

Unfathomable 71

Chapter 71

"It's you!"

Fei exclaimed in a surprised voice.

"It's me, long time no see?"

Matt replied in a somewhat more relaxed tone.

"We should probably stop meeting like this..."

He scratched his cheek a bit while looking at the smaller female in front of him, he could see the woman's facial expressions cycle through a couple of times. She didn't know how to react in this situation as she did not expect to see this man again. Matt wasn't quite sure what he should say either, his experience with women had gone up lately but not by much. He decided to speak up first, trying to use a neutral tone.

"Well, why don't we leave first, we can talk on the way..."

He pointed to the exit and beckoned the voluptuous female over, he could bring one person onto his flying sword without having any drawbacks.

"Senior Dong... or is it Yinglo?"

Matt turned his head to the side trying not to laugh as his great naming sense came into the limelight.

"Dong is fine you can drop the honorifics..., the other one is just a pseudonym, it wouldn't look too good if the Zhang Clan Patriarch was bumbling about the place. We have enough trouble as it is with that dark palm sect business..."

Matt started talking, kind of blurring the dark palm sect thing out in the open but not like it was that much of a secret. This made the woman perk up as she started asking questions.

"Dark palm sect? Trouble?"

Fei asked a bit curious about the clan situation, from her point of view the clan was on the rise with the new strong Patriarch at its help.

"Ah yes...about that..."

He scratched the back of his neck while pulling up his sword. Pointing to the large thing as he invited the female cultivator onto it. He took the rear position, he was a head taller than the woman so he could see quite well.

"You don't need to be afraid, you won't fall down."

He brought his aura around the female's frame, he kind of naturally moved his hands behind his back as he stood on the sword. Lan Fei intuitively backed up into the man, grasping the hem of his robe even though the flying technique didn't allow any gravity or wind pressure to affect her. His new mind technique really kept his perky tendencies at bay, as he didn't stare all that much but he still got quite

excited due to the woman's close proximity. So he resumed where the two left off so that he could focus on something else.

"Yes, I'm sure you know of that expedition the Dark Palm sect ordered some time ago."

Lan Fei replied with a yes, due to the flying technique the two could hold a conversation even though they were flying above the speed of sound. The woman looked down at the passing by landscape a bit jealous of the core formation experts that could do this so easily.

"Well, those guys came right back and ordered the clans to do it again, ours included... I also have to participate"

Matt said while his voice became quieter in the end.

"Is that so Brother Dong..."

Lan Fei contemplated while Matt sweatdropped at the fact that the female was calling him brother now, guess he told her to drop the honorifics but he didn't realize that it would just switch senior to brother in her mind. This time Fei started talking speaking out in a shy sounding voice.

"I have to apologize for the way I behaved back in Moonlight city..."

It was kind of a strange situation, the woman slept with him but then run away, the whole lead up to the act was mind-boggling.

"Ah, it's fine... it was a strange night, guess I lost myself to your charms, ha ha..."

The two started awkwardly laughing, the woman might have been a lot more experienced but people in this world conducted themselves differently. Relationships like on earth didn't really happen as people were more materialistic, families traded each other's children just to have better relations.

"Well, I guess this will be a good learning experience for both of us."

The two started chatting during the flight, the woman blushed after thinking things through at the way she acted just going for broke at seducing the man the moment she got the chance. Matt did the same, thinking back to the way he acted like a teenager and allowed himself to get seduced even though he should have been the more mature one. It took him a mind skill to be able to relax and not be stressed out around women, this was kind of cheating but it let him see things more clearly.

"Brother Dong, you have to understand, times are tough ..."

After a while, Lan Fei started unloading onto Matt telling about her troubled times and her thought process. He just started nodding and replying with 'Is that so?', 'Aha' and 'Your right' kind of getting lost while the lady chattered on. He also checked out the girl's stats while he was at it.

Name : Lan Fei

Age : 24

Cultivation : Qi Condensation 12th level

Potential : B-

Trust : 40%

Alignment : Chaotic Good

40% I'm not sure if that's high or not...guess she trusts me more than the average person?

While he was thinking the trust level shifted to 41% on the fly, guess the more they spend time together the more it increases. Her potential was quite high as well, probably if she had some sort of good cultivation technique she could be in foundation establishment at this point. Or, it was due to her traveling too much and not focusing on cultivating.

He could see her cultivation techniques, they revolved around the wind element but she didn't have many fighting techniques to speak of. He could actually get into more detail with his upgraded analyzing skill, he had dropped in more points just for this.

Name : Lan Fei

Potential : B-

Elemental Affinities : Wind B+, Fire C, Earth E,

Weapon Affinities : Whip A-, Sword C-, Spear D+, daggers D-

He raised a brow at the weapon affinity, the one with the A- made him imagine Fei in a black latex suit, whipping people around while laughing.

Oh, boy... I think I made a 'perfect common grade' whip while doing tests...

The woman continued talking while Zhang Dong thought about some things he could give here before he left.

"And that's when I smacked him in the face and run away from home. Do you believe the audacity of my dad, trying to wed me to that ugly toad of a man, well he had the money... but that face... nothing like you Brother Dong."

She looked up smiling, as she went back to those alluring gestures the man just gave a forced smile, he didn't know one person would be able to talk non stop for this amount of time. From what he gathered, the female was very foolhardy, running away from home and forcefully starting her own caravan business. Her father wasn't all that rich so he couldn't really provide great security, it was a miracle that this woman didn't get sold off to some slave traders a long time ago. Guess her luck ran out recently, or perhaps it was his trouble attracting aura that caused all of this.

"W-well...uh... I think I better change we will be arriving in your town soon..."

He started shifting his appearance back to his pseudonym, his hair getting shorter and face getting more scars. The woman looked at the change in appearance, astonished by the whole process yet again.

"I know what you might be thinking... but yes the previous appearance is the way I really look, I'm just thirty years old..."

The woman just smiled while nodding, this answered one of her questions as she was afraid that this big bro might be a big gramps on the inside just changing his appearance to suit his needs.

The two arrived in the snow city, everyone at the merchant building was surprised to see the rough-looking cultivator back so soon and their young miss was with him. Just as Lan Fei stepped down from the flying sword you could hear something in the distance coming at her. Matt could see a round blur just on a collision course with his female companion. This was, of course, the big round daddy, eyes all red and snot coming out of his nose. He was quickly kicked in the face by his daughter and fell to the side right into a stand with some fish.

“Waaa... how can you do this to your father little Fei, I was so worried... Sob sob...”

Matt looked at the comedic routine as the dotting father tried hugging his child with fish all over him, the girl in question just kicking and punching him away with disgust on her face.

“Stop it dad, you’re all stinky...”

The man ended up hugging one of his daughter’s ankles while she tried pushing him back with her other leg. While the two were busy he started pulling out all the other girl, they soon appeared outside hugging each other as they realized that they were back in their town. More townspeople gathered, slowly rejoicing as they got reunited with their mothers and daughters.

Everyone cheered as they thanked the scared up cultivator that proclaimed that he slew the evil Ravager and all was well. It had been about three weeks since he left the Zhang Clan, it was time to return. He just needed to drop the dead body of the evil cultivator and pick up the spirit stones he was owed. His alter ego’s name was slowly getting known around these areas as he had slain that cultist monster and now defeated a powerful demonic cultivator.

Before heading out though, he handed Fei a spiky whip weapon along with a tome he got cheap from the store telling her that she should probably practice with this as she had potential in it.

“You should probably get your cultivation up and grow stronger, these are troubling times.”

The woman nodded looking at the whip, she had never trained with a weapon like this. She didn’t know how the senior measured her potential for this, but he was a powerful cultivator she should probably give it a try. She also received a wind cultivation method for the foundation establishment level, he had gotten it from one of the rings the cultivators had. It didn’t take many points to upgrade it to a suitable level that she could use it. He still felt kind of bad for the girl for getting in so many weird situations, he would feel more at ease knowing that she got stronger.

The woman looked at the gifts with astonishment, as she read through the manuscript she could tell that this was quite the refined technique.

“Br... Senior Yinglo, this is a bit much... I don’t deserve this.”

Her hands shook a bit as she tried giving the items back, as she fought against her materialistic nature, these were some costly things and to be honest she wanted to take them.

“Ah, no need, think of it as a present from a friend to another... hope you will do well in the future, no more getting captured.”

The man laughed a bit as he hopped onto his sword ready to leave.

“W-wait, will we ever meet again?”

The woman asked while hugging the items she received to her body.

“Well, it wouldn’t be safe around me but I guess you know where to find me...”

He flew away, he thought that this was probably not the best time for a relationship he had other things to focus on. He also didn’t know if he could trust this woman, though she wasn’t a bad person she just had a tendency for chatting and shiny things. He noticed her eyes glistening the moment he brought out the gifts, the way she was trying to resist the temptation was kind of cute though. Maybe if destiny allowed it they could meet in the future but first, he had to survive what the Dark Palm sect had in store for him.

I will probably be taking a longer break, have been releasing a lot for the past two months without stopping. But due to this, the quality suffers plus I don’t have time for other things... anyway thanks for sticking around for so long. (・д・)

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After bidding the lady goodbye he headed to where he could pick up his reward, strangely enough, it was the same place that he got the spirit stones for the dragon. It would take some time till he got there though, he had to backtrack all the way there. It was close to the place he faced off against the dragon at the start of his journey. He wondered if the people would try to rob him again when he left the city, as he was ‘wearing’ a new face again. Though his new pseudonym was gaining recognition due to defeating two evil creatures.

*Took me over three weeks to get this done, guess I’m on track. *

He looked at some other wanted notices, this made him feel like a bounty hunter. He wanted to see if he could grab a fast one alone the way but couldn’t really see anything worthwhile. Core formation beings were rare, it was even harder to find ones that you could hunt for money as most people wouldn’t even bother putting up a wanted poster. Maybe if someone offended some big shot, or was a demonic cultivator like that Ravager fellow.

Well, guess my detection range increased a bit, maybe I can find some demonic beasts around here.

He was becoming quite the monster hunter lately, he also had the white hair to go with it, just needed to get a wolf medallion to place around his neck. He had that one he looted from Ravager, but he was afraid to leave it out in the open. The sects were quite bloodthirsty and everyone was rushing for that immortal ascension thing, they would probably kill his entire bloodline to get something in the immortal grade.

He also took a peek at his cultivation skill, mainly his next upgrade path. He had three choices and after getting his first evolution into the empowered lightning tree he could finally see what those colors did.

Golden Lightning Path	The cultivator’s lightning imbued with more heavenly powers with an added holy element, creatures of the demonic nature are highly susceptible to this type of energy. This path doesn’t favor offense nor defense boasting an all-around increase in combat prowess.
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Violet Lightning Path	The cultivator's lightning takes a more chaotic nature, harder to control but a lot more destructive than the other two types. This path favors offense increasing the cultivators Qi reserves the most, allowing for prolonged use of techniques.
Azure Lightning Path	The cultivator's lightning becomes in tune with the heavens, this is the most stable form and easiest to progress in. Favors defense over offense increasing the resistance of all construct and defensive type techniques.

He read through the information once more wondering which path he should go for. The first option was quite interesting, it would aid him if he ever faced off against demonic beings like the Cthulhu lookalike. He felt that there would probably more of that kind of monster around in the future, so this could be useful. Matt didn't really have a defined fighting style just yet, though he mostly finished his enemies at close range.

The second one had 'Mage Class' written all over it. He would gain the biggest Qi pool from the three and would be able to spam his skills more. Guess bombarding enemies with overwhelming ranged skills could work, he also had his body refining skill for close-range fighting. The last one looked the least interesting as it favored defense but the increase to his construct type techniques like his avatar form and the lightsword was tempting. Though would this push his constructs to another level, or would they lose out against crafted weapons and other items in the end anyway?

He looked at the golden path, it looked like the most interesting one with the added elemental affinity. Maybe he should get some healing skills to go with it, or some auras like Paladins tend to have in games. He could imagine him and the Zhang Clan fighting in the secret ground together, him using some aura skills to boost everyone's stats, maybe using something to boost stamina and Qi recovery.

Well... it's always more fun in a group? Guess I'll have to check if aura skills like that even exist around here.

He checked out the shop to see if there were any paladin or cleric like skills. There were some but there was a small problem, he couldn't use them unless he was cultivating a holy element based cultivation method. This meant that he needed that upgrade before he could even use the cheapest healing skill.

Well that sucks, can't even test things out ... this upgrade costs quite a bit...

He looked at the 1 million spirit points next for the upgrade, the previous one only cost 100 thousand points. By this logic, if he wanted to get that golden nascent soul upgrade afterward he would need to spend 10 million points on it, maybe more as this was a full large cultivation level.

Yikes, think I'd need to kill over 50 core formation enemies in the late stage to get that many points, which wouldn't be that hard if I was some kind of murder hobo... Also not sure if I could find that many around unless I raided some sect.

Matt thought that this system would be really overpowered if he lost his morals and just started extinguishing lives left and right. This was the perfect system for someone that liked to kill.

Well, I guess you could also rob some kind of spirit stone mine instead...

The spirit stones mostly came from mines that were scattered around the continent. The only problem with that was that they always belonged to powerful sects or clans with nascent soul cultivators that

were there to protect the assets. This was understandable as spirit stones equaled wealth, it was the most common currency around the continent.

I might be able to sneak in ... but when they notice the drop in spiritual energy after I absorb the stones, I'd get murdered.

Matt shook his head as he gave up on trying to rob a spirit stone mine, he could rob some convoys but that would probably involve hurting other people. Someone might get killed or maimed, he also could get chased by some angry sect uncles and he wasn't that desperate quite yet.

I need to up my cultivation as well, need to at least reach the late stage in both body and mind.

Matt had tested out spending points on increasing his cultivation with not very good results. He could dump points into it for an easy increase but the more the percentage went up the more he had to spend. It kept stacking doubling each time which made him stop. Due to this, he didn't want to spend his points, only if it was urgent and he needed a quick power-up. He also didn't know how many points he would need to upgrade his clan's cultivation manuscripts to a respectable level.

It would really be nice if I could go into my crafting abode while flying on my sword, it said that this medallion is damaged, wonder if I can repair it. Well I guess I have some time, I'll just do it at night.

He parked his sword by a big tree in a clearing then hopped into his crafting space to see if he could do something with this dimensional regalia that looked like a medallion, guesses it belonged to some king once?

He did upgrade some of his equipment before, so he placed the medallion on the big anvil and looked into his crafting screen if something would show up. He saw the item getting scanned by the system before he saw the medallion's status screen.

Damaged Immortal Grade item detected, can't process please upgrade the crafting abode by at least one level.

Meh... think I need close to 3 million to upgrade the crafting abode... guess I'll pass.

He grumbled while removing the item from the large anvil.

Well, it's still usable people can still go in there and bring stuff over... guess I'll get some of the clan members to clean up the building in the middle.

Matt wasn't quite sure what he could use this closed-off space for yet, he hoped he could use the crafting abode to expand the size or maybe add some upgrades. He hoped for things that would aid in training, like slowing the passage of time in the pocket dimension. Many such artifacts existed in the novels he read.

Guess that's a bummer, but it still can be used for training...

He went inside that space with his sword, he could leave the little floating island but there was nothing around besides empty space. The air thinned out the further you flew away from the center as well. The peculiar thing about this place was, that if the ground was damaged it would recover after a short while. So you could train and destroy everything around you, the next day everything would be recovered.

That is everything besides that unkept building in the middle, maybe it was brought in by someone and placed there and it wasn't part of the treasure.

He wondered if that secret ground would allow him to bring in more people if he placed them in this medallion. It would be unfortunate if it didn't, and they would somehow die due to this, that place was also made by an immortal so he wouldn't risk lives.

Well, time to rest for a couple of hours then I'll go get my spirit stones. They should be done with the tournament by the time I'm back. Guess I could use this medallion as a secret training ground for my clan bros, there is enough space to run around and train. The amount of Qi in there is quite high as well. It also replenishes itself naturally for some reason. This Qi is a bit strange, it lacks any kind of elemental affinity, but its quality is slightly higher.

Matt thought about the future while time was running out, the people back home were close to ending the event, the people selected for the expedition were the most skilled and willing warriors that the Zhang Clan could offer but they still needed some training.

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Not much happened while he was picking up his reward, he left the chopped up remains of the demonic cultivator behind, he didn't feel like keeping that pervs body stashed in his storage ring. He also saw the idiot trio that he disrobed the last time he was around, they were acting a lot nicer though. They probably won't be bothering random cultivators for a while.

Well time to go home..., home huh?

He wasn't yet sure if he should call that Clan's city his home yet. He had only been in this world for a couple of months, so the feeling of longing wasn't quite there yet. After having some food he flew back to his clan, he hoped that his clan members would procure those crafting materials so that he could start crafting. He could make quite the amount of items as long as he had the materials as the rhythm game took between ten to five minutes. If the blacksmiths of this world saw him making weapons in five minutes they would probably get a heart attack.

Zhang Kuo should at least be able to get the crafting materials for foundation establishment items, even though I can't earn that much with them they are a lot easier to make. Though also depends on how fast they can sell them

If he made perfect grade weapons in the hundreds he could make quite a bit of spirit stones, the problem were the logistics. Unless you had a flying sword traveling between the big cities took quite some time. Maybe he could get ol' gramps do act as a courier, but he also wanted to upgrade the old man's cultivation method so he could get stronger.

Guess I'll do it in the beginning so that our clan people can go between the cities and trade, would probably take them a couple of weeks to a month to do it.

Thunder could be heard as Zhang Dong churned his cultivation to the max shooting off like a rocket towards Spirit Spring City. He needed to check those skills first, maybe he had enough points for everything and he was just overthinking it. While he was on his way he spotted an immensely huge

mountain, on top of it a giant storm was brewing. Lightning bolts could be seen hitting the peak, while the hurricane-like winds were breaking nearby trees and scaring the beasts living in them.

He stopped as he was passing by, thinking that he could use that huge storm to increase his cultivation, he still had time too, so he dived right into that thing. He got bombarded by lightning bolts left and right, even he had a hard time absorbing all of this energy, coughing up blood as the rainwater drenched his whole robe.

While Zhang Dong was getting electrocuted at a snowy mountain peak, the tournament back in Spirit Spring city was coming to an end. Liu and Xue were still fighting it out as this wasn't an elimination event. The younger sister was barely keeping up at the 194 spot hoping to survive among the 10th to 12th Qi condensation clan members. Liu ended up around the 90th spot, his fighting strength being around the 11th level even though he was at the 10th level.

The two hadn't adapted to the lightning arts just yet but if they had more experience, they would probably jump a couple of levels above their peers.

Xue delivered a wind infused kick to one of her senior brothers that barely defended himself with the help of a saber that rattled after the impact. Zhang Dong's two disciples didn't have any weapons with them, they wanted to focus on what their new master was teaching them. They hadn't received any weapon training and their previous water-based techniques didn't really work all that well with the new lightning Qi ones, or they just didn't know how to synergize the two.

"You've gotten quite strong little Xue, but not strong enough!"

She was fighting an 18-year-old at the 11th Qi condensation level, she was barely holding her own. The youth swung his battle saber at her, she was barely able to evade the attack thanks to her nimble movements. The sylph physique added to her evasive repertoire quite a bit. Just after this happened you could hear people cheering from the sides.

"Junior Sister Xue is the best! You can do it!"

"Hey, if you hurt Junior Sister in any way you'll be answering to me! I'll pummel you to death!"

"What a stinky Senior Brother, you should be ashamed of yourself!"

Xue was quite popular among her own generation, probably it had something to do with her being one of those jade-like beauties. You could hear cheering and threatening shouts that were aimed at the opponent that she was fighting. The opponent gulped as he had heard that one of the opponents of this clan sister, was found beaten up and left naked in the streets.

The siblings were cultivating body refining physiques that were transforming their bodies. Liu was getting more manly, his muscles were showing in all the right spots that made him quite popular with the junior and some senior members. Xue, on the other hand, was getting her female attributes enhanced thanks to her Sylph physique, it probably helped that she was wearing more form-fitting robes so that she wouldn't get slowed down by them. She was focusing on her speed and nimble movements.

"Hey, you guys stop this is a serious event!"

Xue shouted at the peanut gallery, with her brows furrowing but that only made the people cheer more.

“Hah, she looked at me, look at that passionate gaze!”

One of the younger males said while another slapped his head from behind and the two got into a fight. In the end, the fight ended in a draw as the senior brother didn't want to get beaten up also he didn't need to get any more points. The top brackets mostly consisted of people at the 12th and 11th level. There were a couple of level 10's at the end, with Xue in tow. She was the only person that made it in while being at the 9th level.

Both of the Patriarch's new disciples generated a lot of buzz, some were envious also wishing that they could get taught by the strongest member of their clan. The two have been rapidly growing at an unprecedented pace, showing everyone that Zhang Dong was quite the teacher with superior cultivation knowledge.

Most of them didn't delude themselves into thinking that their Patriarch would pick them up as disciples. They realized that these two had a lot more talent, being the strongest at their age range even before Zhang Dong came along. But they were hoping that if they got into the best 200 they could get some pointers and rewards from their leader as they knew where all of them were going afterward.

The Clan members were mostly segregated by skill and cultivation levels. Matt was surprised when he previously toured the compound as the younger generation members went to something akin to a high school. They had normal classes that consisted of reading, mathematics, and the sort, combat aimed lessons were also taught. There were even classes on pill forging and crafting.

The people of the clan even wanted him to take a teaching position for the more experienced students but he quickly refused that proposal. There were four classes starting from common followed by mortal, then earth and at the end was heaven class. The last class was reserved for people at the strength level of 10-12th Qi condensation. So depending on talent and resources people of various ages attended.

The fourth week was coming to an end, all the placements were set at this point. The place got busier as every placeholder was ordered to list out their cultivation methods and battle techniques. The Patriarch apparently wanted everyone to get segregated by their cultivation method firstly, then by similar working combat techniques. Most people weren't sure what he was up to, did he want to check out the skills before giving them pointers. That would be extremely hard to do without seeing them preform first, how could he even know what they were good or bad at.

No one really knew what good it would do to look at some random clan skills, but they trusted in their Patriarch's strength at least. The way his disciples were progressing was also a boost to his validity as a teacher.

“How's everything progressing?”

Zhang Jin asked one of the Patriarch's new retainers, Zhang Kuo, he was mostly responsible for the calculating side of business while Zhang Ya was more in human resources, doing odd jobs.

“We are in the process of gathering the manuals that the Patriarch requested, there shouldn't be any problems in procuring them as the Clan members techniques don't vary that much. Also, we have gotten reports that all the missions that the Patriarch selected were carried out.”

Zhang Kuo gave a jade slip to Zhang Jin as everything was written down there, the older man looking at the report with a mixed expression.

“Make sure none of this leaves this room, If my grandson wants to stay anonymous he has to have a reason for it.”

The old man was a bit surprised by his grandson’s battle prowess. That Lesser Calamity Dragon he took out would probably maul the old Patriarch that was in the core formation late stage, that thing had a really tough hide and anyone below the great circle would get trashed. Also, he fought another monster and a strong demonic cultivator that was nothing to scoff at, and the boy just bested them without a setback.

This grandpa would probably be less astonished if he knew that his grandson barely escaped with his life when he was fighting the first monster on that list. Still, the achievements were speaking for themselves, this Patriarch was already stronger than the old one, the problem wasn’t him but the rest. The other clan members weren’t ready, they didn’t make it into the last selection for a reason.

Back at the mountain range Matt was in a hole, pulverized rock all around him while he was twitching while laying on this back. The lightning storm had done him in a bit, but he managed to absorb most of its energies before they dispersed. He felt like an overcharged light bulb as the chaotic energies circulated all over his body making him shoot off tiny sparks.

Damn, didn’t think this blasted storm would shred my clothes down to my boxers.

His robes had begun regenerating already, but the chaotic energies in his body were making things difficult.

Guess I should be careful in absorbing so much energy, but that was a nice boost of 10%!

He dusted himself off the gravel and hopped up onto his sword, guess if he flew high enough people wouldn’t see that he was bare-chested. He set off towards the clan, he wasn’t planning on stopping to cultivate anymore the month was coming to an end and they only had two left, he had to start training his soldiers.

He had gained over half a million points from killing the three mini-bosses alone, but he also gained another 200k through killing smaller demonic beasts along the way. He got close to 45k spirit stones that would translate to a bit less than ten times of that in points. So he stood at about over a million points now, having spent some to buy the sword arts, the disguise skill and the tracking skill which paid off in the end as he would never be able to find that pervy cultivator otherwise.

Some other people could have probably gained more points by killing more, like those three that he left naked and bruised. That wasn’t his style though, it would be nice if he could get a fraction of the points for just beating up people instead. He also didn’t run into any spirit stone convoys that he could try to rob, though he would probably be apprehensive about that as well.

While in thought he started noticing some familiar scenery as more water springs appeared on the horizon. The water elements started being abundant and the familiar smell filled his nose.

Home sweet home, huh?

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Matt canceled the disguising art during his cultivation period in the mountains, so he was back in his white robe looking like the Patriarch that everyone knew and loved. Well, at least that was what he hoped for. People on the ground spotted him flying in, he cruised by the gate and just gave the guards a nod, this making the men freak out and do sort of a salute.

“At ease?”

He flew back to the main clan building, trying to slip in without making too much of a commotion but the moment he landed he could hear footsteps coming, people were apparently waiting for his return, he could hear some youthful voices.

“Master! Welcome back!”

The shout made his ears ring as his male disciple greeted him with a wave followed by a small quick bow with clasped hands. Matt looked at the sixteen-year-old, his hair was a lot whiter than before but you could still see the black strands in there. His sister appeared right behind her brother, a pout visible on her face.

“Aww, I wanted to greet Master back first... not fair...”

The girl puffed up her cheeks while glaring at her brother that was looking kind of smug. Matt didn’t know how to react, was it some kind of grand achievement to greet your master first? The kid sure looked like he had won some kind of prize, while the young lady pouted like a little child. Though their master started chuckling to himself, finding the siblings to be quite the comedic duo.

“Well, Liu my student for greeting your Master first, you have earned the right to a reward!”

The brother perked up at his masters’ words, you could see his eyes shining with anticipation.

“R-really Master?”

“Hah, you wish!”

Matt replied with a smile on his face then ruffled up the youth’s hair with his larger hand. The sister started at her squirming brother that was getting his hair rearranged by their master. This was a peculiar sight, most master – disciple relationships were more no-nonsense but Zhang Dong liked to keep a more relaxed atmosphere where people weren’t that tense around him. After he was finished teasing the youth he asked about the tournament.

“Well, I didn’t see the report yet, how did you fare in your fights?”

Zhang Liu was grasping his messed up mop of a head, trying to calm down his long locks, due to that Xue answered instead.

“We both got into the top 200 participants! They had no chance against Masters’ superior cultivation and combat techniques!”

“She meant to say that she barely made it into the 195th spot.”

Liu snickered under his breath while his sister snow-white complexion started turning pink, her eyes in the form of daggers were pointing in the direction of her brother that was having a good time.

Matt crossed his arms over one another and looked at the two, the two would be going with him, their life probably depended on his decisions. He sighed inwardly hoping for the best, the two made the decision to come along on their own but they were far too young in his opinion.

"Is that so..."

"Well, I'll check your progress later you two. First I have to speak to your grandpa, we need to start preparing for that expedition..."

The two quieted down, the atmosphere got a bit more serious as their Master started talking about the impending quest into the unknown. The two bid their master adieu as he went to his chambers, his two retainers and Zhang Jin were already waiting for him.

"I see that you are back Dong'er, were you successful in your travels?"

Zhang Jin asked while the two people on the sides gave small bows of respect to their acting Patriarch.

"More or less, got some loot. I went through it all and there are some things that we can sell, but I'm not sure about some of these items, here take a look."

While saying that he handed one storage ring with some less useful treasures over to Zhang Kuo so that he could pawn them off. He handed a second storage ring over to his grandpa, this one contained a lot of occult looking items and demonic cultivation manuscripts. Matt didn't really know what to do with those, could they be sold of, or were things like these banned? Matt did look through all of them on his way here, he disposed of the more gruesome techniques, like the one that used women as batteries. He mostly left techniques and items that used the cultivators' life for bursts of power, if someone wanted to use things like those for a short term power increase they could go right ahead. He just didn't want more demonic cultivators popping up that used strange skills to bother the populace.

Zhang Jin just scanned the storage device with his spiritual sense, his eyebrow quivering oh so slightly.

"I see... we can't sell these with the usual channels, but there is a way, don't worry I'll have someone handle it."

Gaining more spirit stones was always a good thing, he could absorb them for more points or buy more crafting materials to equip his soldiers.

"So, did you do what I asked for?"

Matt looked at his retainers that nodded, they handed him a storage ring with a lot of old parchments and manuscripts. Some of them looked like they would crumble at the slightest touch. He also received a jade slip with the statics that showed him which cultivation techniques were the most used by the Zhang Clan members. Luckily the costlier ones that the foundation establishment seniors used weren't that varied, they all more or less cultivated similar water skills.

Mostly depending on the family ties and bloodline, a Zhang clan member could choose a cultivation method from a limited pile. The higher the grading the less of a choice there was, so most of the people

tried their luck at cultivating the highest-ranked technique or skill they would find. Due to this, there wasn't as much verity, which would mean that there were fewer manuals to upgrade.

"Okay, I'll start with the foundation establishment ones first... Oh right, Gramps give me your cultivation manual as well."

The Zhang Clan members still weren't sure what their Patriarch was trying to do, what could he do with those old techniques, could he learn them all and train the people in just two months of time? This was a hard pill to swallow, there were over a hundred manuals in there even if you were a genius, you needed a couple of days to grasp even the easiest of skills. They didn't think that there would be enough time to do that.

"Ah sure, here you go..."

Zhang Jin handed his grandson the cultivation technique. The group discussed some other things, asking Zhang Dong about his travels. They gave him a general report about the tournament and what happened in the past month, but there wasn't much to report. The three left soon after, Matt could now concentrate on his next task. He removed the big bed from his storage ring and started placing all the foundation establishment manuals on the ground, segregating them by general cultivation manuscripts, then combat techniques which were further segregated into ones that required and didn't require weapons.

"There we go..."

He picked up one manuscript, it was called Rainwater Sutra. It was a general cultivation manual and this was the second part of it. This was the method the main family line practiced, along with his new disciples that switched over to his now. There were three parts to it, that went from Qi condensation up to core formation, but the third part was incomplete. Due to this, it was impossible to cultivate it to the great circle and you could barely get into the late stage if you bumbled around.

Rainwater Sutra part 1 (Common high grade):	The first part of a cultivation manual, suited for cultivators with water affinity. Gives a more than moderate insight into qi condensation.
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Rainwater Sutra part 2 (Mortal high grade):	The second part of a cultivation manual, suited for cultivators with water affinity. The foundation pillars forged through this method are more or less stable, but flawed ones can arise.
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Rainwater Sutra part 3 (Earth low grade) [Incomplete]:	The third part of a cultivation manual, suited for cultivators with water affinity. It's missing a lot of information, cultivators won't be able to cultivate past the late stage if they follow the incomplete instructions and it will stifle their progress.
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Matt raised a brow at the explanations, the best cultivation method of the clan wasn't all that great. The ones the core formation elders were supposed to use even got them stuck in the late stage. This was the one his grandfather was using and the same one the previous Patriarch used as well.

He brought out a different cultivation manual, it belonged to the first man he killed it was called called 'Inferno art'. It had quite the cool sounding name, but the grading was just as bad as the one that the Zhang clan was using. Matt had checked every core formation manual that he got from his travels and

they all were of lower grades, sometimes incomplete with glaring flaws. This was probably why no one was able to reach the nascent soul, the methods these people used were just abysmal.

The manuals for foundation establishment and Qi condensation are better, but still they aren't perfect, no wonder the sects treat the clans as lower-class citizens. I bet they hog all the good methods to themselves and just laugh at the clans that bumble their way through the process.

Matt could see that past the foundation establishment the clan was reaching a bottleneck in their techniques. The lower the grade of the method the more damage one suffered to their body. Like with the Rainwater Sutra, it outright stopped the cultivation process after the late stage.

Also the advanced grade is quite low and that rainwater part isn't good either...

Cultivation methods mostly fell into a certain Dao. The Rainwater Sutra was derived from a greater Dao of water and was a lesser Dao. The closer to the 'Source' of a Dao you got, the better it was. Zhang Dong's lightning cultivation was from a greater Dao, the inferno art was also something created from the greater Dao of fire, or yang as the people in this world liked to refer to it.

What was the difference between a lesser Dao and a greater one? A person that followed a lower path would always be weaker than a person that followed a greater one. Also, you could not progress into the immortal stage if you didn't have any insights into a greater Dao. Most cultivation techniques in this world were just crude imitations of greater Daos, but they were a lot easier to produce.

Guess I lucked out with my greater Dao of lightning, I wonder how many spirit stones I could get for my cultivation arts...

This was a tempting motion, to start selling improved versions of cultivation methods. But then some scary sect uncles could come knocking, wondering where he got them from.

Think I better wait till I'm in the nascent soul for that...

He picked up the manuals that the foundation establishment members used and started upgrading them.

Rainwater Sutra part 2 (Mortal high grade) Do you wish to upgrade this cultivation manual.
Yes/No?Springwater manual (Mortal middle grade) Do you wish to upgrade this cultivation manual.
Yes/No?Dragontide manuscript (Mortal middle grade) Do you wish to upgrade this cultivation manual.
Yes/No?

His points started going down and down, he got them all up into the mortal perfect grade. This wasn't the limit of the upgrading though, you could improve them further. He also used an immortal grade cultivation manual that was for core formation practitioners. The only rule was that a manual couldn't be of a lower grading than what the cultivation level was. So, if you were in the foundation establishment realm your cultivation manual couldn't be off common grade, that just wouldn't work.

Should I upgrade them into the earth grade, or is this enough...

Matt thought that upgrading a technique of a lower level into a higher one would probably be very beneficial to the cultivators that practiced it, even if it was only in the lowest of them. He was glad that

there weren't that many of those scripts for his foundation establishment members, so it didn't cost that much but still he lost eight thousand points a pop.

This better be worth it, could buy myself an earth grade skill for this... Though it's not that much at this point

There would be more spirit stones coming in so he could spend some points on these things. He needed to go through the other parchments before deciding if he could upgrade anything past the lower earth grade.

Though there is one problem...

The upgrading process didn't do anything to the manuals he was holding, the refined techniques were added to his system's library which he now had an icon for. He could click on it and read through everything, he also got the knowledge inserted into his brain as always.

Damn, do I need to write these down myself now?

The Impartation skill was good and all, but it wasn't perfect so he needed to complement it with the written down texts. As always, the system came to the rescue as it had various calligraphy and copying skills that he could buy, and they didn't cost much as they weren't used for battle.

He bought two skills, one called hyper calligraphy the other beautiful penmanship as his writing style was quite trashy. Thanks to the first skill that let him smoothly scribble everything down within seconds, he managed to write everything down within fifteen minutes. Which was quite fast for so many complicated manuals.

Think I should hand these over so that those guys can go to work, still so many things to go through...

Chapter 75

A person was standing with both of his hands on his forehead. The man's name was Zhang Zhi, he had just turned forty this year but due to his cultivation he looked like a man in his late twenties. He was the one that took the first spot for the foundation establishment elders at the clan tournament. Due to his fairly young age and high cultivation level, he was highly regarded amongst the clan.

Half an hour earlier he and the other tournament participants were brought into a room. There he saw some copied over manuscripts, even while they were walking in some women clan members were diligently working on copying them down from some nearby notes. He straightened out as he saw that their current Patriarch was standing there, handing down some papers to people that were copying them over.

"Ah, I see that you all are here, could you all just line up. There is much work to do, best if you line up in order of your tournament placement."

The patriarch ordered while waving his hand around, moving it in a certain direction. The Zhang clan elders looked at each other and just followed the instructions, lining up by the wall. Zhi was the first one getting approached by their new leader, he was slightly shorter than Zhang Dong and had a more ectomorph like physique. He looked at the silver-haired man in front of him as he placed his hand on his shoulder, he could feel some strange energy wash over him the moment that happened.

“Zhang Zhi, Great Circle, 40 years old... you should probably switch to sword arts from those spear arts...you practice the Dragontide method, I see...”

Zhi was a bit astonished that the man that he never interacted with started naming things that he shouldn't know. The man started claiming that he was better at the sword than the spear, he had followed in his father's footsteps that was quite renowned for his spearmanship. The white-haired Patriarch mumbled to himself for a moment before placing his index finger on Zhi's forehead.

“This might feeeeee a bit funny, just bare with it...”

The moment Zhi heard those words he could feel information getting forced into his brain. This knowledge was something that he knew by heart, it was about his cultivation method the Dragontide Manuscript. It was different though, the wisdom contained was far superior to the understanding of the technique he previously had. He backed away, holding onto his head in shock as most of the knowledge remained intact. He instinctively wanted to seclude himself and try out the improved cultivation method.

“T-this...”

Before he could say something the Patriarch looked to one of the people that was copying down his scribbles. Talking to them in a pleasantly sounding bassy voice.

“One Improved Dragontide manual, please~”

He said while one of the girls brought over the goods, Zhang Zhi got the item shoved into his palms his eyes going wide as it was the same cultivation method that was imparted into him, just written down the ink didn't even look dry.

“If you have any questions, they should be answered in there, now go reinforce the foundation, you have a week.”

Zhang Dong had improved his Impartation of Knowledge skill, but it still wasn't perfect so he needed those copied over manuscripts with all the required data. Zhang Zhi being the typical cultivator nut started shaking furiously as he looked at the manuscript in front of him. He knew that improving cultivation methods that you didn't make yourself was extremely hard. But there it was, his family art improved even he could tell that it was far beyond anything the clan had in their library.

He was baffled, he wanted to hug the man in front of him and beg him to take him on as a disciple. But he managed to stop himself, for one this man was the clan's Patriarch and he already had disciples, two he was ten years younger than him. The others next to Zhi glanced in his direction, they saw his eyes redden and his lower lip quivering not really sure what was happening.

“Thank you, Patriarch, this Zhang Zhi will never forget this act of kindness!”

What followed was a furious display of ass-kissing in the form of kowtowing, which made the Patriarch's eyebrows twitch momentarily. He coughed into his hand and moved over to the second person. He placed his hand on the older looking man and within a couple of minutes, the man was down on his knees, thanking the young clan leader for being so benevolent.

Zhang Dong started moving past the quivering clan members, trying not to look at their over the top behavior. Everyone was receiving the improved versions of their cultivation methods. The ones that had yet to receive their manual had stars in their eyes and sweaty palms, they looked like a bunch of puppies before you fed them. Most of the people were old men past their forties, so the looks on their faces were priceless, Matt had to force himself to not laugh in front of them.

“Oh, you’re Liu’s and Xue’s...”

About at the end of the line, was the mother of his graying disciples. She and Xue looked very similar, having that unhealthy white complexion that people in this world liked so much. She looked a bit more refined than her daughter that still had some baby fat stuck on her face, also she was quite flat. She made up for that deficiency with her back end, which was quite large in comparison.

“Zhang Jie greets the Patriarch.”

She gave him the usual bow of respect before Zhang Dong went through the motions and imparted the improved Rainwater Sutra art to her. The woman was wondering what was the deal with this man, her children just couldn’t shut up about how great he was. She finally knew how those two brats started progressing so fast, this man teaching methods were quite unusual. Her head was throbbing but her knowledge of the cultivation arts increased by leaps and bounds.

“You should tell gramps to not cultivate before I look through his cultivation art, it has way too many flaws in it.”

She figured that this ‘Gramps’ that the new Patriarch was talking about was her grandfather Zhang Jin, she didn’t know if she should laugh or cry about the way this man referred to her adored grandfather.

“Ah yes... I’ll be sure to pass it on, Patriarch.”

The dazed Zhang Clan foundation establishment elders waddled out of the gathering room, their heads hurting a bit but this was a small price to pay. They all felt invigorated as with the imparted knowledge, they were sure that they could reinforce their flawed foundation pillars.

What was the Foundation Establishment cultivation realm? It was the first real step on the way to cultivation, everyone could condense Qi in this world, but not everyone was able to advance past that. If you wanted to further advance you needed to create your dao pillars, people that advanced to the early stage only had one pillar while advancing further they formed more. Depending on the cultivation technique the amount of those pillars varied. The thing that also varied was the state those pillars were in.

The lowest kind were the cracked pillars, a myriad of cracks like spiderwebs would run through them, indicating a flimsy foundation that could be shattered at any moment. After that came the flawed pillars, they had fewer imperfections ruining through them. These types of pillars were very common among the Zhang Clan practitioners. After that came the superior pillars, flaws in those were difficult to spot. The last ones were the perfect pillars, the rarest and the most difficult ones that a cultivator could produce.

A cultivator could have mixed pillars, flawed ones together with superior and cracked ones. Most people around the world that used average cultivation methods had flawed pillars with some cracked ones in the mix.

Zhang Dong having an immortal grade technique was the owner of perfect pillars. Also they were special lightning dao pillars which increased their rarity even further. With the improved versions of the cultivation arts, Matt hoped that everyone could transform their flawed and cracked pillars to the superior version of them, maybe even add a couple of new ones in the process. The better your pillars were and the more you had of them, the smoother your cultivation path would be in the future. This was also the reason Matt was cultivating at such breakneck speeds, he faced no bottlenecks whatsoever. The only thing holding him back was the amount of spiritual energy he could absorb to expand his lightning core.

Back in his chambers, Zhang Dong looked at his system screen, the shoulder touching wasn't only for figuring out people's names and what they were good at. He could actually save everyone's stats into his database, in it he could see the personal data of the people he examined.

I'm sure glad that I took that analyzing skill.

He couldn't see the progress of the people he analyzed as he saw it in his Disciple section. He could pull up the database at any moment, update it and see how everyone was progressing. He could also plan ahead, like with Zhang Zhi, his talent wasn't that great only at a C+, but his affinity with the sword was at an A+. But for some reason, Matt saw that the only weapon techniques the man had were spear ones. Zhi's spear affinity was much lower at a C, it was a travesty that this man was training in an art he had no talent in.

Should I get him to try out some sword arts, or is two months not enough...

Matt didn't know if retraining yourself before going to battle in two months would be wise. But the A+ indicated that the man had superior talent in swordsmanship, also he was a lot older so some things should translate over. There were other people that were already using the sword as it was a common weapon type along with the spear and saber, so it would come in handy.

I can't give him my sword art, it's for lightning Qi...

Due to being the Patriarch, he had access to all of the best techniques that the clan could offer, though they were worse than even his lowest graded technique. He looked through the more advanced sword techniques the clan could offer, they were mostly in the lower or middle grade, but there was a high grade one that could be used.

Rainstorm Blade (Mortal high grade) Do you wish to upgrade this cultivation manual. Yes/No?

He upgraded it to the low earth grade, the thing about this whole process was that he was learning all of these skills almost instantaneously while not even cultivating them. Matt didn't know if knowing so many skills would even be good for something, he looked through his technique library but he didn't see any options for combining skills which he could use.

Damn, I can't even sell these as that would undermine my clan in the long run...

He threw the motion of selling off cultivation arts out the window, as he didn't want a paper trail leading to his doorstep. Also, you couldn't earn much back for anything below the core formation as most sects and clans had their own stuff below that level. Training in some random techniques could impede your progress.

Well time to go through the youngster techniques...

He gave out a sigh as there were two hundred of those Qi condensation juniors he had to go through, at least upgrading techniques from Qi condensation didn't cost that much. Also, they weren't that bad as the foundation establishment ones, being a lot easier to produce for the lower level clans and sects like them. Matt flexed his cultivation aura which alerted a nearby clan member that was in his service. This was quite a nifty way of getting people to come over, he didn't even need to use his voice.

"Give this to the Zhang Zhi fellow, tell him that he should try it out. Also, tell the junior members to come to my chambers in order of the tournament results."

Matt didn't want two hundred people looking at him silently while he analyzed others one by one. It would be less stressful if he just takes care of them one at a time, they were young so they could wait in line all day. Which they would have to as he had to look at their cultivation method, write it down for them, then have others copy it over. This would be a lengthy process, they didn't have time and he also wanted to teach people some actual battle skills later on.

"Okay, let's get this over with..."

Chapter 76

Zhang Dong needed about ten to twenty minutes to process one person, but due to there being two hundred people that he had to go through it took him two days to finish everything. You could see a big line of nervous youths just outside his chambers. Matt made a mental note to have the clan members build him an office for things like this. There were a lot of people from the side families here so they weren't familiar with the place, their eyes moving left and right as they examined every nook and cranny. They looked at the inner members with envy in their eyes, but now with the new Patriarch also being from a side family, they felt like things would change.

After the two days without sleep, Matt flopped onto his bed. He had 198 more people in his database as he didn't need to add his two disciples that were already training in other things that he got for them. After checking out their affinities he noticed that due to his Dao of Heavenly Lightning their grades towards the lightning element were increasing. He sure wished he could afford to buy Dao knowledge for the water element with so many water cultivators around, but he only had a small fraction required. The Dao of water was a greater Dao, so it required a lot of points.

He laid on his huge bed looking up at the ceiling, but he was actually looking at his system window that was showing him the Qi cultivator profiles. Luckily the techniques didn't vary as much as he thought. This was probably due to this being a clan and not a sect, so most people specialized in similar fields. You didn't really have divisions for pill forging, crafting or beast taming as clans tended to stick to one profession. The Zhang clan specialized in restorative pill forging that went with their water arts that were suited for healing.

Glad that their techniques don't vary as much as I thought. Got the basics down, now I need to prepare the regular weapon training techniques, the evasion techniques, they don't really use any body refining techniques...So still a lot of work left.

The Qi condensation techniques were really cheap so he got a 'Water Nymph Physique' for the female cultivators, it was similar to the Sylph Physique that Xue was using. For the male cultivators, he found the 'Leviathan Constitution', this also belonged to the water element bracket. These two worked similar to the techniques that he got for his disciples, the girls got more agile while the men got more resistant. They were a bit worse than what he got for his disciples, but they were fashioned for water type cultivators so they would complement their strengths.

He decided on those two for one reason, they would let water cultivators use their Qi skills even in harsh environments devoid of any water elements. The more they progressed in his refining techniques, the more Qi they could store in their body for later usage and the less they needed to use for their other techniques.

Zhang Dong meditated for an hour, not sleeping just yet as he headed over to his dimensional regalia. Inside he saw many clan members shuffling about, they were carrying various tools and resources. Some of them were sweeping, some of them were scraping the moss from the bricks. The more Matt gazed at the building the more it looked like a university dorm that he was familiar with. It was long and made from bricks with many rooms that were connected to a hallway. It was several stories high if you squeezed two beds into each room, you could fit about 250 people in. Maybe more, as cultivators liked to sit down and meditate instead of sleeping which took up less space.

After the walls got cleaned up you could see the reddish color of the bricks, it had that steep Mansard roof that Victorian-era buildings back on earth had. It had some sash and bay windows plastered in, making Matt wonder where this thing came from, as most buildings in this world were more or less Oriental, but there was that one western looking tavern back in the gloomy town.

The moment the people saw him they bowed and started working faster and harder, fearing that their new boss would start whacking them if they didn't speed things up. The place was getting renovated, beds and furniture were getting carried in as Matt was preparing this place for the training that he was going to give his warriors. He thought that making the people live around each other and spar would increase their coordination.

He was still of the mind that that whole place would be some kind of group activity, so he wanted to increase his peoples' teamwork. He wanted to implement some group exercises to elevate the synergy between his clan members. It would be good if they figured out each other strong and weak points, then complemented each other's flaws.

He wasn't going to do it alone, as he had some more experienced members help him out with the formations they could put the people in. They wanted to segregate people into groups, each Foundation Establishment elder would get a team of ten Qi condensation juniors to lead. He wanted to assign everyone at the start so that they could get to know each other better, this wasn't anything out of the ordinary as it was quite common to put soldiers into smaller teams.

"I guess eleven people isn't much of a platoon but it will do..."

He would be the company captain while the twenty elders below him would be his officers, the Qi condensation members would be the grunts. He would need to either make specialized squads or more all-around platoons.

Well, if I use specialized groups it would be easier to train them. But if everyone gets split up and my medics are lost without any combatants to cover their butts, they will be screwed.

Naturally, everyone was good at something, most people knew how to fight but the first ranker and the last ranker were miles apart. Matt thought back to his gaming days, mostly the MMORPGs he played. Most parties had a tank to keep the monsters busy while the damage dealers either used ranged attacks or flanked them from the side. The healers could then keep their party refreshed and ready for the next fight. There were also the buffers and debuffers and various other specialized classes, but he would be keeping it simple for now. The Zhang clan being a water elemental clan, had some good healing arts which Matt would be upgrading for future use as skills like those were a necessity.

Guess I'll go for the more all-around team setup, better be safe than sorry later.

Got eleven people in one platoon, would be good to have at least one medic/healer, then some frontliners to keep the enemies busy while the backliners either bombard them from afar.

He looked at his database, focusing on the Qi condensation members. There would be enough people with healing abilities to cover each team, but all platoons wouldn't have perfectly balanced setups as the people were picked mostly through combat. Teamwork was fine, but he also had to take into consideration that everyone would be separated and would have to fend for themselves.

The cool thing about this world was that the cultivators had specialized techniques for team combat. They were called formation techniques, Matt also fought against one of those formation techniques. The people from the Tsai clan had combined into a giant volcano golem and gave him a good whacking before he turned the tide. He was holding two books in his hands, they were the formation techniques that he had chosen for upgrading.

Floodarmor Formation (Mortal Low Grade)	This formation allows cultivators to produce a large shield in a wide area around them from water Qi. It can be used by Qi condensation practitioners in tandem with a foundation establishment cultivator that acts as the core of the formation. People within the formation can still attack from the inside while being shielded. Minimum 8 cultivators required.
Spirit Serpent Formation (Mortal Low Grade)	This formation allows cultivators to transform into a large serpent composed of water Qi. It can be used by Qi condensation practitioners in tandem with a foundation establishment cultivator that acts as the core of the formation. Minimum 9 cultivators required.

One was for attacking while the other was for defense. Matt hoped that with the increased grade the formation would shine even more, maybe allowing the people inside to reach close to the core formation level. The formation techniques didn't have any cap on how many people could use them, so in theory, if all 220 of them used that Water serpent transformation, going into the core formation area wasn't that far fetched.

Would be good to get these up as high as possible, formation techniques are indispensable in large scale combat.

He thought back to the rock golem, he still had that technique manual with him. It was of low grade of course, but he reckoned if it was of a high grade than he would have probably lost during the power struggle at that time.

Matt sat down on a chair that was brought in by his fellow clan members as he was still in the medallion realm. He scanned through the most used techniques, thanks to his library he could organize them like in a spreadsheet. Everything was nicely presented, from the most commonly used skills, the highest-graded ones, he could compare everything and take out the most essential ones for further improvement.

While he was busy with clicking the air, the Zhang clan members on the sides started staring at him while they cleaned the building. They looked with wide eyes at their silver-haired Patriarch while seeing him poking at the air in front of him. Was this some kind of ritual for a new technique or something? It would be far too rude for them to ask but the sight of their leader swishing his finger up, down, left and right was making these people have sweaty palms from the way their boss was frowning.

“Ugh, why are there so many of these skills... just learn one and stick with it...”

Matt rubbed his forehead while staring at his decreasing points that were declining with each second, soon he would run out. Luckily he got most of the skills that he wanted and more spirit stones would be arriving as well. The next thing on the agenda was the equipment, thanks to his golden touch he knew exactly what each person had an affinity for so he could design the right weapon and gear for them.

Guess I'll have to use that dancing platform as well... the clan robes don't really have much to go for them...

He vanished from the pocket dimension and appeared in a certain heavily guarded room, there were many intricate inscriptions on the walls that were pulsating with spirit energy. This was a secret chamber that the dimensional regalia was resting in. The moment he showed it of, his grandpa looked like he had laid an egg. He knew the implications of having this sort of item around, if any sect figured out that they had it with them, there would be nothing that could save them from extinction. Unless they just gave it away, but luckily this thing didn't give off any immortal artifact aura. You needed to get really close and actually touch it to feel the wondrous immortal radiation that it was giving off. So, they decided to hide it for now.

The people that were working inside had sworn an oath of secrecy, it was something to keep people's mouths shut. Other clans used different methods, in Zhang clan's case if a person tried blabbering out the secret they would find themselves bursting from inside. Guess there was a lot of water in a person's body, so a water clan would know how to come up with a technique that would use that and explode a body from the inside.

Matt was a bit apprehensive about the methods, but kind of knew that this was the only way to be sure that no one spilled the beans. The people that were working inside the pocket dimension weren't against it at all, everyone knew that this safeguard had to be made. Also, the people inside the medallion didn't actually know of the treasure's grading most of them reasoned that it was a heavenly

graded artifact at most, as the dimension inside wasn't all that large. No one actually touched the item as it was used by the Patriarch.

Matt went out of the room and headed to his chambers, it was time to get some crafting done after that he would start cultivating, he really needed to get into that late stage as soon as possible.

Chapter 77

In his crafting abode, Matt was looking through his system window. This would take a while, he had 220 people so he needed to make the same amount of battle robes, the thing with robes was that higher graded robes could be used by lower-level cultivators. While using higher-level weapons taxed their cultivation more while executing attacks, due to robes having mostly passive buffs.

Weapons past the common grade had a lot more spiritual energy in them, kind of a mind of their own. They would work against a cultivator if they weren't ready for it, so giving mortal grade weapons to the Qi condensation juniors wouldn't be such a good idea. But the robes, on the other hand, could be used for their passive enhancements.

It's kind of strange, people in this world don't really pay attention to the armor side of gear... guess it is due to the body refining skills. They probably think that they don't need any more defense anyway.

Matt wanted to give everyone a nice battle robe that would increase their defense and give them as many supplementary passive bonuses as possible. Luckily he wouldn't need to spend many points for this, as his clan had spent most of their spirit stones to procure the resources that he needed to fashion two hundred mortal grade robes and twenty earth grade robes for his people.

The biggest problem was the design, Matt didn't want any generic looking robe design, he wanted something cool. The color would be in the blue or azure as he wanted to keep the water theme going. He didn't want one of those baggy robes that a lot of xianxia people liked to wear, they were good for long sleeve swishing but got in the way of fighting. He was thinking about certain space wizards that liked to fight in robes as well, though theirs were a lot easier to move in and a lot cooler too look at. He went for the evil counterparts of them though, giving the robes a darker bluish hue.

After upgrading his abode he could edit or even create his own designs. For now, he choose a design that looked the closes for what he was going for. He added a hood to it so that the wearer could use it for more protection. He also thought about adding a mask, it would add more protection but it would limit the vision. But an evil space wizard without a mask didn't feel right, so he scanned through the building options and found something that let the user see just fine.

The helmet came out futuristic looking, it covered most of the head and the eyes were wide but narrow. By the mouth, you could see vent like openings that filtered the air, the headgear could be used as a gas mask. It had azure stream patterns etched into the shiny metal and the helmet was kind of skull-shaped. Due to the enchantments, the vision wasn't impaired and it would even help with the breathing.

Maybe I should change my robe too, then shoot lightning out of my fingers, though I can already do that.

Matt kind of laughed to himself as he was geeking out while fashioning his 'battle robe' for his clan members, the foundation establishment elders would get a version with a cape while the ordinary Qi

condensation members would get ones without it. Also, the masks would be a little bit different to indicate a different rank.

Guess it's time to dance as I've never danced before...

He turned on the crafting contraption and heard a tune from his earth days, at least in here he could enjoy some music. These robes would all be mortal perfect grade, by this time he could do this without any worry. His reflexes had gone up with his increased cultivation, he had no problem in hitting all the right steps over and over again. The only problem was that he needed to repeat this procedure one hundred ninety-nine times.

While Zhang Dong had locked himself in his crafting abode and wouldn't come out before he had all the armor and weapons ready the other cultivators were diligently working on their progress. Zhang Zhi breathed in, his toned body was giving out a pungent smell as black sweat and blood were getting expelled. This was a common occurrence when you switched over to a good cultivating method, your body would be refined from the inside while disposing of the impurities that arose from previous techniques.

The man was quite stunned by the ingenuity of this new method that the patriarch had given him. He felt like a new world had opened up to him, he already managed to patch up any cracked pillars that he had blundered in creating. The new insights that were presented in the improved version of this technique let him progress at an increased rate as well.

"It's all so clear now!"

This new development made him look at the young Patriarch in a different light. Before he thought that man would bring them to ruin, the moment the dark palm sect appeared he vanished. He was at that banquet as well, he saw how this Patriarch behaved not knowing any decency while confronting the young master of a powerful sect. They were lucky as the young master didn't bother with any punishment, but that could have cost them dearly.

But now, he saw potential in him. Someone who could modify an old cultivation method on the fly had to be special. He either was a genius among geniuses or he had some kind of fortuitous encounter and managed to find an immortal legacy. Zhang Zhi was more prone to believe the latter.

"If someone can get us through this, it's him..."

He had made a decision, he would fully support this man in his future endeavors. If he got out of that expedition alive, then this clan could go even further. He also believed that maybe this man could get through the bottleneck that all the clans in the area were in, the bottleneck of the nascent soul. If Matt knew what this man was thinking he would probably buckle down under the pressure of his expectations.

But cultivators in this world weren't very difficult to figure out if you showed them some love they would repay you fully. The world was very cutthroat, everyone kept to themselves and daily battles for resources were common. People didn't receive charity often and when they did, they liked to do melodramatic things like swearing oaths of allegiance. Though not everyone was like that, as you would always find some snakes among them.

Things like this were happening back in the houses of the other clan members, each of them young or old was slowly reinforcing their cultivation base. Their bodies were getting cleared up from the imperfections while their foundation pillars increased, or got repaired. They were quite thankful to their young Patriarch that at this moment was moonwalking while thrusting his hips back and forth, in his crafting abode.

This act of improving techniques might have been easy to him thanks to his system, in reality, something like this required an unfathomable amount of knowledge. People could live for many hundreds of years and this was how far the old members of the clan brought their techniques too. Even if someone was able to improve something, most of the time they would keep it to themselves in the hopes of rising up. Most people didn't see a reason to share their hard work with others, they wanted to elevate themselves first. If they managed to do that, then if they had the time they would throw some scraps at the others.

Matt had a different mindset than these people, he would rather have more people uplift themselves together. He hoped that a domino effect would start and everyone would start improving together. But he knew well that it wasn't that easy, he would need to slowly change the mindset of these people. First, he would need to get past that dungeon, he already had something in mind for when they got back. He would introduce new institutions and laws, there would be more jobs for the common populace so there would be a lot of work ahead of them.

Time passed and Matt was finally out of his crafting chamber. He wobbled out and placed his hand on the nearby wall. His other hand was placed on his forehead, which he rubbed while giving out a loud sigh. He had to dance, not once, not twice, but over two hundred times. He even managed to fail a couple of times, which resulted in something of a lower grade.

"If I have to line dance one more time... think I'll vomit... what's wrong with those Americans?"

The thing about the dance dance revolution crafting was, that if you crafted the exact item over and over, it tended to use the same song. On this occasion, it was the country classic line dance. It wasn't all that difficult, but the longer he did it the more annoying it got.

"Well, at least when I was crafting the officer armor I got to listen to some MJ"

He looked into his spatial ring, he had all two hundred elite soldier robes in there along with the twenty officer robes. All of the robes had the Chinese symbol for the Zhang clan on them. If you looked at the robes and the masks, there was one word that came to mind, that word was 'edgy'. Even then, they were a lot more functional than the regular robes that the clan was using. The old ones were quite baggy and had long sleeves that got in the way.

Besides looking 'cool' the robes had more advantages. They were a lot more resistant, being able to tank a couple of good hits that were above the level of the person that was using them. The user could even pump in some spiritual energy for a greater temporary defensive buff. They had a function that helped the user collect ambient spiritual energy, it had buffs to water elements and various other stat boosts.

Hm, should I get a mask for myself too... Eh, probably better to just get my body refining up for defense.

I don't know if I need to make those common grade weapons for the kids. The clan has a lot of those in stock, even the perfect grade ones. But the perfect grade mortal ones are a different thing, most of those got lost in the first expedition.

He dived back into his crafting abode after massaging his legs, he had all stats for his officers, what type of weapon they liked and what type of skills they used. Luckily besides Zhang Zhi no one was using a weapon that wasn't fit for them, so they didn't need retraining. He wanted to try maxing out those advanced grades, he had a lot of cores to use up.

First, he made a sword for the man in question, this wasn't a long sword-like he used but a katana. There were many types of swords and bladed weapons to make, but after further examining the man's affinity he could see that he was suited for the weeb weapon of choice. He could already imagine the man doing quick draw techniques and bisecting people, their bodies slowly breaking into two parts while he looked into the distance.

I got lucky that the sword technique manual was fit for katanas as well.

Even though the weapons fit into a certain bracket, it didn't mean that a 'sword technique' could be used with any type of sword. It was different to wield a two-handed longsword than it was to use a broadsword, even though they both were considered swords. Luckily for our brainy Patriarch, the Zhang Clan technique was quite varied and could be used for swords that had a blade on one side. He would have to pay attention to things like this, otherwise, he would run out of points soon.

*Would be nice if I could modify more techniques as well... but... not enough time for that."

He packed his gear after he was finished, it was almost time to hand the items out along with the techniques that he upgraded. After this, he would lock himself in his chambers and cultivate till the late stage both in body and cultivation. He would have Zhang Jin and the others instruct the juniors, for now. He would probably take a while to advance as the closer he got to the late stage the slower the progress was.

Chapter 78

A large group of youths approached a certain room, there were many people close to the walls acting as guards. Before they were let in everyone was searched thoroughly. The atmosphere was tense as everyone was searched, no one knew what the fuss was all about they were just ordered to come here by the top brass.

These people were the two hundred Qi condensation expedition participants that were chosen through the tournament. The oldest one from them was twenty, while the youngest was Zhang Xue that was fifteen. Everyone here was devoted to the clan, no one with a shifty character would actually come this far. All of the people that valued their life more than they valued their clan, were already thinking about what they would do when the expedition probably failed again. It wouldn't be hard to leave the city on the pretense of a journey or business and just wait it out, some people like that were already packing up.

After everyone went through the check they were guided further into another room, there were a lot of stairs going down. They went further into the inner sanctum and into places not many people had been before. They were led into the dimensional regalia room, Zhang Jin was already waiting for everyone.

Zhang Dong could give partial ownership to his magical treasure, he was kind of the administrator who could give moderator spots to other cultivators.

The medallion was hidden in the middle of the room, without giving off any immortal treasure fluctuations no one would be able to tell that the dimensional treasure was there. Most would just assume that the whole room was the portal to the separate small dimension. Everyone had already been given the finger poke of pain to the forehead by Zhang Dong while he was passing down the cultivation knowledge a few days ago. He would give an update about that a month later, but for now, he wanted to focus on his cultivation progress while everyone else did the same.

“Everyone gather up, anything that will happen in these next two months can not leave this room, is that understood?”

“YES, GRAND ELDER!”

Everyone responded while shouting out loud, but thanks to the silencing formations nothing could be heard outside. Zhang Jin looked at the promising youths in front of him, his heart started hurting as he knew that he was sending these poor children to a place they would probably never return from. He was hoping that somehow his grandson could pull off a miracle as he did before, but he was a special case, these youths were far, far weaker.

“I won’t bore you with a long speech, but know this. A crisis can be an opportunity in disguise! Now go train well and train hard, the Zhang Clan is depending on your success.”

Zhang Jin waved his hand, the youths in the room could detect a vortex forming in the middle of the room. They were all prompted toward it by the grand elder and started vanishing into the pocket dimension one after another. After everyone was in, the old man gave out a sigh and returned upstairs. He had other things to tend to, there were many things to prepare like what he would do to protect the city while his grandson was outside. Even if he returned victoriously, some enemies might try to pull a fast one while the strongest cultivator from the city is away.

“It’s always the old farts like me that are left in the end...”

The grand elder wouldn’t be taking part in the training, he was just there to let people in and out. The twenty formation establishments officers were already in the pocket dimension getting ready to introduce themselves to their squad of ten. They would be responsible for their formation training along with some helpers to do the dirty work. There was only one problem with the teams, Zhang Jie demanded to have her kids in the same squad. She whined her motion to her grandpa, he had the freedom in choosing as their Patriarch left it to him.

There was a conflict of interest if you had a close family member in places like the military. Others might see their comrades in arms getting preferential treatment which might lower the morale or cause fights. It was slightly different here though, as this was a clan where everyone was kind of related. There were cousins and siblings everywhere though most of the ties run quite thin. After some deliberation, Zhang Jin agreed.

A crowd soon appeared, the cultivators looked around in astonishment none of them had ever been to a pocket dimension before. Their eyes scanned the surroundings, there wasn’t that much in here besides the big building but they could also see other training areas getting set up. They could see some training

dummies for close combat and long combat practice. Some spots were devoid of grass and they had symbols written down on the ground, these were to aid people in their formation training, helping them remember the spots they were supposed to stand in.

There were some impromptu tents set up, with things like 'Armory' or 'Cafeteria' written on it. There wasn't much time to construct a proper building and the large 'dorm' in the middle only had space for the living quarters and nothing besides that. The twenty officers greeted their soldiers as they entered, the juniors quickly straightening up as they saw their elders.

"Listen up everyone, when you hear your name you will go to your assigned team. You will be given further instructions by your team's lieutenant."

The youths looked at each other, one of them raised a hand after the elder was done talking. The elder in question gave a nod, letting the junior speak out.

"Um, excuse me elder Zhi... what's a lieutenant?"

The people here didn't really have any military ranks, what did you need an army for if one guy could just bulldoze through a city. The clans mostly took the form of the soldiers and they had their inner family ties and rankings, the sects had all the outer and inner disciple designations. There was no organized military structure around here, most cities were self-sufficient city-states with the clans acting as the lords or kings.

"Lieutenants are leaders of a platoon."

Zhang Zhi replied while his eyebrow twitched a bit, but he just saw more confusion in the youth's eyes.

"A platoon is a team of cultivators acting as a unit..."

He tried to recall what the Patriarch said while he was giving them the orders, he just gave them some unique names and divided them into smaller teams. Also for some reason he wanted to be called 'General Dong' instead of the Patriarch, he couldn't really argue with the man though. They also received new robes, these were some state of the art garments as he could feel the flow of spiritual energy, these were clearly earth grade treasures.

"Your lieutenant will explain everything to you in detail later, just follow the instructions. I'll begin calling out names for my platoon first then."

People started getting called out, if Matt was here he would probably get dizzy from all the similar-sounding names. Soon enough Zhang Jie stepped out and started gathering her own group. Zhang Xue and Liu were a part of it, besides that there were twin 18-year old girls named Zhang Mii and Zhang Yuu. There was a chubby fellow by the name Zhang Hong, a tall burly looking male with a beard that looked older than he actually was, called Zhang Peng.

Besides those six there were four more youths, the first one Zhang Tai he was a bit special as he was the person that scored the highest in the tournament. He looked like your average young master with a resting bitch face, he was already scoffing at his team members. The second one was Zhang Teng, his face was a bit elongated making him look like a snake, he was also grinning constantly. The third person was called Zhang Ai, she had a more mature vibe than the other girls in the group with a body to match.

The last person was a small looking youth by the name Zhang Bao he looked very meek, with his neck long hair covering up his eyes.

This would be the 9th Platoon, they ranged from the youngest Zhang Xue to the oldest Zhang Peng that was already twenty. Zhang Jie looked at the group of kids, she was ordered to help them train with the help of some other clan members. She was still apprehensive about her kids coming along, but at least she would be there with them if something happened.

“Well then young ones, first its time to gather your equipment.”

Zhang Jie followed the instructions and went with the kids to the armory tent. In there they could get their ‘battle robes’ and weapons, as they arrived they were already the 9th team there. They could see people leaving the tent carrying some things, there weren’t enough spatial rings for everyone so they had to carry their gear manually.

“Oh, that’s some good stuff...”

Zhang Teng mentioned while grinning as he checked out some of the things the other juniors were carrying out, no one was actually wearing the robes just yet. After going inside they started receiving their gear, everyone got excited as they felt the mortal grade energy radiation coming off the robes. Though they were a bit skeptical about the designs, they looked at the ominous-looking masks, not sure if they were safe to use.

“You’ll find these magical robes to be quite high quality, they are very resistant and don’t get in the way at all.”

The quartermaster chimed in, while everyone was looking at the presented items. The kids could also pick out a perfect grade common weapon for themselves if they needed one, but most of them already had theirs. On from the twins chuckled while putting on the mask, quite curious about the features it had.

“Hey, hey Mii? how do I look!”

The helmet looked like a front mask at first, but when you placed it closer to your face it would envelop the entire head from all sides. The girl shrieked out a bit as the helmet shut itself around her head, but noticed that it didn’t impend her vision at all. The eyes shined a bit with an azure light as she looked around. She could already tell that it enhanced her optical senses in various ways.

“Yuu... you look funny...”

Zhang Mii snickered to herself while her twin looked around while wearing the new item. She also wanted to try it out, but before she could do so she heard a loud snort.

“Knock it off you two, just take the magical items and be quiet.”

It was Zhang Tai, annoyed by how the way these clan members of his were acting, this wasn’t a place for kids to be playing. He just grabbed the robe and helmet and left the tent, bumping into Zhang Bao on his way out and making him fall onto his butt.

“Watch were you are going, hmph!”

He held his nose up high and headed to the large building in the middle of the closed of space, they were told to do that after they were done with picking up the gear. Zhang Liu helped the shorter clan member up to his feet, a bit dejected how that other senior brother was acting.

“Don’t mind him, Senior brother Tai is like that... but you can count on his skills.”

Zhang Liu didn’t want to admit it, but he was weaker than that senior brother of his. Even with his new master’s skills he still needed to catch up. But with the Patriarch upgrading everyone’s skills as well, he might have a harder time doing that now. The others stopped playing around after that, everyone grabbed their items while Zhang Jie hurried them on as well. She needed to show them their rooms and then brief them in on the training schedule.

The twins were staying in one room, while Xue and Ai were together in another one. The muscular youth ended up with the stuck up Zhang Tai, Liu shared his room with the chubby brother. That left Peng and Bao in the last room, the smaller youth was a bit scared of the snake-like youth that kept staring at him with a giant grin on his face all the time. Training would be starting soon, so everyone was ordered to change into their new robes and meet outside. They would mostly be training in the new body refining art and the formations, besides their regular cultivation techniques. The boot camp was finally on its way!

Chapter 79

The pocket dimension had its own light source in the distance, no one knew if it was real or an illusion because if you left the small rock formation you would quickly run out of air. Every platoon was gathered outside the dorm building, each officer was standing in front of their squad while another member of the Zhang Clan was in the middle.

“By the order of the Patriarch, I will be your ‘Drill Sergeant’. From now on you will speak only when spoken to, and the first and last words out of your filthy sewers will be ‘Sir.’ Do you maggots understand that? If you do, reply with “Sir, yes Sir!”

The Drill Sergeant was a middle-aged man, with a military-like haircut and scars all over his face. The man was trying to keep a straight face as this was ordered by the Patriarch himself. He had written down some mean sounding quotes to him and told him to use them while training the juniors. The foundation establishment elders wouldn’t be part of the training drills, so they were free to train on their own accord for now. The formation training would be practiced later, first came the physical drills and some sparring among the youths.

“...Sir yes, Sir!”

The kids shouted out, some of them feeling a bit dejected at the treatment.

“If you juniors leave this island, if you survive the training, you will be a weapon. You will be a minister of death, praying for war. But until that day, you are nothing but unorganized pieces of amphibian excrement.”

Question marks could be seen above the youth’s heads when the ‘amphibian’ was mentioned, from the context they somehow knew that it wasn’t anything good. While the foundation establishment elder was belittling the new soldiers, he was exuding an aura that was making the Qi condensation juniors

buckle under the strain. Everyone in the surroundings was starting to feel pressured, this clearly wasn't going to be easy. After some shouting they finally left for a run, the robes they were carrying had a function to decrease and increase the weight just for this. The juniors quickly found themselves sweating profusely under the increased weight of their enchanted clothing.

The first one to fall behind was Zhang Hong, due to his increased bodyweight he wasn't really fit for cardio all that much and collapsed. The drill sergeant instantly was on him, shouting and even kicking his rear end to get a move on, some of his fellow platoon members helped him up and they all started moving once more. The Sergeant looked at the fatty wobble away, now remembering a certain instruction that he got. The clan leader had told him, that if there was someone that started falling behind the others, he should let up on him just a bit, even more, if he was overweight. He wasn't sure why, but he would follow orders to not be so hard on Zhang Hong.

The drill Sergeant pulled out a jade slip, on it he had all the lines that the Patriarch gave him. He looked at it, his eyebrows twitching slightly while he sighed inwardly. Orders were orders and he would follow them to a t, he moistened up his lips and started talking while the youths were jogging around the compound. The Patriarch kind of told him to try to sing this part, he wasn't sure about that though. He also didn't know what the 'Totally original Patriarch lyrics, plz don't steal :)' at the end meant.

"Let's get down to business, to defeat our foes. Did they send me servants, when I asked for cultivators?"

"You're the saddest bunch I ever met, but you can bet before we're through. Junior, I'll make a cultivator out of you!"

The training switched to hand to hand combat, the platoons competed against each other as they were learning some basic teamwork. Most of the time they were bumping into each other though, the 9th platoon wasn't doing all that well as Zhang Peng liked to solo everyone, letting his muscles do the talking. Zhang Ai liked to hang in the back while spamming ranged attacks, just using her teammates as meat shields. This resulted in her hitting Peng in the back of the head with a water serpent technique while he broke of defensive formation to attack an enemy. Some semblance of teamwork could be seen between the two pairs of siblings, the twins along with Xue and Liu were somehow not getting into each other's way.

"Tranquil as a forest but on fire within. Once you find your center, you are sure to win. You're a spineless, pale, pathetic lot And you haven't got a clue. Somehow I'll make a cultivator out of you."

A week had passed now, the members were still not doing that well as they were slowly learning the ropes with the formation arts. You could see the formation's blue lights all over the place as everyone tried to make the shield appear. Some of the platoons were succeeding while some were nowhere near finished, their shields breaking and the people suffering cultivation backlash from the rampant spiritual energies in the area.

"I'm never gonna catch my breath, say goodbye to those who knew me..."

Zhang Hong said while collapsing, his robe all sweaty from the constant running and physical training that he was being forced to do by the drill sergeant.

"Boy, was I a fool for not preparing more, Now I really wish that I didn't come here."

Said Zhang Teng as he suffered a hit to the face from a clan member during a mock battle against the 7th platoon, his team members just looking at him as he ate dirt.

“Be a Zhang! We must be swift as the coursing river. Be a Zhang! With all the force of a great typhoonBe a Zhang! With all the strength of a raging fire, Mysterious as the dark side of the moon!”

Which of the moons did the drill Sergeant even mean, thought the youths while their physiques were getting better and better. Their understanding of the two formations was increasing as they didn’t blunder so much anymore. There were even close to moving on to the next step of every clan member forming a giant formation together.

“Time is racing toward us till the Patriarch arrives, Heed my every order and you might survive Even if you’re unsuited for the rage of war, Don’t pack up and be through because I’ll make a cultivator out of you!”

Three weeks in the juniors were showing promise, they were all working together with each other. You could see a large muscular man together with a wide chubby youth standing side by side while shielding their teammate from attacks while she charged up a finishing move. The team mentality was slowly clicking together as even the unlikable Zhang Tai was seen working together with a smaller junior, pummeling away at some other platoon people. Everyone was slowly singing the catchy tune that the drill instructor repeated each day, it started getting integrated into their minds.

“Be a Zhang! We must be swift as the coursing river. Be a Zhang! With all the force of a great typhoonBe a Zhang! With all the strength of a raging fire, Mysterious as the dark side of the moon!”

After the ‘training montage’ was over, they all returned to the dorms to talk. They had all increased their mastery in their techniques, but they still needed to do more. There was still about a month left before the time was up, they could still level up their masteries and get better. Due to spending so much time with people with the same mindset everyone started slowly thinking as a unit, the petty squabbles between the purebloods and the side families were shoved to the side while everyone concentrated on the future of the Zhang family.

At this time Zhang Dong was not in the vicinity of the Zhang Clan, he was on a tall mountain experiencing an increase in power. The lightning energies in him were a lot more chaotic this time which caused a huge explosion. Any creature in the vicinity would get electrocuted as the cultivator in white hovered in the air slightly. Yes, he was hovering this was an early sign of a cultivator getting close to the nascent soul level as experts of that caliber didn’t require flying swords anymore.

He couldn’t fly just yet though, as you required a lot more juice to do that without a flying sword to hold you up. Matt was only at the late stage now, but he could give anyone at the pinnacle of the core formation a run for their money due to his immortal grade cultivation method. He was frowning though, looking at his opened palm on which the blue lightning energy was forming.

“Damn, it took me a whole damn month to finally get through to the late stage...”

He noticed a serious decline in his advancement speed, it still was swifter than any other cultivators, but it would take him at least a year to get to the great circle at this rate.

“Guess cultivating more won’t make that much of a difference, but every bit counts... maybe I should try getting some new skills, the guys should be back with the spirit stones by now.”

He had a minor amount of points left, not enough to do anything with them. He wanted to get enough to upgrade to that golden lightning art, but he needed a million for that, and he didn’t think he would be able to gather that many spirit stones from the sales. The clan blew through all of the resources that they had stashed behind, so there wouldn’t be much more. What was left was hunting beasts, gathering points from his students, or just cultivating more as even one percent more in the cultivation art made him slightly stronger.

He looked through the wanted lists, but since his last hunt, most of the criminals were laying low. People were afraid of the strange cultivator that was hunting core formation criminals, so most of the evil cultivators decided to hide and wait it out. All of them had long life spans, so waiting a couple of years wasn’t that hard. Matt, on the other hand, didn’t have much time left, so spending time on a needle in a haystack was out of the question.

Heh, wonder if that guy actually followed my instructions...

He got a bit curious as he returned back to the Zhang clan, a month had passed and he saw his disciples progressing in their skills a bit. There wasn’t a big change though as the focus was teamwork and formations instead of cultivation arts. When he arrived, no one noticed him as he was hiding his aura. He peeked at the youths that were training and could hear them singing the tune that he butchered a bit.

Haha, they are really doing it.

Matt was holding his hand to his mouth, trying not to burst out into laughter. Soon enough he was spotted by some people, the small floating land didn’t really have many places where a white-haired buff dude could hide. He came out of hiding, which caused everyone to take notice and stop with the training. Everyone gave him a proper bow, they were all wearing the gear that he made which made them look like a small army of Chūnibyōs.

Well... I got myself an army of edgy teenagers, who can stop me now?

He nodded at the people, telling them if they could show him the fruits of their labor. They demonstrated the formation techniques, some of the youths were quite nervous while looking at their patriarch which caused some fumbles here and there but somehow they pulled through. The giant two hundred people formation needed some work though, he told them to form the water serpent one so that he could test the formation’s power.

Matt watched as the crowd worked together like an almost well-oiled machine, they quickly got into their designated spots and started forming the large water serpent. It was quite huge, larger than his avatar form with the many cultivators floating around in its spirit energy body. They were all in the lotus position, with the strongest member that was Zhang Zhi in the snakes head acting as the core. He was controlling the giant thing, the snake gave out a roar that blew the Patriarch’s hair a bit.

“Well then, give me all you’ve got.”

Matt produced his lightning shield, setting it up in front of the snake. He was quite used to the technique now so he was even able to layer the barriers together. He made it so that the first one was the weakest starting off at the foundation establishment lower level, all up to the late stage of the core formation. He wanted to see how far the attack would breach in, hoping that it would at least get through the early core formation level.

The snake opened its mouth, he could see the sharp watery fangs protruding. A large water ball was forming in that maw, he could see the spiritual energy getting sucked in from the surroundings like a whirlpool, then a bright blue beam of light was fired off towards the shields. The cultivators inside the battle formation grimaced from the skill usage, the attack draining them of their spiritual energy.

The beam attack hit the shield, going through the first three barriers without a problem stopping briefly on the fourth one before blasting through it as well. When it hit the fifth one it stopped though, this one was the early stage of core formation. The beam continued as the snake kept at with the attack, the people within giving their best to not disappoint the Patriarch. Due to this, you could see some of the youths passing out and flopping out of the formation due to spiritual energy depletion.

After seeing that, Zhang Dong wanted to stop the test but he noticed the determination in their eyes. The attack continued and the shield finally started to show cracks and with a resounding boom, it shattered to pieces. The attack hit the next barrier, but before it could do any more damage the formation started breaking and it collapsed due to too many cultivators tiring themselves out.

“Okay that’s enough, you did well. It can be used as a trump card, you just need to keep the formation more stable.”

Zhang Dong nodded while trying to give his clan people a pep talk. The youths seemed invigorated as he saw some of them smiling while panting, probably proud of their monthly achievement.

“But don’t get cocky, there is still much more work to be done.”

He ended it on a serious note, time was of the essence and there wasn’t much more left as the last month started ticking down.

Chapter 80

The people looked as the Patriarch turned around and vanished into thin air after they showed off their skills. He didn’t test them out on the defensive formation, but not like they had enough spiritual energy left for that. The Zhang Clan members were in high spirits though, they managed to break through the leader’s strong barrier quite a bit. The moment the man came in they could feel the high energy fluctuations from him. The younger members couldn’t tell much, but people like Zhang Zhi felt the increase in Zhang Dong’s power after he formed the shield that could block an attack of a late stage core formation expert.

He wasn’t showing the full extent of his power.

The man thought to himself while sitting down into a lotus position to gather his energies. He looked at the youths around him, he didn’t think that they would be able to train them up so well. The strange military methods seemed to be working, the catchy workout song was also doing its thing. The upgraded techniques were a lot easier to master and the youths, as well as the elders, were progressing at

breakneck speeds. The spiritual energy in this artifact was quite pure so that helped with the training as well.

“Everyone you have an hour to rest, we will resume further training afterward, you did well.”

The younger members were sweating a lot more than the foundation establishment elders that looked slightly out of breath. Though they were invigorated after this test run, they just saw their new Patriarch he was quite the celebrity around the clan.

“Did you hear that. The Patriarch said that we did well!”

One of the tired youths said while he flopped onto his back and panted.

“Yes yes, I think he also smiled in my direction, such a manly smile!”

One of the females said while other members looked at her with narrowed eyes. Zhang Zhi’s lower lip quivered as he got ignored by the younger generation that started talking about the Patriarch and didn’t even reply to his comment. He let this transgression slide this time, as he also was a bit excited that the man that improved his arts gave them a passing grade.

He was also right about my spear training

After he received the katana, he was in a bind as he had to train in the sword art manual that he got. He was apprehensive at first, thinking that if he didn’t see any progress within a week he would just return the sword and skill manual to the leader. But to his surprise, after he started training he noticed that the sword was like an extension of his body. He was already a seasoned cultivator and warrior, he knew how long it normally took to learn a new fighting style. The speed at which he was immersing himself in the sword Dao was astonishing. Day by day he found himself improving, getting past the beginner stage and advancing further rather easily.

The sword does indeed fit me more than the spear, wish I knew this sooner. But how did the Patriarch know about this, he just examined me briefly with his spiritual sense... truly wonderful.

The figure of Zhang Dong was getting bigger and bigger in the eyes of his clan members, making them think that the man was some kind of one in a billion genius. The cultivators in this world already tended to show sect-like behaviors, having the leader’s opinion outweigh their own or their families. Matt was slowly getting put up on a pedestal in the mind of these people, he did make them stronger and did it for free, this was mostly enough for cultivators to pledge their allegiance to the person responsible.

While people were overestimating Matt, he walked out of the secret chambers wanting to check out if there were any spirit stones he could gobble up. His system point tank was on empty after having upgraded so many techniques and frankly, they weren’t all that great anyway. The most he spent was on his grandpa’s cultivation technique getting that thing to not halt the cultivation process was quite costly. Upgrading unfinished or incomplete techniques cost a lot more than just upgrading finished ones. Guess it was easier to renovate an old building than to rebuild a half-finished one.

He was greeted by his accountant Zhang Kuo, well at least that’s what Matt started thinking the man was as he was mostly responsible for the numbers. After selling off all the weapons he had gained some spirit stones, but it wasn’t nearly enough. He spent all the crafting resources on the robes and weapons

for his clan members. The rest were used on weapons that he could absorb, finally managing to get his body into the late-stage along with his regular cultivation level.

This isn't enough to evolve my lightning cultivation into that golden one... Should I try hunting for some core formation beasts...

There was less than a month remaining, the dark palm sect had given them instructions to gather their forces in a certain place at a certain time. The Zhang Clan had one flying ship left, it looked like a large galeon with a dragonhead at the front. It was different from regular ships, it didn't have sails or anything as everything around this world worked on spiritual energy. It was the last one the whole clan had, as the ones that it previously used in the first expedition never came back, probably pawned off by the dark palm sect or some other clans. He would probably look into that later and get their stuff back.

The trip there will take about a week, so that leaves less than three weeks to tie up loose ends around here...

The option of running away was still open for Matt, but for some reason, he didn't feel like it. He was slowly bonding with these strange people and their quirky ways, finding it funny as they overreacted when they saw him do 'unfathomable' things. They were clearly a violent bunch, but most of them were good people. There was also the thing that he promised to himself, not wanting to be a coward anymore.

"Well, hold the fort while I'm out Kuo. I'll be heading to the mountains but I'll be close by. You know how to reach me if something happens."

Matt headed out to cultivate at the mountain peaks and maybe hunt some beasts for points, he might get lucky in his travels. While he was charging into the distance on his flying sword, the light in the hidden pocket dimension was dimming. The people there noticed that the place had a night and day cycle, the nights took about eight to nine hours.

The dorm was quiet as most juniors were resting, but there were four youths sneaking to a certain place. The dorm was only used for living, there was nothing besides the rooms that could be used for sleeping, no plumbing or lights to speak of. But the water wasn't a problem around here, so the people just dug out a couple of holes and transported some spring water from the outside. The water had healing properties and could also help with stamina recovery. There was a separate place for the boys and girls, blocked away by a large bamboo wall. The youths in question were clearly heading for that wall.

"E-elder brother Teng, are you sure about this... if we get caught w-we will be severely punished."

Zhang Bao asked while he looked at the grinning elder brother that was smiling and licking his lips. There were two large males behind him as well, the buff Zhang Peng and the round Zhang Hong that had replaced some of that fat with muscle now, but he still looked round as a ball. The smallest from the bunch was blushing, still wondering how he got himself into this. He was just outside to pee when he saw the trio sneaking out of the dorm, he went to check on them but they just pulled him along to go peek at the girls.

“No need to fear, my part of the family is renowned for their hiding skills and the Patriarch even improved on our skill so if you just follow my instructions, the lovely thighs of junior Sister Xue and the lovely front peaks of Sister Ai will be all for us to behold!”

The youth's started doing obscene motions with his fingers almost drooling while talking about the peaks in question. The other two members that got roped in had dopey expressions as well. The burly guy looked like a perverted older man, the chubby fellow seemed to be salivating as if he saw a jelly-filled doughnut in front of himself to devour.

“Little bro hehe, you remember how the elders told us to work together, we must get through this as a team!”

“Yes Bao, remember what the drill sergeant said, it's all for the team, it's a team-building exercise!”

The three looked like hungry wolves sneaking through the night, due to Teng's sneaking technique their footsteps were muffled as he could produce a mist around the whole group making them hard to spot within the dark night. The idiot quartet approached the bamboo wall, they could hear the girls chatting on the inside. The group clearly went out the moment they saw their female team members leave to take a bath, as the four girls were talking inside.

“Oh, little Xue your hair sure is shiny, what do you use to keep your hair so smooth and soft?”

“Not much, think it might be the cultivation art that Master taught me, my hair turned white too.”

“Not fair, I also want to be the Patriarch's disciple, do you think he will take me in as well?”

“He looks so dashing, not like the boys from our group.”

The males heard their names getting mentioned as the girls chatted, though it wasn't anything good. Teng was thought to be a big pervert, due to his snake-like appearance that gave the girls the chills. Peng was said to look like an old uncle and was too buff for the girls taste, Hong... well Hong was just a thick boy, the girls were scared of him crushing them. There wasn't much said about Bao, Liu and Tai got some praise from the girls though they didn't like the older ones stuck up attitude. The girls laughed as they joked that elder brother Tai looked like he was constantly constipated.

The pervy youths were listening but at the same time working on the next stage of their masterplan. The next stage would be poking a hole in the wall so that they could peek on the girls, what could go wrong? It was just bamboo, they were high-level cultivators they should be able to poke a hole in it with their fingers by now. But while the three hornballs were pushing their cheeks against the wall, as they tried to listen in the bamboo started buckling under their combined weight.

The wall started to shake as the young male's hormones got out of control. The females on the other side noticed the shaking wall, it was giving out under the weight. Hong had gotten too excited and tripped, slamming into Peng on the way making the two large males fall face-first on the bamboo, which gave out in seconds. The girls saw three males on the collapsed wall one was missing though as Teng was nowhere to be seen, he had dissolved into mist the second the wall started falling down and made his escape. Using the commotion to get out before the impending thrashing.

*Kekeke, oh well guess I'll try another time alone~”

“Kyaaaaa... damn perverts!”

A girl screamed loudly alerting all the other women in the spring, everyone started covering up while the three guys sweated profusely. They looked back to their ‘leader’ but he had vanished into thin air, long gone.

“Team building my ass!”

The three youths shouted in unison while trying to run, but there were too many angry women around them cutting off their escape route. Teng sneaked away while the other three youths were pummeled by the angry girls on the other side. The four females from their platoon weren’t the only ones in there, so there were many more girls eager to stomp them good. The three youths’ faces looked like they were stung by bees and they had an allergic reaction after the beating was done. Their lips were swollen and many bruises could be seen on their bodies, the three were pulled away by an elder to get treated.

The next day, the three were punished by Zhang Jie that was fuming with anger due to her daughter being in the bath while the three were peeping. Though after some scolding she let them go, they were beaten badly so there wasn’t really a reason to punish them more. She didn’t see the part where the three youths started chasing their snaky looking friend with drawn weapons, the drill sergeant didn’t know people could run so fast. He just saw a blurry snake-like youth sprinting away, with fear in his eyes.

“Get back here, I won’t be satisfied until I punch your face at least ten times!”

Zhang Peng shouted while wielding his knuckle looking weapon, that covered both his forearms.

“Hey, it’s not my fault that you lard asses can’t keep quiet! Lieutenant Jie save me!”

While this was happening the girls were looking at the four with shifty eyes, Zhang Liu was just laughing to the side while the last male member from the platoon didn’t know what those four fools were doing, so he just jogged on.