

Unfathomable 651

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“The sect warriors, they have returned!”

“Are they really back?”

“Yes, we must quickly depart, maybe we can witness the Patriarch!”

“Is the Patriarch going to appear!?”

A group of kids was screaming through the streets while charging forward. Not so long they heard that their army had been victorious. The pride in the sect that resided in this grand city was at the zenith. It was victory after another victory without them ever having to back down.

It started with the strange demi-human monsters that plagued the borders. The United Element Sect was the only large force that fully defended their lands. Everyone else had fled back into the central regions of the empire where the Azure Emperor resided. To their surprise he was not the one they should have relied on, the one to save them was his brother the Golden Dragon.

This was the start of his legend which continued to this very day. People were quickly turning away from the previous Emperor that didn't do anything to help them. Even to this day, there was no word from the capital city. During the whole evacuation not much had been done as the people were left stranded in front of the large walls leading into the Lands of the Long Clan.

It became painfully obvious that the citizens of this empire didn't matter to the Azure Emperor at all. Some even speculated that they would do nothing unless they were directly attacked themselves. Others claimed that the Golden Dragon had been sent by his elder brother to take care of the situation. These rumors could not be confirmed as the Emperor never spoke out nor did his brother. Thus most assumed that Zhang Dong was acting on his own accord.

Spirit Spring City was quickly becoming the hottest new tourist attraction in this empire. Some even decided to create new settlements inside this region after what had transpired. It was clear to many that it was better to seek shelter with the Golden Dragon that actually defended his lands and the others instead of begging the Azure Dragon for some mercy.

This wasn't all good, a lot of the cultivators in which direction this was all heading. Now after another victory, Zhang Dong had proven yet again that he was one of the strongest within the Empire. No one really knew how he could stack up against his brother but they were convinced that a day might arise when the two would clash swords against each other.

Two Emperors could not exist at the same time and it was clear that the United Element Sect had full control of the whole western region of the empire. Even the West was rumored to have fallen to his power. The Heavenly Crane Sect had taken aid from Zhang Dong who participated in their counterattack against the Emerald Phoenix Empire. The tide quickly shifted after he joined up and the rest was history.

“It's grand elder Huo Qiang!”

“I can see some other elders but it's hard to see...”

“Idiots, just look at the spirit screen it shows a much better image!”

Some of the onlookers tried to sneak a peek at the large golden palace in the sky. It was tremendous in size and radiated an aura of power. Within it, their Patriarch could possibly be inside. He rarely showed himself out in the open and was rumored to reside mostly inside his own home in secluded cultivation. Only when the time to battle other powerful masters was right, did he show himself to the public.

Instead, most people could see some other prominent figures. One of them was the elder that was famous for controlling flames or the Patriarch's grandfather that enjoyed the company of many ladies. Both of them were flying through the air while people waved. Soon a line of flying masters filled the entire area as they arrived.

...

“They sure are jolly.”

“Why wouldn't they be? They are able to witness the creation of a new legend.”

“A new Legend huh?”

“Is everything okay? You don't seem too happy, is there a new battle awaiting us?”

“I'm not sure, probably if I don't seek it out, we'll be content for many years... maybe even for a thousand.”

“My dear husband, I think you have earned a break, If you're afraid of that Azure Dragon then don't, we have grown too much for him and the Long Clan to be an issue. If they try anything, we will just crush them!”

“Haha, my dear wife, you sure can be ferocious.”

Zhang Liena smiled while clenching her fist. Zhang Dong looked at her and knew that after all that they went through her power had skyrocketed. It was the same for everyone else that had participated in the battles down in the north. With time they would get even more powerful and perhaps it would have even been possible to get some people up to Emperor levels of power within a couple of hundred years.

“Don't worry, I'm not planning any wars for now, we do have to keep an eye out for my dear brother but I don't think he will try anything.”

“It does seem so, he had the perfect opportunity to raid our sect while we were all gone.”

Zhang Dong nodded as this was the case. Their spies never sent any signs that the Long Clan was attacking. He had a few theories about why this was the case, one of them involved the scenario that was taking place. It was possible that the Azure Emperor was never meant to be an obstacle. Instead, he had given him the tools to fight against the other leaders. Only thanks to the Golden Palace was he able to take care of three emperors within a year's time.

“It is so, this is a time to rejoice we have earned this peace.”

Zhang Dong nodded again while he and Liena were sitting in the secret chamber away from the others. His wife liked this spot as no one besides them could enter it to bother them. They had spent a lot of the

trip back in here just relaxing. Even though they could have used a teleport back home there was no reason. Their children were cared for and it was better to conserve the spirit points.

Even though he didn't know if he could relax, there wasn't really much else that was left to be done. The main enemies that plagued these lands were gone and only Argus with Lucius remained here. Unless they were hellbent on getting into the lands of the Long Clan then he could relax. Their search for the armor pieces would probably take a while as the Azure Empire was a huge place. Considering that he had grabbed their secret sword from the Azure Palace, the other items were probably scattered elsewhere.

The Demi-Human Emperor had been defeated and his forces were driven back to the West. There were still two active bridges there that connected him to their lands but he had no intention of letting anyone cross them. Instead, his people continued to build up massive walls and defensive structures for any potential invaders. If for some reason another Demi-Human Emperor was created within a hundred years, his forces would be ready to drive him back even without his help.

To the East, things were looking similar. With the help of the Heavenly Crane Sect and his angel automatons, he built up a defensive fortress near the bridge that existed there. There was only a single bridge there so it would be easier to defend and whoever decided to wander in would be pelted by spirit canons of huge sizes.

Then last was the underwater empire that had just vanished along with their bridge. Right after the collapse of the dimensional abnormality there, the connection vanished from the map. It was as if it never existed, to begin with, and any red areas vanished along with it. The undersea creatures that remained in the sea were cut from the connection they had with their Empress and were now not even seen as part of that Empire.

When Zhang Dong looked at his minimap there wasn't really much left for him to do. It was easy to keep Argus and Lucius in check thanks to this map he lifted from his older brother. He needed to make a decision now, would he try to absorb the Dao of water and wood that he received from the Empress or was it better to wait?

'I might be able to ascend now but it might not be enough...'

He wasn't sure how the other system holders did it but perhaps he needed to take out all four enemies before it was all over. However, there was a small problem with that plan as the King from the magical kingdom Argus came from wasn't here. It was possible for him to enter these lands but this didn't mean that it would come to blows.

'If that's the case I might have to spend some time preparing by myself. Bob, I need you to calculate the probability of me reaching a new realm after absorbing that seashell. I don't care how long it takes, we have some wiggle room.'

'Affirmative, beginning calculations...'

"Shall we depart?"

"Sure, I bet those two are waiting for us."

Zhang Dong smiled at Liena who gently grasped his hand. When looking at his lovely wife he could feel some of that stress moving away. He didn't need to make a decision right away, this day was one to celebrate. His quest of minimizing casualties was close to ending and he had earned a small break. Perhaps if he put more thought into it he would arrive at the proper answer to his next task.

When he arrived outside he was greeted by many cheers from millions of people. He did not expect this many eyes to be on him as he was floating through the air. There were just so many living humans down there and all of them were ecstatic to see him. Considering that just a few years ago he had been nothing more than a regular person living in a small apartment, this felt a bit surreal.

However, even when they cheered he didn't really care that much. This was not really why he was doing this, the real reason was in the distance. He could see the large floating structure that housed his children within. They were waiting for his return and together with his wife, he would finally have some time to relax.

[Chapter 652](#)

"Congratulations!"

"Happy Birthday!"

"Can we eat the cake now?"

"Xiu'er what did you learn?"

"Uh... can we eat the cake now, please?"

"That's not what I meant..."

"Ouch, my cheeks. Mother stop pulling on them!"

Zhang Dong was sitting to the side while looking at his wife stretching Xiu's cheeks out. It was a joyous occasion as his son had reached the age of six. As a father, he was feeling proud but also sad. He had missed five of these birthdays already, previously he was teleported away into another world and this was the first time he was here.

The attention was pulled away from his son by his drooling sister. Apparently, the cake that was made from various delicacies was something that she desired. Cultivators teeth weren't really affected by caries so there was no reason to deny his children from eating sweets. Before she could dig in the birthday boy still needed to make a wish.

"I should make a wish?"

"That's right but you need to blow out the candles in one go first or it won't work!"

To everyone's surprise, the ceremony was changed this year around. When Xiu was younger there wasn't really any cake as people here celebrated things differently. Shoveling chocolate cake into a toddler was also something that he was concerned about. Now on the other hand when the kids were a bit older, it was fine for them to gobble down all these sweets.

This reminded him of when he was younger. His mother tended to always make a large cake that was usually made with a lot of chocolate. Cooking wasn't one of his best skills so he just left it up to the sect chef instead. After describing to him what the cake should look like or taste he was given something that tasted quite similar.

Zhang Jun looked at the six candles in front of him as if they were some legendary treasure. It was clear to his father that the little boy was still reserved about their interactions. However, it was much better than when he first arrived in this world. Soon enough he was leaning over and blowing out the six candles in one go. It wasn't really hard for someone like him who had a natural martial physique. His lung capacity was a lot higher than normal and almost caused the top part of the cake to fly away.

"Happy Sixth Birthday Jun."

"Happy Birthday!"

People started cheering as all of the candles were blown out in one fell swoop. Jun smiled while looking at the people around him but his gaze mostly fell on his father which Zhang Dong noticed. Even though they had a rough start he could see that his child was interested in him. Probably being the Golden Dragon who was the most powerful cultivator around helped move things along.

"Good job my Son, now you can eat the cake."

"Yay, cake!"

Jun's sister saw that as a signal for her to get some of that yummy-looking cake. Liena that was next to her delivered some divine justice by bonking her on the head before she could get her hands on it.

"Calm down young lady, a daughter of mine will not eat with her hands, wait for the cook to put it on the plate!"

"I'm sorry mother..."

People laughed at his daughter that started rubbing her head. There were a lot of people from their inner circle here but they tried to contain everything. Zhang Zhi and his family were here, his wife had delivered two boys that were seven and five years old. Both of them were sitting to the side and eyeballing the chocolate cake that was getting passed around.

'I hope they can form a relationship with my son but I don't like how they are treating him...'

Zhang Dong had a few concerns with his children. Everyone was treating them a bit too well as if they were from some type of royal family that wasn't that far off. He would have preferred it if his children were treated equally to the others but this was probably too much to ask from the cultivator nuts living in this world. Even though he tried to strip the cast system it wasn't such an easy task to remove it.

Even now a group of kids was surrounding his son that was eating cake and unpacking some gifts. He was showered with expensive toys and adoration from his peers. It seemed that the parents of the other children had told their offspring to get closer to Jun. This was normal as being close to the child of the Patriarch was an obvious thing that could get them ahead in life. Pushing their daughters that were of similar age as him close was also something they were already thinking of.

‘What’s with those girls... there are so many of them there, did those sneaky elders talk them into it? This feels wrong.’

Zhang Jun was already surrounded by young girls. Some of them were smiling at him in an awkward fashion as if they were told to go along with whatever he desired. This was the part that he was worried about that could cause his son to go down an erroneous path. He was a young master now with the most powerful person in the sect as his father. It wouldn’t be strange if he started thinking that he was better than others or that he was some type of destined being.

‘I can’t let him become like those other idiot young masters... the same thing goes for my daughter...’

When looking at Xiu with cake on her face his sour mood quickly went away. However, soon he was thinking about the same thing. Many other kids were gathering around her as well. For the time being he was leaving his daughter up to her mother. She had informed him about some elders showing interest in presenting suitors for her but for the time being she denied them all. There were apparently even some that attempted to tie her into a political marriage with the Huo Clan. Perhaps this was one of the reasons that she seemed to dislike Qiang even more now than before.

Luckily for his offspring, he was not planning on letting them marry anytime soon. The two wouldn’t be burdened with a political marriage as long as he was in power. While his bond with his own wife was somewhat political and it worked out, he couldn’t imagine a life where no love existed. Liena was luckily interested in him beforehand which initiated a spark in him that continued to burn brightly to this very day.

“Is everything fine?”

“Yes? Why wouldn’t it be?”

“You do have that look on your face, my husband.”

“I can’t hide anything from you, can I?”

“No, you can not and you should stop trying.”

Liena approached him while he was staring at his children. Luckily his position was so high that he could forgo any mingling with the other elders. Being forced to converse with old farts about the state of the empire was not something he wished to do now. Thus he was left sitting in his throne-like chair with a good view of his kids that had gone away from the table to play.

“I was just thinking about the future of our children, sooner or later they will grow up and need to fend for themselves.”

“Oh? I’m not sure if there is anything to worry about, with how their father is now, no one would dare to stand in their way.”

“I guess you’re not wrong...”

While Liena knew somewhat about his real origin she was not informed about everything. After winning so many recent battles she might have assumed that her husband was an invincible master that not even the Azure Emperor could face. This would still need to be confirmed but as it stood now, there wouldn’t be any chance to prove this theory.

The war between empires was over now and the refugees poured back to the lands that were once in turmoil. People were singing praises of the Golden Dragon who was now the savior of the empire. His sect was now considered the owner of the western region with the Long Clan owning the middle and the Heavenly Crane Sect the east.

This didn't mean that the way his sect acted didn't have a greater impact on the population. Besides the old residents from the west, others from the east and even central regions started pouring in. The way Zhang Dong's name was elevated to be on the same level as the Azure Emperor caused this.

The Emperor was an age-old name that no one could really touch. He on the other hand was more palpable and accessible. Spirit Spring City was his home ground and many people rushed over with hopes of joining his sect. The next time the sect pushed for a recruitment drive he expected the candidates to multiply by at least ten times. He was the hottest name on the tongues of everyone and would probably remain

"There is nothing to worry about, not even the Azure Emperor would be brazen enough!"

"Hey, it would be better if you didn't say such things out loud..."

"What is there to fear?"

Liena shrugged as she was convinced of the power their sect had. In her and the elders minds, they had become a mountain amongst pebbles. The Heavenly Crane Sect was no match for them so they assumed that the Long Clan wouldn't be that much of a problem either.

Some of them were even hoping that they continue on their warpath. Taking out three powerful beings skyrocketed their confidence. They were willing to believe that they could gain control over the whole Empire and become a new dynasty. The only reason they wouldn't was due to their Patriarch not seeming to be interested in such a thing.

'I hope they won't try to plot something in the background...'

While the war was over it could be restarted at any time. The borders in the west weren't really drawn out as there wasn't anything done in an official fashion. The old sect that controlled the West was gone which would usually mean that the spot had become vacant. While the Heavenly Crane Sect accepted the United Element Sect as their equal, the Long Clan had remained silent.

'I hope days like this could continue for a bit longer... but sooner or later I'll have to act.'

Zhang Dong peeked at his system screen where he could see a percentage counter that was slowly going up. The scanning process of the room she took from the water empress would still take some time, before it was completed he could only hope that peace would reign.

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'This isn't as easy as I expected it to be... but nothing that matters ever is.'

Zhang Dong was sitting in something that looked like a room that was lifted from an apartment. The back of it was missing and instead of walls, it was surrounded by a bubble made of energy. The outside was in an empty space covered by thick cement-looking rocks. It was illuminated from all sides and

floated directly in the middle. The lack of any windows and doors was on purpose as only he could get in here through the help of his system.

This place was hidden away in the Dimensional Regalia that housed a continent-sized pocket dimension. It was the best place to hide away such an important treasure and perhaps enough to keep the overseer away. Considering that it was an immortal grade treasure, perhaps the one pretending to be the Azure Emperor's wife would not be able to get in.

What he wanted to do here was figure out how time worked. The Dao of time was mostly unknown to him but after seeing the creatures that were frozen in time, he hoped to figure some things out. Bob had been able to somewhat hack himself into the room to present him with a few things. It was now somewhat possible for him to recreate the effect through this machine but he didn't really understand the concept of it.

For the test, he brought over a lone creature from the outside. It was just a little spirit mouse that had been put on hold. The time around it had been slowed down but not really frozen as it was still moving. Through the machine, he could somewhat slow down or speed up the passage of time around this little creature. However, stopping it outright wasn't that easy, first of all, it required him to use spirit points and a lot of them.

'So, if I wanted to stop time for one second with this thing, I'd need a year's worth of spirit points?'

'Affirmative.'

'That's quite something and I can't even activate it unless it's outside of this chamber...'

To be frank, the plan to learn the Dao of Time to counter the time-stopping effect of the Azure Empress was looking grim. With his current understanding, he would not be able to speed up or slow down everything by more than a fraction of a second. He did not even know if he would be able to move at all if the same thing happened again.

'It's better than nothing though...'

There were a few ways of using this thing and at least he was able to go through the tip of the iceberg. There was a chance that he could protect himself against the time-stopping effect if he did things right. Luring the woman over here would be one thing and something that he even thought about.

The sea shell that he took from the Cerulean Empress was still in his possession but he decided not to use it yet. He worried that the moment he did something would happen to his mutated seed. It could attract the Azure Empress to this location which he wanted to postpone.

'Maybe it would be possible to trap her here and ask her some questions... But will I be strong enough to tackle her by myself?'

By analyzing the Overseer from the other world he knew that his next opponent should be above the nascent soul level. After revisiting the secret ground that he was forced to go through he became aware of one truth. Something that created this world was keeping people from reaching the immortal realm through regular means.

Qi Condensation, Foundation Establishment, Core Formation, and last Nascent Soul. These were the first four realms that were freely accessible to the people of this world. However, there was a new realm above the Nascent Soul that was still below the immortal realm.

After going through the research of his predecessor, he came to a conclusion. The realm above the nascent soul level should have been easily reached by him. All clues pointed to mastering a greater Dao and he had mastered multiple ones already. Dao of Heavenly Lightning, Dao of Holy, Dao of Darkness, Dao of Flames, Dao of Wind, and Dao of Gravity were the ones that he had fully mastered.

There were ones that he had not yet fully comprehended as the Dao of Swords that he was also very proficient at. Yet this should have already been enough for him or anyone else to break through into the next realm. He could even conclude that fully mastering a greater Dao was not really needed for the stage above the nascent soul.

‘He names the stage after this Dao Enlightenment stage, then after it would be the Dao Mastering stage or Dao Merging stage. The first one was probably where you mastered one greater Dao and in the next one you had to do the same with multiple ones, maybe even combine them into something greater...’

This was his theory that he came up with and also ran through Bob which gave him a high probability of it being true. There were at least two new realms that this world was stripped of. Without getting into those stages a person’s spirit sense would not be able to evolve either. Their understanding would reach a bottleneck that could never be broken.

The same thing was happening to him, without the help of the system he would not have been able to gather so many new greater Daos. Even though he knew so many it was still not possible for him to get into the true immortal stage and perhaps even if he absorbed the Dao of Water and Wood that he was given, not much would change.

‘If the stage before the Immortal realm is the Dao Merging stage, it might require me to combine at least two Greater Dao’s with each other in some way...’

Zhang Dong had tried this theory already and it wasn’t that hard to complete with his attacks. Combining the Dao of Wind with the Dao of Fire to create a Firestorm technique wasn’t that hard but this didn’t seem to be the issue. There was something missing, it was more likely that he needed to create a grand Dao of something by merging the greater Daos together with each other.

‘The main elemental Daos are wind, earth, water, and fire. Then there is also wood, holy, and darkness that sometimes are accounted for... Do I have to combine them all into something to reach the Immortal stage? Maybe it would be enough to combine the four base ones?’

He was not sure what he should do or if it was even possible. If he was supposed to combine greater Daos into a grand one then they all had to be connected to some type of source. Just like there was a lesser Dao of Rainwater that connected to the greater Dao of Water, all of these elements had to come from something.

‘There could be something that all of them came from... like a point of origin, something like a Prime element that they all stem from... In theory, if I could figure out what this Prime element is, then I’d be able to open up this seed and enter the Immortal realm.’

Now came the focal point of the issue. For him to start his research he would need to analyze all of these various elements to find a connection. Perhaps it was enough to analyze the paths that he already knew but maybe he needed the two others that were for now inside the seashell.

‘This might take a while, I wonder how long other masters took to get through this...’

He started considering the life spawn increase after reaching a realm above the nascent soul one. Perhaps it reached something like then thousand years for the first one and a hundred thousand for the next one. It was unclear but it probably gave each master a lot of time to ponder their Daos in peace and tranquility.

‘Well, I should have some time to do it...The Empire has gotten quite peaceful and if that woman hasn’t appeared I should be able to continue.’

For a moment he deliberated about hiding himself in one of the spawn zones that appeared as black circles on his map. The walls were made from an incredibly hard substance that he couldn’t break. However, after Bob informed him about them being connected to the world’s system he decided to not go with that option.

All his attempts to cultivate safety didn’t go to fruition. He had convinced himself that the moment he began a transformation into the immortal realm or one of the other two realms that were blocked, the Overseer would be at his doorstep. He was not sure how strong his next opponent was but she had to at least be in the next realm but also could be in the other one right before the immortal realm.

‘Well, I’m not in a rush for now... maybe this is for the best...’

With peace somewhat returning to the empire he finally had some time on his hands. His children were continuing to grow and he hoped to be there to witness everything. Perhaps he was being a bit selfish but he wanted to at least take some time off and enjoy the current state of things.

His lifespan would be around a millennium and his current age was not even forty years old. The body that he currently had would not age and even if it did it wouldn’t really matter. His soul was tremendous and would allow his Qi to remain almost as powerful until the moment he died.

With this in mind, he decided to make a few moves. It would be one of the first times that he actually went into a state of closed cultivation. He needed to focus on examining all of the various Daos that he had and connecting them to the others. Only after learning what he could learn from the paths he already had would he attempt to use the sea shell because when he did that, the end of this world might be upon him.

His shoulders felt heavy as he had to wrestle with a moral conundrum. Was it really fine to allow this world to perish if he failed? Like in the other world, the Overseer was trying to wipe it clean and the same thing could happen here. Perhaps it was better to live out his long life with his family and let it all go, who was he to decide their fate?

Even with those thoughts clouding his judgment he needed to push forward. The possibility of this unknown being wiping this world clean even without his involvement was also probable. When that time came, he just needed to be ready and give it his all. If there was something he could do to protect the people that he cared about, he would work tirelessly to achieve this goal.

[Chapter 654](#)

“Ah... this is the life...”

“Isn’t it? Everything has calmed down!”

“Haven’t been able to enjoy spirit wine in a while, things really did improve now...”

“Yeah, even the prices have actually gone down! Did you hear why?”

“No, but I’m assuming that you won’t rest until you inform me about it.”

“You know me well my friend, listen to this. Apparently, the United Element Sect is spending some of their wealth on helping the areas that have been affected by those strange creatures.”

“They did? Why would they do that? This makes no sense, they won’t get much in return for their generosity.”

“Haha, that’s where you are wrong my friend, people are flocking to the western region! Now is the time to spend those spirit stones and coins!”

“Now that you mention it, I have seen a lot of merchants and new businesses opening up everywhere, so that’s it!”

“Indeed, they’ll attract new people to settle down and reap the rewards later!”

“But... will the others take this lying down...They must have noticed the drop in population.”

“Perhaps but what can they do? The United Element Sect is like a meteor, would they dare to stir up trouble? The Heavenly Crane Sect already made everything clear, they won’t touch the West, would the Long Clan dare?”

“This is the Long Clan we are talking about... When was the last time that they weren’t the rulers? I don’t think the history books go back that long...”

“Do you think that they won’t take it lying down? Come to think of it, they haven’t been active that much only the outer sects have been active. What if they have been preparing?”

“Hey now, preparing for what?”

“Another war...”

“Uh...”

Two old men were having a conversation while sipping on some red wine and eating chicken drumsticks. They were inside an inn that was bustling with people. Everyone seemed to be in a good mood after the three emperors had been slain. Some of the people here had been forced to retreat but most just knew things through rumors.

While to the uninformed it seemed like everything was fine to the ones that knew the dynamics between powerful sects, it looked like a powder keg waiting to explode. The whole war seemed like a slap to the face of the Long Clan. It made them look incompetent to the entire population of the Empire.

Even though they might have been capable of the same feat, it didn't matter. They didn't do anything during the one-year war period and it made them look weak.

To other sects, the Long Clan's movements weren't strange. It was normal for them to prioritize the central region to which the fights didn't reach. Both the Heavenly Crane Sect and the United Element Sect performed well during this period. No enemies went up to their doorstep which didn't give them a reason to act.

The cultivators that resided in the smaller sects understood what the Long Clan did but this didn't mean that they didn't feel some type of way about the whole thing. Even though they would have probably made the same decision, there was a problem. The United Element Sect appeared out of nowhere. They were like some type of saints, helping people without asking for much. Even now after they had taken over the western region, there was a stark difference.

The previous owners that were the Soaring Dragon Sect, were different. They acted similarly to the Long Clan in a more oppressive manner. The taxes were steep and they didn't really do much to protect the lands. Unless a powerful demonic cultivator appeared they left everything up to the smaller sects.

The replacements were different though, they even cleared up the massive concentration of demonic sects up in the northwest. Crime was at an all-time low and they were even trying to recruit people to go to the demonic island. It was a new frontier that some saw as a chance to put their mark on the world.

With the decrease in the population came a lot of possibilities. New clans and sects were popping out left and right to fill the holes. Cities that had been destroyed by the demi-humans were being rebuilt and needed new management. Under the watchful eye of the new powerhouse in the region, everything was proceeding nicely.

Usually, everyone expected territory battles between the remnants of old powers and the new ones to occur. However, there existed a new policing force in the region, a strange group of mechanical beings called the Archangels. They wouldn't allow for much bloodshed to occur between the larger groups and would pop out if the fighting got too drastic. Already many new and old clan leaders were apprehended and taken to the mines.

Usually, none of the great three powers bothered to minimize the infighting inside of their lands. As long as they were given their share of the pie everything was fine. No one really counted all the deaths or how many small clans perished. This policing force caused them to handle things differently and in a more peaceful fashion.

However, this didn't mean that everything was all and well, instead of open conflict it was just hidden in the background. People expected a lot more silent assassinations and the growth of those types of underground forces if things continued.

"Stop trying to scare me, you drunk bastard."

"Haha, calm down."

One of the two men rose up from his seat in anger at the one that was insinuating that a war would occur. Soon the two were back to laughing but in the back of their heads, they weren't sure about that

possibility. The Long Clan had a reason to move in as some people were spreading bad rumors around them. There just needed a spark to light the fuse and another conflict could be upon them.

“Long Live the Golden Dragon! He is the true savior and true ruler!”

“You dare make light of the Azure Emperor?”

“What if I do, what are you going to do about it?”

The people in the in went quiet as they felt an oppressive force wash over them. The voices of people that were outside could be heard by everyone and drew their attention.

“Did you hear that?”

“Yeah, what’s happening outside?”

These two drunk men that were foundation establishment cultivators were able to feel a power greater than themselves. They both slowly rose up from their seats to go towards the opened window. There, not that far up in the air they saw two groups of people shouting at each other.

“What sect or clan do those people belong to?”

“I think the ones on the left are from the Yan Clan... but I don’t recognize the ones on the right, probably a newly formed force.”

The two men nodded at each other as they belonged to a smaller family that only had foundation establishment experts within their ranks. They kept their voices hidden just like everyone else here as it seemed that a fight was about to break out.

“Yan Clan... I think I’ve heard that name... Oh I know, that man that is arguing, his daughter was married off to someone from the Long Clan.”

“Didn’t they flee the moment the west became chaotic, they have a lot of nerve coming back now...”

“Did they come back to reclaim their lands? Hmph, they hid behind the Long Clan walls for all this time and now they just want everything to return to how it was?”

“Hey... this doesn’t look good...”

“What do they think they are doing?”

This city was a special one, it was on the border of the West and Central regions. Previously it was divided between the Soaring Dragon Sect’s and Long Clan’s sub-clans. Wang Long’s appearance and destruction of that Sect made the Long Clan’s sub-clan the true owner. However, soon after they left in fright of the Demi-Human Emperor’s forces that were destroying everything.

After things had settled down the United Element Sect lay claim to this land. This location was quite far from their original region so none of their people had yet been stationed there. This left it up to the people that remained to claim it instead. The two old men assumed that the residing new clan had achieved some type of deal with the current Western giant.

“They are really going at it... we need to get out of here before something terrible happens!”

“You are right, we should try to lay low, nothing good can come from this.”

The two men that were watching over the fight with the other people gathered here started to slowly back away. The sky above them was starting to turn into a bloodbath as the two sides started to fight. They both knew that something terrible could come from this confrontation and were quick to jump out through one of the windows.

“Look, they are already here!”

“I think we should split up here my old friend, I wish you luck.”

“You too, stay safe.”

Soon the two men were running in two different directions while glancing up. They saw flying beings surrounded by a golden aura flying toward the city. They were the angelic beings that were left to patrol the skies by the United Element Sect. There weren't that many of them as there was just too much space to cover in this vast Empire.

“I have a bad feeling about this, I must get everyone out of this city...”

The man was sweating all over as he had been living in this place for a while. He knew that the clan head of the people that were related to the Long Clan was a hot head. The man would certainly not let things go as for him the family name was everything.

“Quickly, pack your things, and let's depart, we need to get to a safe location!”

“Grandfather, what is happening?”

When he arrived at his home he was greeted by his son's wife. Before he could give her an explanation a massive explosion erupted behind him. When he glanced back he could only see a torrent of energy that could only be created by a nascent soul master or a costly treasure.

“Quick stop talking, get everyone together, we must leave this place before it becomes a battlefield...”

He could only dread while looking at the mangled angel automation being flung out of the explosion. A confrontation between the Long Clan and the United Element Sect was something everyone was dreading and this could have been the spark to set it off. Even though it could have been resolved with money he was not willing to wait around for another war between sects.

[Chapter 655](#)

“Something seemed to happen to the angel units at this location, could there have been some demi-human stragglers?”

“At this location? They should not be able to reach that far and the elders should have chased every one of them down...”

“The Emerald Phoenix Empire?”

“Why would they start things now that their two Emperors are dead? And how would they even get here from the Eastern region, do you have a brain in that head?”

“My apologies Senior brother, but who would dare attack us?”

“I don’t know but that city, isn’t it located near the Central Area?”

“The central area? Could the Long Clan be involved? But why would they...”

“I don’t know but we have to report this to the elder immediately, go tell them that something happened in the Azure Basin City.”

“Leave it to me, senior brother!”

A man that looked to be in his early twenties clasped his hands before running out from the large room they were in. Inside a large map of the whole empire was visible in the background. It wasn’t the only one as many smaller ones were placed at booths with sect members.

This was something that was created by the elders and used to monitor the whole western region. The youths here were sect disciples and seniors that were working for their merits. The Empire as well as the Western region was gigantic and it required a lot of manpower to monitor along with the angelic automatons that could be ordered to take care of the situation.

When something was discovered a person here could send out one of those automatons or relay the information to the nearest sect location. It was similar to the police force with this being a command center. Thanks to this system a certain Patriarch could turn his brain off and focus on cultivating to reach the next level.

Thanks to this in place it was possible to intercept an SOS signal and one of the people that caught it was already running. The young man made his way to the elder's office which he sprinted into. His hand didn’t need to reach for the door handle as it was one that could slide open to the side. What he needed to do was to inject a specific spiritual energy pattern and it would perform the task for him

“Elder, I bring bad news!”

“Yes, bad news for you if you don’t explain yourself, how many times do I have to tell you juniors not to rush into my office like this!”

There was a lone man behind a large desk made of dark wood. On the desk, he had several marked communication jades through which he could call other sections of this large building. Due to him being responsible for the monitoring department whenever something bad happened, he was the first to know. Then if the situation was truly dire he would inform people in higher positions that could move a greater amount of people and even reach the one on top, the Patriarch.

“Of course, it’s dire news, three lesser anger units have been destroyed and we have lost contact with them.”

“Three whole units? Hm... that is bad but the weaker ones can be defeated by weaker cultivators, what were they doing before the signal was lost?”

“I have brought the report.”

The young man gave him a memory jade with the information. After plugging this item into the nearby monitor he could go through some of the footage that the angel units recorded. It was similar to

policemen wearing cameras on their bodies. The image quality was limited and the framerate was bad but it was a necessity to conserve more information.

"This looks familiar...oh now, is it really... the Long Clan?"

The old man started squinting while going through the image. He couldn't make the mistake as the situation was dire. Even though a lot of people considered their sect to be one of the great three, this man was a person that survived the old era of the Zhang Clan. He remembered the days of struggling and the meteoric rise to power was only recent. The fear of the Long Clan had been ingrained since birth.

Even though he saw the youngsters being boisterous and proud, he was not of the same mind. The Patriarch was strong but even he sometimes vanished and faltered. His disappearance for five years was an indication of this. It was never really clear how well the greater elders were doing only during a full-scale war would everything become apparent.

"Are they finally making a move?"

"Making a move? What are you even talking about?"

"The Long Clan has remained silent for so long, there were rumors that they were just gathering their forces."

"That baseless rumor?"

"Is it baseless elder? It seems that they have shown their fangs and attacked one of our cities. What will we do, should we notify the supreme elders or have the Patriarch..."

"You want to involve the great leader? Are you stupid or something!"

"Ow..."

The old man started frowning before smacking the youth over the head with his palm. If they sent out the nascent soul elders there then the Long Clan could respond in a similar fashion. This could lead to another war that could end very badly for their rising sect. The elder here knew of the dangers and was positive that the Long Clan was just waiting for an excuse to show themselves. It was strange for them to throw the first stone, there had to be something else to it.

"No, I will relay this information to the proper department, sending a small unit of experts should be enough. Nevertheless, this involves the Long Clan so I'm not someone that can make this decision, now get out and keep your mouth shut. If I hear that anyone is spreading rumors that a war with the Long Clan is upon us, I'll come looking for you!"

"Yes, Elder..."

The youth walked out with a lump on his head while the elder contacted another department. Soon a lot more calls were going through as many people were trying to make the correct decision. Even though no one wanted this information quickly reached some of the supreme elders as the potential involvement with the Long Clan was a big risk.

“Hm... So the decision is mine to make... Very well, we will send a small force there with one nascent master which will be me. I haven’t had anything to do for a while. This might be a good occasion to stretch the old bones and see some new sights, this must be some type of misunderstanding. I can’t leave this up to the youngsters.

The word reached the ear of Zhang Jin, the Patriarch’s grandfather. After achieving the nascent soul level his complexion got better and he now looked to be in his fifties. Over a year had passed since his last involvement with the Golden Dong palace he was now at another location. He was now stuck tending to the main sect which was a boring endeavor.

With this incident popping out it was a good chance to do something about that boredom.

“Dong’er is in closed-door secluded cultivation, he must not be disturbed before it’s truly necessary.”

Zhang Jin rose up while dining a special robe with the United Element Sect’s emblem on the back. Around this Emblem, it had smaller different colored circles that represented the four base elements of fire, water, wind, and earth. With this appearance, he would have no problem showing where he came from.

“Gather up everyone, I want a team to assemble within fifteen minutes by the great teleportation gate, and prepare the middle-sized battle Crouser for transport.”

“As you wish, Supreme Elder.”

“Ah... life sure is great when your grandchild is so successful.”

Thanks to his current position there were a lot of resources at his disposal. With the help of the angelic automatons and lesser versions of them, a whole production line was created. Now these puppets were the ones making flying ships made of precious metal that he could order around. For this small expedition, he decided to take one of the fastest ships at their disposal. It had a sleek design and didn’t even use a sail as the models that came before it. Instead, the ship had its own spirit engine that generated thrust from the back as well as an anti-gravitational field.

“It should be able to even outrun a fully ascended nascent soul master unless the Azure Emperor decides to come out, there should be enough time to escape.”

While the other sect members made the preparations Zhang Jin examined some of the treasures at his disposal. This mission’s intent was not to start a fight but to prevent it. Cultivators loved pricey treasures so the spirit herbs, pills, and divine treasures that he had at his disposal could be used as bartering chips.

It didn’t take a long time for everything to be prepared. Everyone that was on his crew was someone that had previously participated in the war. They were all veterans and were good at using the tools that the Patriarch provided for them. With his status, Zhang Jin could make everyone else wait while he was allowed to initiate the teleportation gate.

“Let us head out! If everything goes well we will remain for the day and visit the sites.”

Soon Zhang Jin was seated on the captain's chair. No one commented on the latter part as they knew what kind of person he was. Normally they would all love to return to their jobs and homes as soon as possible. The old man on the other hand loved hanging out in new locations where new lovely beauties

could be discovered. There he would try to entice them and without his wives being there, no one could stop him.

The large circular gate that could fit a massive battleship through it was activated. The Crouser which was made from the same material as the Golden Palace was quite eye-catching. It was a calling card to the sect and to its leader. With it, as a shield, no one in the Western regions would raise a tone.

The propulsion system that was on the back started glowing in a red light. Just as soon as the gate materialized the quick-flying vessel started moving forward. Before them was a juncture city through which they could arrive at the Azure Basin City within a day's time. If they tried doing it from here it would take him a week but with this little shortcut, they would soon arrive at the answer to their question about the Long Clan and their true motives.

[Chapter 656](#)

"Elder Jin, we will be approaching the Azure Basin City soon."

"Are those why they call it the basin city?"

"I'm not sure..."

Zhang Jin yawned while looking out the window. There large steady circular pools of water were everywhere. Around them was nice green grass along with some peaceful animals drinking from them. There was a noticeable lack of fish and plant life inside these pools of water which probably meant that they weren't lakes.

"What do you mean you're not sure, why haven't you informed yourself? Did you become lazy after my grandson elevated the sect?"

Zhang Jin shook his head while squinting at one of the people from his squad. He had brought along a few people that he knew. Normally when going out on missions, people from the sect personnel would get all the information they could about the target. Their sect was still in the building phase which didn't always allow them to get to everything.

"W-we managed to inform ourselves about the clans and sects that reside in this city."

"Well, at least you aren't totally useless, was about to send you to the demonic sect region."

"Please, anything but that Grand Elder!"

"Haha, well who are we facing here and what are their connections?"

After a little joke, Zhang Jin started listening to the crewmate. There weren't that many things of note besides the two feuding clans. One had ties with the Soaring Dragon Sect that used to rule the Western region and the other one was connected to the Long Clan. It was somewhat of a proxy war without the main two forces getting involved. However this was enough to paint a picture in Zhang Jin's mind of what was happening here.

"Hm... I see, so this branching clan with ties to the Long Clan could have seen it as a chance. Now that the Soaring Dragon Sect doesn't exist anymore, it makes sense. This complicates things..."

It didn't take a genius to figure out what had happened. In actuality, this wasn't something that they should have been that involved with. He didn't even think that anyone would mind losing it to the branching clan. The problems were the angelic automatons that belonged to the United Element's Sect.

"Perhaps it was not a good idea to leave things like this to soulless automatons."

"I agree, if a person from our sect was here it would have been possible to diffuse the situation. The puppets are a strong deterrent but they aren't without their faults."

The other sect members that were in the command booth of this golden cruiser all nodded. This territory had some strategic value but their sect was already spread thin. It would take many years to gain full control over the whole Western region. There was no reason for them to start territorial disputes if this place was connected to the Long Clan.

'This will be a hassle, hope whoever is leading that branch clan isn't stupid. Maybe I should have gotten Zhi to come with me...'

Zhang Jin shook his head while trying to ignore the bad thoughts. He was a nascent soul master from a prestigious sect and should be strong enough for this mission. If all things failed he had a few ways of getting out of trouble. If he allowed some hotheads like Huo Qiang or stoic fools like Zhang Zhi to come along, whenever a chance presented itself they would approach an issue with their weapons drawn.

"Grand Elder, we are close to the city. There are unknown cultivators approaching us, all core formation experts."

"Slow down, have a talk with them, and inform them about our issues."

"Yes, Grand Elder."

While Zhang Jin was here to talk it wouldn't be proper for a nascent soul master to come greet core formation juniors. Instead, one of the senior members of the crew that he could trust to do a good job was asked to perform this task. Soon their golden ship was coming to a halt right before the walls of this large city.

It was filled to the brim with millions of residents and had some signs of struggle. When spreading his spirit sense and also looking at the camera image on the panels he could see destroyed buildings. Some of the large pagodas had holes in them. The fires were already put out but it was clear that a fight took place.

"Whoever did this doesn't care much for the people in this city, this would have never happened in Spirit Spring City."

Zhang Jin recalled the effort of evacuating the citizens when Wang Long appeared. Here on the other hand he could tell that some commoners had perished in the battle. With people at higher realms involved, it wasn't hard to kill a lesser cultivator. Even an aura of a nascent soul master would be enough to kill if not contained by them.

"Grand Elder, they told us that we can venture into the city but we must leave our ship outside."

"How brazen, who do they think they are? They are just from a branching clan!"

"Calm down now, we are not here to start any fights. There is a reason for their behavior, there are multiple masters within the city."

"Multiple?"

Zhang Jin could feel someone else's spirit sense interacting with his own when he tried to scan the city. It was not alone as he could feel at least two more trying to measure his power level.

"One should be a late stage, the other two were early stage so be careful, I won't be able to protect you all."

"Yes, Grand Elder but should we inform the sect about this and ask for help?"

"No, that won't be necessary but ... at least give them a heads up and keep even though they told us to not fly into the city, leave the ship on standby and ready for any occasion."

"Yes, Grand Elder, we will wait for your return."

He nodded at the group of people here and decided to leave with ten core formation experts at the great circle level. While he hovered in the middle they surrounded him while standing on large crystalline swords. They were similar to the one Zhang Dong used in his earlier days and had become a must-have for people trying to follow in his footsteps. They were actually an improvement on the old design but remained similar in appearance.

"Grand Elder..."

"Yes, we don't seem to be welcome here."

This was clear from the moment they entered the city. First of all the common people were all huddling up in their homes. The city that should have been bustling with life was devoid of any noise. The streets were empty and the booths that should have been filled with vendors were empty. He could feel them looking at his small group flying through the air through their windows.

"I will guide the envoys from the United Element Sect, please follow me, the Clan head wishes to speak to you."

"I see, guide us then young friend."

Zhang Jin started thinking that it was a good idea to come instead of the other elders. It was clear by the way these people acted that they didn't fear them. The man that approached him was a young core formation expert in a lavish-looking robe. On the back, it had the clan name that he didn't recognize.

'Yan Clan, huh?'

On the sides, there were many more core formation experts looking at them and closing down the perimeter. He came with just ten people but the other side had fifty of them and they were all at the pinnacle of power.

'If I look at even one of these experts, they would be able to destroy the old Zhang Clan even if the old Patriarch was still alive. Oh, how much things have changed.'

These experts that would previously tower over him could not really intimidate his little group. Even with it being ten against fifty he had confidence that his people would be victorious. The cultivation methods his sect used were above anything that this empire could offer. The only ones that could come close were the Long Clan and the Heavenly Crane sect. These were not them, they were only from a branch clan that would have a lesser version taught to their people.

‘It’s not a matter of quantity, it’s the quality that matters...’

His grandson was a prime example of this saying. Even when he was an early-stage core formation expert his power was closer to the Late stage. While his people could not jump three realms at once they could at least go past a single one. This was enough to make them capable of defeating any other great circle practitioner in the same realm as them.

‘Everyone, be careful and try not to speak without me, I’m not sure what they are planning but let us get out of this in one piece.’

They were finally at the end of their journey. A large lavish palace was right in the middle of this city. It looked to have been newly assembled with two smaller ones being at the edges of the city. Zhang Jin was sure that one of those lesser castles was the previous headquarters of this clan. Now that their competitor was no more they created a larger building right in the middle.

Soon the whole group was in front of a huge gate. Next to it, even more, cultivators appeared; it didn't seem that they were that welcome here. Zhang Jin floated down along with his small squad of core formation experts. The crystalline swords that they were standing on were quickly placed into their spatial rings and just in time for the large gate

to open for them.

“Please, enter the Clan Head is expecting your arrival.”

The man that exited looked old and not amused. His eyes looked at the ten core formation experts that were standing behind Zhang Jin.

“The Head has asked for the elder to enter, the rest are to stay here and wait.”

“You...!”

Before one of the core formation experts could say anything Zhang Jin raised his hand to stop him. The other people that were here were somewhat on edge as they were quick to go towards their weapons.

“It’s fine, this won’t take long.”

Soon he turned to face the man that insulted his men. He wanted to do nothing more than to slap his face and storm in but the stakes here were great. If something happened the Long Clan could seek revenge. Thus without much hesitation, he decided to go along with this clan head but he could not make himself and the sect look weak. If this Clan Head pushed things too far, then he wasn’t sure what he would do...

[Chapter 657](#)

“Hm... should I take a break? I have made some progress but it’s not going as fast as I had hoped for.”

Zhang Dong looked at his palm where a tiny little dot of dark brownish energy was bouncing around. This little dot contained the combined energies of fire, wind, and lightning. He was able to combine these three elements without them rejecting themselves but there was something missing. The dark color of this combination made him worry as he expected it to go in the opposite direction.

“But maybe I’m going in the right direction? Would the element of origin be pure black or pure white?”

If he identified the elements as colors then putting them all together would produce a darkened color from all the combined saturation. However, what he was trying to find out was a combined energy that all of these elements had in common. If he looked at it from that angle the color should have been getting brighter.

“It should be like an empty canvas that is easy to draw on and not a black patch that needs to be sieved through.”

This made sense to him as otherwise, the practitioner would have to siphon their element from this dark energy while also blocking out all the other ones. How would they do this without generating all of the other elements in the first place? It made more sense for the point of origin to be simpler than harder. Probably after finding this original element, he would be able to fashion it into all of them at once instead.

“This doesn’t mean that it was all for nothing, finding out what all of these elements have in common and how they fuse with each other should give me some insight.”

If he imagined all the basic elements like fire and water to be a part of a chain, then what he was looking for was the big one in the middle that all these elements were connected to. By bonding them with each other he was coming closer to understanding their base which he was looking for.

“Would be easier if I absorbed the water and wood element...”

His progress was slowly ramping up but there were many questions that he needed to answer. First of all his elemental Dao was also limited, at the moment he knew two of the basic elements which were fire and wind. Water was close to him but he hadn’t truly mastered this part yet.

Then there were more advanced elements like holy, darkness, and lightning that didn’t necessarily connect to the base four. However, if there existed an origin energy that connected all of them, there was a possibility to use them for his research. His only hope was that he would be undisturbed in his secluded cultivation for at least a bit more until he got all the bugs sorted out.

“Bob, run a few more simulations for this and try finding something that binds these three elements.”

“Affirmative.”

Luckily for him, he was not alone in this endeavor. With the help of Bob’s computing power, he was able to run various simulations without having to do it himself. His Ai was integrated into his very being, his soul that had become massive. With all this computing power he would be able to shave off hundreds of years of bumbling around on his own. It would make up for the loss in longevity that was being blocked by the world’s rules. Otherwise, if he was able to reach the age of ten thousand, then it might have been possible to do it the long way.

“Should I take a break and check up on the kids?”

The spot that he decided to cultivate in was the dimensional regalia. He had hopes in the immortal treasure to shield him from the overseer. This meant that he could freely leave this place and get back to the sect. Sometimes he would take walks through the city to get his mind off things. When in a disguise he could listen in to some rumors going through the world without them being filtered by others.

People tended to hide their true selves whenever a person of power was next to them. He was the Patriarch of a great sect, the whole city would come to a halt if they spotted him taking a walk. His status was that of a King or an Emperor. Considering that the regions were so huge, he owned more land than the planet from which he originated.

“They seem to be doing fine at least, probably better not to interrupt their training...”

Instead of going out to see them, he decided to just take a peek through one of the monitor screens. His children were growing fast and his son was approaching the age of seven. His daughter that was around ten was also becoming an even bigger troublemaker. At this very moment, she was terrorizing the teenage disciples in a training facility. Her strength was above any child of her age and it was clear to everyone that she was a prodigy.

It brought a small smirk onto his face to see his own flesh and blood jumping around the stage. The others weren't even holding back as she was just too skillful to be caught by any attacks. Her fighting style was very similar to her mother's but it also integrated some of his own skills. She was trained by one of his own disciples that were trained in the Dao of Lightning. It seemed that she would combine this with wind energies that she also had a good affinity for.

His son on the other hand was good at fire energy just like Huo Qiang and also lightning. It was a strange combination as he didn't really have that fiery attitude that practitioners of the Dao of fire usually had. After going through some of his training sessions he could see that he was prone to overworking himself. It was as if he loved seeing himself progress to the new stage, it brought him joy to win little battles, even if he didn't show it on the outside.

“Everyone seems to be doing fine... Hm... That's odd, where did that old fart go, wasn't he supposed to be performing the grand elder duties?”

While glancing through the many screens he noticed that one of his family members was missing. Zhang Jin, who was supposed to act as a decision-maker, wasn't there. Liena, just like him, was doing some closed-door training. Even though his grandfather wasn't the strongest out there he usually was able to make the right decision. He had one fault though, whenever a new pretty face appeared from somewhere his IQ would plummet.

“Did some new beauty appear somewhere in the empire? I told him not to use the sect teleportation gates for things like those.”

Zhang Dong quickly started going through the various screens before him. Thanks to the system that he implemented in the sect he could know everything that the people in his factions did. Things had to be logged and it was very easy for him to identify teleportation gate usage.

“He used the golden cruiser and jumped through the main gate, this is odd...”

He knew that his grandfather was a hornball but he wouldn't go through the official gate to seek out a new lover. This had to be some kind of official mission that he decided to carry out. There weren't many things that could force him out of the city.

“He traveled to the outermost gate...”

After checking where Zhang Jin teleported to he started getting a bad feeling about it. The gate he used was the closest to the central region. Their sect was steadily expanding its influence but building all those large structures came at a big cost. It was possible to use the old gates that other sects built but some of them weren't up to their standards. Most weren't large enough to let ships sail through them and were not power efficient in the slightest. The ones that his sect was using were much safer and also allowed him to track everything through his faction system.

“He probably had a good reason for not informing me about it ... but not like I have to.”

“Hey Bob, bring up the mission records, they should be somewhere inside of the database.”

Zhang Dong liked to keep a watch over all of the dealings inside his sect. This also meant that he set up everything so that he could take a peek at everything if he wanted to. Bob was integrated into the system and could be used as a search tool. All of the mission data would be infused into the system and kept for storage, similar to a big library just without any books. Instead, they used items similar to communication jades that were able to use storage that cultivators could use.

“Lesser angle units were destroyed?”

He quickly looked through his autonomous army logs to confirm the mission claim. It wasn't unusual for some of the core formation-level puppets to be destroyed. They were not invincible and he also didn't want to scare the populace by having the stronger ones flying around everywhere.

Peace gained through an iron fist was not something he was aiming for. They were mostly there to be helpful and diffuse the situation, not murder anyone in sight who performed a crime. After confirming that the two units were destroyed in the battle and their location he concluded what his grandfather was aiming for.

“Well, it wasn't a bad decision if the Long Clan is involv...!?”

“ALERT! ALERT! The health of a family member is critically low. Activating safety measures.”

“Huh?”

At first, he wanted to praise his grandfather for not involving him in a bothersome trip like this. Before he could close the window a red one appeared before his face. There was an alert option in his system window that could notify him if certain terms were met. This one for instance would instantly trigger if one of his family members was low on health.

“It's gramps? What is happening there?”

Without thinking much about it he pointed his finger at the red screen before him. He was sure to rig it like this so that he could teleport to the injured family member that was under attack. With one click his

body started glowing blue before vanishing within one second he was brought to where Zhang Jin had gone to.

When he appeared on the other side it was hard to not see the glowing pillar of lightning surrounding his grandfather. His body was bruised and he was out cold. The safety measure of his system had been activated to create this effect and push everyone in the vicinity to the sides. His eyes started darting around to find the perpetrator of this act. There was a lot that he could stomach but hurting his family was not one of them.

[Chapter 658](#)

“There was a hidden master among them, quickly before he can act!”

“You won’t even give me time to ask a question? Very well...”

Zhang Dong was somewhat shocked at the scene that was playing out before him. Zhang Jin was encased in golden lightning. Through the system, he could place defensive seals on people from his faction. These hidden seals could be given various attributes depending on his capabilities. It was a standard one that every one of his family members was equipped with. After sustaining enough damage it would trigger a pillar of holy lightning that would act as a shield and also recover their health back to full.

After he popped out of the teleport he was greeted by quite the scene. His grandfather was inside this column of lightning with many unknown cultivators around it. They were throwing various techniques toward it and clearly trying to deliver the finishing blow. Perhaps they had noticed that the energy was healing their target and wanted to deliver the final blow before it could finish.

Thanks to his cultivation level he could see everything very clearly. The people coming his way were moving in slow motion and trying to strike him before he got his bearings. It was a known fact that after a teleportation technique was used the user was usually disoriented for a moment. It was a great chance to land an attack before the fight even started and this was probably what they were aiming for.

‘Two early stage nascent soul masters? They are taking me lightly...’

A sword clad in spiritual energy flew at his head. It was aimed right between his eyes with the intent to kill. Then to make things worse the other man came in from behind and aimed for his blindspot. They were doing a standard combination attack, when he dodged the sword from the front the spear from behind would get him.

He wasn’t sure who these people were but they had angered the wrong person. To him, these two people were like mosquitos, not even worth moving. Without reacting at all he let the sword fly forward to connect with a thin veil of electrical energy. The moment the weapon touched the energy it absorbed a massive charge of lightning Qi onto the person that was holding the weapon.

The man’s whole body started convulsing before getting shot back in the direction he came from. It was the same for the spear user that flew forward like a madman into his blind spot. The aim was for the backside of his heart but the only thing he received was a gigaton of voltage. Both men were repelled by a simple Qi shield that he generated without moving. There was no real reason for him to move as none of the people here were qualified to be his opponents.

“You dare attack me, do you know who I am?”

Zhang Dong wanted to let his aura explode to show off his power but he decided against it for now. If he overpowered everyone instantly then he wouldn't know what these people here were truly thinking. Force was still the number one way of clearing out problems in this world and it seemed that these people were still content with their capabilities.

“White hair and a golden aura, you are the fake from the West, or probably someone masquerading as him.”

“Fake from the West?”

While the two nascent masters were propelled into some walls his attention was pulled towards the direction of a voice. He could sense that this person was quite strong for this world's standards. He was a great circle nascent soul master and next to him was someone at the later stage as well.

“Did you think you could take over what belongs to the Long Clan and get away with it? Until the Emperor accepts your claim you hold no power here.”

“Hoh? So this is what this is all about? You deny the claim of the United Element Sect to the western region even after all that has happened?”

“You dare speak in such a tone? Grandfather, let me take care of this pretender!”

“It would be wise if you don't proceed with whatever you think you are doing, this will only end badly for you...”

“Empty threats! You might have bested those elders but I'm not like them.”

‘Hm, so he intends his grandson to fight it out? Is he one of those types?’

As the conversation continued it seemed that a fight was imminent. He was not sure what Zhang Jin had told them but if his grandfather wasn't able to convince them with words, then he probably wouldn't either. When looking around he could also feel the presence of some United Element Sect's members. They were covered in wounds and some of them had even lost their lives. It was clear that Zhang Jin had misjudged this mission's parameters.

His next enemy was a late-stage nascent soul master. He was a lot stronger than the ones he encountered in the middle regions but he didn't really pose a threat either. What he was more interested in was the man sitting in the large chair in the back. Ever since he arrived his gaze remained planted on his form. It was clear that he realized the threat to some degree.

Sending the stronger fighter after him was probably a means of measuring his threat level. His robe was also different, it belonged to the Long Clan while the others were part of something else, a branch family perhaps. This was probably why they were so haughty, with the backing of the Azure Emperor they expected total submission.

‘They lived hundreds of years without anyone being able to call them out on their bullshit... I guess I'll have to wake them up from their dream.’

Before more people died he needed to end it. After the short conversation, he got the answer to his question so there was no reason for the act. His power exploded and the man that was charging at him found a fist right next to his jaw. Before he could even react his face was caved in and his body flew to the side. The explosion of speed didn't finish there as he rocketed directly to the man sitting on the large chair.

Just like he expected, there was a purpose in sitting at that location. The area they found themselves in had a large formation inside of it. The moment he tried approaching this sitting elder its defenses had been triggered. This was perhaps the reason why the man was this confident and the smile on his face confirmed his hypothesis.

"Hah, so predictable."

"Predictable you say?"

"What do you hope to achieve with this?"

"You are a blemish that needs to be taken care of."

"It really worked, he took the bait."

"His power is tremendous but he won't be able to free himself!"

"Haha, I knew this was a grand opportunity."

The moment he was entrapped in this formation more people started coming out of the woodwork. All of them were wearing robes from the Long Clan and consisted of four other masters at the nascent soul level. Zhang Dong had already been aware of their presence and decided to give them a chance to show themselves. If he just devastated this one old man that was before him, the others would just flee or imply that they had been blackmailed.

'This does complicate things...'

While they gloated he was trying to figure out a way to avoid more conflict. While he was mad about what happened to his people and his grandfather there was a bigger issue here. Multiple members of the Long Clan had raised their weapons at his head. This was more or less a declaration of war. Even if he didn't want to go that far the people from his sect would see it otherwise.

These people had planned to lure their leader into a trapping formation after attacking Zhang Jin. There was a motif and there was also no idea how many people were all behind it. Some would claim that they were acting on their own, and others would say that it was a scheme to kill the competitor for the seat on the top.

The Azure Emperor didn't show himself though neither were any of his kids involved either. On the surface, it seemed that this was a scheme created by one of these elders that showed themselves. One of them he even knew as he was part of those three supreme elders that he interacted with.

"Long Yingjie of the Grand Elders, I didn't expect you to be part of this."

"I'm just performing my duties, this is all for the Long Clan."

"I'm sure that it is..."

Long Yingjie was the oldest of the three elders that he met a few years ago. It was clear that he didn't want the status quo to be affected by the powers in the West shifting. While the United Element's power base grew, the one established by the Long Clan was decreasing. Their decision to not get themselves involved backfired greatly. They seemed weak in the face of danger while their competition looked very competent.

"Let me ask you, did Long Qing order this, does he even know what you are attempting to do?"

"How brazen, you dare call the Azure Emperor by his name? Elder Yingjie, we should take care of this now, we must not let him get a second chance!"

"I... agree."

Before he was given an answer the group of nascent elders surrounded him from all sides. The trapping formation looked like a prison made from blue shackles. The moment this small group started acting the formation started getting smaller until he was stuck in a rectangle of one meter in width and two meters in height. He continued to resist while trying to fish for more answers but it didn't seem that they would say anything else.

"I see, so that's about it... You felt your clan to be endangered by my presence so you either orchestrated this encounter or just grasped at it when the occasion presented itself. You probably knew that I would rush to save my grandfather."

"You're wise for your age and would have been a powerful member of the clan if you accepted our invitation, such a shame."

"Yes it is a shame... that I have to do this."

While the elders were assured of their victory something unexpected happened. The trapping formation burst into many tiny flames as if it was never there, to begin with. There was no massive torrent of Qi needed to free himself as things like this were already below his level.

"Okay then, we can do this the easy way or the hard way, I don't really care but in the end all of you will come with me..."

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"How is he doing this? Does he know the secrets of the Azure Shackle formation?"

"H-he is breaking out, we must stop him, concentrate before he is free, we can't let him escape!"

The group of elders stretched their hands out along with a few supportive core formation experts on the side. They all infused their spiritual energy into the trap that they prepared for their greatest enemy. This was a once-in-a-lifetime chance of taking care of their biggest problem. Without the Golden Dragon around their dynasty could not be questioned and the status quo would remain.

To protect the longevity of their clan they were ready to kill anyone that got in their way but today they would have a rude awakening. Even though they strained with all of their might the shackles keeping

their enemy at bay started dissolving. It was as if he knew the weakness of this formation that had been specifically created to suppress powerful cultivators.

“Just give up, this won’t work on me, surrender and I will promise not to kill you.”

“You want us to give up, preposterous!”

One of the elders called their soul beast to his aid. It looked like a massive bear made of some sort of earth-aligned Qi. It tossed itself at Zhang Dong that was just standing there with his arms crossed over one another. All the other elders did the same, massive legendary animals started popping up everywhere made out of different elemental energies. They all quickly tossed themselves at the white-haired man who didn’t seem to be perturbed by the gesture.

“I guess I’ll have to be more convincing, such things won’t work on me...”

Without even moving or raising his arms he produced a spike of spiritual energy before him. It was a wide-area attack that targeted everything in the vicinity. Right when it collided with a large number of soul beasts, all of them were instantly eradicated. This of course caused a backlash to the owners that started coughing up blood in mid-air.

“W-what’s with this power... is he really the Emperor’s equal?”

Long Yingjie, who didn’t call up his soul beast for help, was stunned. He was preparing his own contingency but after seeing how much power Zhang Dong could wield it became clear. There was no way this group that he procured to win against this man, there were just not enough elders gathered here for a powerful combination attack. Without the trapping formation, they couldn’t suppress Zhang Dong enough for a critical blow to land.

“The Emperor’s equal? I’m not sure if he is my equal.”

“That’s absurd how could someone so young eclipse the Azure Emperor, this doesn’t make any sense... h-he must have used some trick...”

“It’s no trick, he is truly powerful too powerful, he must not confront the Emperor.”

“Grand Elder?”

Long Yingjie gave out a sigh while lowering his hands. Zhang Dong looked at the man as if he expected him to surrender. The old man had realized that opposing him was worthless, anything they threw at him would not work.

“I see that you realized it.”

“It is as you say, we can not oppose you, the rumors were not exaggerated. To think that someone so young could be this powerful...”

To these people, it was an unfathomable amount of power resting in the fingers of such a youth. Zhang Dong was in his early forties now, this was usually the moment when people just entered the core formation stage. He on the other hand had already reached the pinnacle of power and could potentially eclipse all the experts that came before him, including the Azure Emperor.

“What are you saying Grand Elder, this was your idea! Do you want us to surrender to the pretender?”

He remained standing in his spot while sometimes glancing at Zhang Jin. His body had managed to get healed by the holy pillar of light. The defensive measure was now quickly weakening so he wanted to get this over with. If it continued for too long then he might have to retreat. It was possible for these people to use the surviving members of his sect as shields before trying to escape.

“If you understand then surrender.”

“We will not surrender to the likes of you! Isn’t that right Grand Elder Long Yingjie?”

The nascent soul masters looked to their leader for support. Probably if the man told them to give up they would listen to them. If he could get this over without any more bloodshed then it was fine. They were inside a large city with millions of people around them. If multiple nascent soul masters started blasting away and causing a ruckus thousands of them could die.

Even though this was not his city, they were not part of this entrapment. He was aware that everyone feared the Long Clan, it was ingrained into their very souls. This dynasty had lasted for hundreds of thousands of years and no one had any reason to believe that it would end now.

The people that were here would be tried and stripped of their cultivation base. They had killed members of his sect and needed to be held responsible for it. Even if this would create friction with the Long Clan, they were the ones to start it.

“Surrender? No, we will not surrender...”

“Huh? I thought you’d be the reasonable one, save yourself some face in front of your juniors and come quietly, I’ll even promise to leave them be.”

“That is truly a magnanimous offer but I will have to refuse. You are too dangerous to be left alive and for this reason... I must apologize to all of you, my brothers and sisters...”

“What are you?”

“You don’t mean? Please Grand Elder reconsider!”

“This is for the dynasty, it must survive and this man can not leave here alive, please understand.”

Zhang Dong, who was just standing there like a pillar, was confused about the conversation. It was as if they had some sort of trump card but he didn’t notice anything powerful enough to take him out. However, in his attempt to reduce bloodshed, he had miscalculated just how crazy about their prestige these people were. When he realized what the Grand Elder here was planning, it was already too late.

“You... Do you intend to take the city with you?”

“The Long Clan must survive! Let it be known, Long Dong had conspired with the Demonic beings in an attempt to usurp the throne, in a fit of rage he decided to destroy this city with all its inhabitants!”

Long Yingjie shouted out while pointing at the ground. It was as if he was sending a message about how to resolve this issue when people started asking questions. Even if Zhang Dong survived he would be branded as a demonic cultivator that destroyed a whole city by himself. It was a clear attempt of

swaying public opinion against his newly created image. Some would believe it, others would not but as long as some doubt existed the Long Clan would be able to retain their prestige.

“You madman, stop!”

Even though his cultivation base roared he was a second too late. The cascading effect that had been triggered by Long Yingjie could not be stopped. Strange letters started appearing under them which triggered a reaction in all directions. The grand formation that was used to protect the city from harm was given an order, one of self-destruction.

In the distance, citizens of the city gazed at a large blue pillar of light shooting up into the sky. Tiny particles of light started gathering everywhere as this energy wave pushed itself in all directions. Before they could even muster a scream they were all engulfed by this massive explosion of spiritual energy. Everything turned to white and soon their consciousness faded as they were all burned to ashes.

The earth rumbled and the heavens trembled. The energy pillar reached the skies and parted the clouds. Hurricane-level winds descended on the entirety of this place while people tried to flee. Even the ones that were outside the city were scorched by the massive amounts of charred air and energy. The lucky ones that found themselves on flying vessels could only quickly evacuate while looking at the event with horror in their eyes.

‘These maniacs really did it...’

Zhang Dong found himself in the middle of the torrent of energy. In his hands was Zhang Jin and to the sides were four surviving members from the party that arrived at this location. All of them were shielded by his energies and remained uninjured.

‘He had to know that this wouldn’t kill me... this was all just to give them an excuse...’

As the light subsided he saw nothing more than rubble remaining. The nascent soul elders that were just floating in the air had turned into bones with most of their skeletons missing. Even their nascent divinities had been damaged and erased in the blast. However this was not what he was concerned with as his gaze peeked further.

The Azure Basin City was no more and all of those pools filled with water were nothing more than steam. He could not feel anything, the only people that were alive were the six remaining here. Zhang Dong could not understand how a person could do such a thing. Long Yingjie was offered mercy but he chose strife instead. With this event being skewed by the Long Clan this would mean war.

‘If this is how the Long Clan handles things... then perhaps it’s better if they stop existing...’

In the distance, he could see nothing more than dust-filled streets where millions of people once lived. The buildings had been blown to nothingness and not even the bodies of the citizens remained. A rage was building up in his gut and he didn’t know who to aim it at.

The whole city had been rigged to explode from the start. There must have been such a function inside of this protective formation. Without it, Long Yingjie would not have been able to activate it as fast. This meant that any of the other large cities in the Central Empire were potential nukes just waiting to explode.

'I can't let this go on but I'm not really ready to face that woman yet...'

With his grandfather in hand, he raised himself up into the air. In the distance, he could see a tingling of light. It was a reflection coming from the golden cruiser that Zhang Jin arrived in. The ship was fast enough to escape from the predicament after he quickly informed them to fly away. Now what remained was to ask his grandfather some questions as his brows were starting to tingle.

'I need to get some answers and then make a decision...'

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"So that's what happened?"

"Yes, I made a grave error..."

"It's not your fault gramps, who could have expected the Long Clan to plot something like this."

"I should have known that something was fishy after they delayed me so much."

"They sure did their homework to keep you there... when will you grow up?"

"Hoho, can't blame an old man for having some fun!"

"Sure I can!"

Zhang Jin gave out a sigh as he explained what had transpired after his arrival at Azure Basin City. After reaching the large castle he was escorted into a fine room and given some entertainment. This consisted of a group of beautiful women tending to all of his needs. It was obvious that while he was having fun people were working in the background to set up a trap for Zhang Dong.

'Did they expect me to teleport there by myself? I guess my movements have become a bit obvious...'

It was possible that they took a shot in the dark. He was known for appearing out of the blue whenever his family members were involved. With strange powerful treasures existing everywhere, it was very probable for Zhang Jin of having some type of beacon to tell him his location. If he didn't arrive alone they would have probably switched to a different ploy to get their way. Blowing up the city might have been that and would certainly take out almost everyone from his sect.

"Nevermind that, we need to get to the bottom of this."

"Yes, what are those Long Clan bastards planning? If they decided to go this far, they might already have an army ready for deployment."

"That could be true but I'm not sure if my 'older brother' had anything to do with it. The way that Grand Elder spoke about it, it seemed as if he was doing it on his own accord."

"Could it be another faction within the Long Clan?"

"That's a possibility and with this, we might have given them an excuse to hook in all the other factions from their clan."

The Long Clan was as large as any sect and also had many branches all around the central region. In name, they were one entity ruled over by their Azure Emperor but in reality, they were divided just as

any other large organization. It was the same with the United Element Sect who started out with three separate factions like the Zhang, Huo, and Feng Clans.

This event could give the faction that faked the events a reason to dirty his name. Long Yingjie during his last moments implied that Zhang Dong was part of a demonic sect. Orthodox cultivators that were on the surface just could use that as an excuse to attack. It wouldn't be strange if they went even further than that and tried to pin all the atrocities that happened during this war on him.

"Yes... I'm sorry Dong'er this is all my fault, I knew that I was dealing with the Long Clan."

"It's fine, you couldn't have known that they would go to such an extreme after such a long period of silence."

He couldn't really blame his grandfather for all of this. There were many ways for the Long Clan to find a justifiable cause for a counter-attack. It was known that Zhang Dong and his sect had already cleared out the northern demonic island. They were in the process of turning that place into something new and that was enough cause. The Long Clan didn't necessarily need to get the people on their side but it would look better on their record. If they managed to win the new war then this would probably become the truth.

"We need to inform everyone, send an order to move closer to our teleportation gates."

"Yes, Patriarch."

At the moment both Zhang Jin and Zhang Dong were flying through the air in the golden cruiser. With his help, he was able to move it faster and they would arrive at the nearest gate to get back to the sect soon. Everyone needed to get informed about the new ploy, it was possible for a push from the Long Clan to occur at any moment. While it was not probable there could have been a force created to attack the cities bordering the central regions already. It was best to have his sect members retreat as they didn't really have any high value besides the spirit points they generated.

'So they intend to push into a new scenario where the ally becomes the new enemy...'

Zhang Dong expected something like this to happen after the war between Empires ended prematurely. He had control of all the bridges and no one could enter these lands anymore. He hoped that by not clearing out Argu and his people he would be granted at least a hundred years of peace. It was like saving one boss for later without having the plot advance further.

'Not everything is lost though, the Long Clan is more of a defensive superpower, they might be unable to muster up the forces to push into our lands.'

From what he knew, the Long Clan had quite a stronghold in the middle of the empire. The playing city he visited had a defensive formation that even he wouldn't be able to break through. Attacking them would not be easy and they had several strongholds down on the ground to make things a lot more difficult. Yet unless they decided to move that flying city out of the region they were entrenched in, he couldn't see them posing that much of a threat. While their relations had perhaps been soured by this event, it might not lead to an all-out war just yet.

Thus along with Zhang Jin he finally reached the closest teleporter and got everyone home. When arriving back at the sect he showed off the recording of Long Yingjie's last words that he made sure to

save as evidence. While the Long Clan would deny those claims it didn't really matter. They just needed to push their own narrative to get people to believe in their cause. If they didn't defend themselves against the claims then their morale would plummet.

...

"The Golden Dragon is a fake and a demonic cultivator, this all makes sense, why would such atrocities suddenly befall our peaceful empire, we must stand with the Azure Emperor and defeat this villain!"

"What nonsense, the Azure Emperor is a coward. He remained in his little castle build on everyone's labor and left everyone to die! The only reason my sister is alive is thanks to the Golden Dragon, he should be the Emperor... no he is the real Emperor of this Empire!"

"How dare you!"

"I dare!"

A fight between cultivators erupted in a restaurant. Scenes like this played out throughout the whole empire after the news was dropped. People were on the fence and didn't know who to believe in. On one side was the old Azure dynasty that survived through hundreds and thousands of years. They were the one firm pillar that allowed this Empire to survive to this day.

On the other was the United Element sect and the Emperor of the West. When people needed someone to save them, he arrived. Some saw him as the dawn of change and the new rightful owner who actually cherished their wellbeing. They denied all rumors about the demi-human attack being orchestrated by the United Elements sect. To a lot, this new upstart sect had been a beacon of light in the darkness of night.

Quickly factions were being created and sides were being joined. Back at a large auditorium a group of elders along with their leader Zhang Dong were analyzing all the data they received in the past month.

"This is surprising."

"Is it my husband?"

"Yes, I expected a lot more people to take the Azure Emperor's side than this."

Zhang Liena smiled while watching the large map on the interactive screen. There as always, puddles of red were used as mapping points. Most of the Western region was covered in green and blue coloring to represent people that were on their side. Green with their support being massive and then switching to blue to areas that were more on the neutral side.

"Everyone knows that our Patriarch is magnanimous, no one with an inkling of intelligence would believe in that nonsense the Long Clan is pushing!"

"That's right, the people aren't dumb, they know that we are not with the demonic sects."

Zhang Dong nodded while looking at the patch of red in the middle of the Empire. The concentration was quite high there. People were moving to their border cities in hopes of being on the winning side. To a lot the old Dynasty was a dragon that could never be beaten. Even if they disliked the way they acted, there was no way of competing with the strongest.

When it came to the Eastern region where the Heavenly Crane Sect resided things were a lot more colorful. There were dots and regions of orange, red, and magenta. Others were lime green, blue, and sapphire. It was clear that they were divided in an almost identical way and would probably stay away from the battle between the two.

Zhang Dong had no plans of getting the East regions involved and hoped that they would remain neutral for the entirety of this fight. The people that he had aided in the fight against the Emerald Phoenix Emperor were still grateful and delivered some aid in the form of cultivation resources. All of those were delivered through hidden means so that the Long Clan wouldn't be aware of it.

"Has there been any movement from the Long Clan?"

"They have occupied the borders and destroyed many of the automatons that attempted to move in closer. We have managed to assemble a perimeter and transferred some of our manpower to counter any potential assaults."

"Hm..."

He nodded while looking at the map. There was no immediate attack coming after the predicament at Azure Basin City. Everything had been somewhat anti-climatic and they had enough time to set up a defensive parameter on the borders. Even though the Long Clan forces had gathered together, they weren't really attacking, just staying in their own region as if they were not allowed to leave it.

'Could this be some type of limiting factor in their setting or are they planning something?'

There was no way of knowing but a decision had to be made. Was it better to just get this over with and move in or give his enemy time to strategize? There was a lot of things about the Long Clan that he didn't know and perhaps twiddling his thumbs while they got ready for an offensive was not the best...