

## Unfathomable 81

### Chapter 81

Matt was close to Spirit Spring city, bringing up his status screen, his brows were furrowed and his face was showing a frown.

<b>Name :</b>	<b>Zhang Dong</b>
<b>Affiliation :</b>	<b>Zhang Clan</b>
<b>Spirit Points :</b>	<b>223267</b>
<b>Cultivation Base Qi :</b>	<b>Core Formation [Late Stage 2 %] (Empowered Lightning Core)</b>
<b>Cultivation Base Body :</b>	<b>Core Formation [Late Stage 7 %] (Golden Body)</b>
<b>Techniques :</b>	<b>Empowered Lightning Qi cultivation art, Golden Body Arts, Thunderlight Sword, Thunder Movement Art...</b>
<b>Dao :</b>	<b>Dao of Heavenly Lightning, Dao of Smithing and Crafting</b>
<b>Other :</b>	<b>Senior Aura, Impartation of Knowledge, Mentor's Eyes, Appraisal...</b>

There was a big problem there, three weeks had passed and he had gained a small number of points. The plan was to find a breeding ground of some demonic beasts or insect-like beasts. He was aiming for creatures like ants, that multiplied rapidly, aiming for quantity instead of quality after failing to find anything at the core formation level. He did find a burrow of some termite looking monsters after a while, there were many of them but soon a problem arose. He wasn't getting any points, he stopped getting points for creatures below the 12th Qi condensation level and for those he got 1 point.

All the spirit points for foundation establishment beings also dropped by half or more, so killing monsters or anything for points became a hassle. This all happened after he reached the late stage, if he knew this he would just remain at 99% and wipe out some insect monster nests for quick points.

\*God fucking dammit, I screwed myself over...\*

He scoured the surroundings for more monsters to hunt, but due to his increased level, the mobs just kept running away. He couldn't hide that much due to the fact that his aura was radiating out as he flew on his sword. If he didn't fly around, he wouldn't get anything done as the world was vast and the distances between places were ridiculous. In the end, he managed to get some cores and demonic beasts at the foundation level, but not nearly enough to get to one million points.

There were some points though, he could get some battle skills to up his powers. He found one that would work nicely in tandem with his avatar form and his golden body.

Spiritual Condensing [Earth Perfect Grade ] This skill lets the cultivator compress his spiritual energy into his body, works well with techniques that exude aura or enlarge the user via energy constructs. It

compresses the energies to bring out a dramatic increase in both power and speed. It can't be sustained for a long period of time, or the cultivator might suffer a backlash.

This looked like a skill that would work well with his avatar form. So he bought it and immediately tested it out. His body ballooned up past what he was able to achieve in his avatar form while being in the mid-stage of core formation. After reaching his maximum height he activated the condensing skill, his avatar form started shrinking and shrinking giving out strange crumpling sounds in the process. After reaching about two meters it stopped, he looked like a miniature version of his avatar form but he could already feel a difference.

He did some side dashes, utilizing his movement technique. But due to his now increased stats, he misjudged where he would end up as he did the sidestep. He promptly ended up hitting the side of a big boulder, pulverizing the stationary object in the process. You could see a deep blue glowing energy being walking out from the crushed boulder, lightning energy crackling with each step he made.

\*Okay, this will take some time getting used too.\*

He did a couple more tests, utilizing various attacking skills and defensive ones as he tried to feel out his new form. But after a couple of minutes he felt drained, his new form started flickering as he had trouble of keeping the two techniques stacked together, finally going down to one knee and panting.

\*Damn, the power increase is there but I can't keep it up for long.\*

His hands felt twitchy and he could see his veins pulsating on his forearm, he felt that if he kept the form up for too long that his veins would start bursting from inside. The power and speed increase was immense, this was a trump card that could be used scarcely. He tried using the technique without the avatar form, it made his frame flicker with energy. The drain on his stamina was lessened but the increase in power and speed was lowered as well.

Just as the explanation said, the skill forcefully stopped his energies from leaving his body. Condensing them together for a short term power explosion. Matt also felt that the backlash was milder than it should be, this was probably due to his body refining skill that made him quite sturdy. Probably without it, he would be covered in his own blood by now.

\*Damn, buying these skills without proper training isn't that smart. If I got this thing in the middle of the battle, I could burst like a tomato.\*

He wanted to get more skills to get more powerful, he also wanted to save the points for his advancement. He thought he was covered in most places, he wished he could get some healing skills but without the holy element, he couldn't use them that well. He even tried using the Zhang clan healing arts but he found another problem. Besides his lightning affinity that was in the S grade, all the other elemental affinities were of the F grade. He would need to study up on the other elemental daos if he wished to use them.

\*Guess this is the downside with a specialized build...\*

Heavenly Lightning Terrain [Earth Grade Perfect ]This technique creates a limited field around the user, passively discharging lightning energies that damage the opponents without affecting the user. The field

fills the area with lightning qi thus lowering the battle power of enemies that aren't versed in the lightning dao.

This skill worked well with the new one he got and with all of his other skills. It was more or less an active buff to all of his skills, all of his attacks would be empowered in this field while the people that he fought would get a debuff and even receive damage over time effects.

He was back at the Zhang Clan compound, his edgy army had just left the pocket dimension and was packing up. Luckily due to the spatial ring technology, there wasn't really much to carry around, so they just needed to say their goodbyes before heading out. The trip to the secret ground would take about a week so they had to leave now.

He had all of his things in his ring as well, he looked at the people that were hugging their family members. Some were crying, some were cheering their elder brothers and sisters on. Some looked angry, some looked dejected there were various expressions plastered on their faces.

Zhang Jin was standing next to him, not saying much as the two looked on. After some time, Zhang Kuo came to report that everything was ready and they could depart at any moment.

"It's time to leave..."

Matt said with a solemn tone, then nodded at Zhang Kuo the man just bowed before leaving. Matt looked to his elderly grandpa, this time it was he who placed a hand on his shoulder.

"Well, I'll leave the place to you, don't stay up all night bothering the ladies old man."

"Hah, leave it to this Zhang Jin I'll protect the city while you are away!"

Zhang Jin just smirked, giving his grandson a nod as the two parted. The defensive formation has been upgraded slightly as well during Matt's upgrading spree, so it could work for months at maximum output. The clan would be safe for some time, but how long they would be gone was still a mystery.

Zhang Dong hopped up onto the large dragon head on the front part of the ship, while Zhang Zhi and some other clan members remained at the helm. He could see the citizens from the city along with the other clan members sending them off, they were bowing and waving while also cheering. The junior members were doing the same, they toughened up during the training a bit but still, you could see some tears in their eyes during the departure.

"Okay everyone, I want you all to reinforce your cultivation further, the trip will take about a week."

His tranquil mind technique had spread through the clan, so even though everyone was nervous they could keep a sharp mind. The days passed and the surroundings started changing, the trip was quite uneventful most of the creatures that wanted to try their luck were quickly dispatched by the Patriarch that seemed more than willing to deliver a killing blow to anything that came close to striking distance. His officers offered their services as they didn't want their clan leader to do all the dirty work, but their offer was refused. They only heard something about having to get more points while the lightning bolts rained down from within the ship. The junior members looking on in awe as they felt the strong energy fluctuations from those lightning strikes.

The other people didn't want to bother their Patriarch, so they just cultivated in peace. There wasn't much talking on the way there as everyone concentrated on getting stronger, each second counted. Soon enough they arrived at their destination and could already see some other flying ships stationed in the area.

The entrance to the secret area was close to a mountain range. The thing was shaped like a huge cylinder and it stretched right into the heavens going past the clouds. It was huge as a mountain, how it looked reminded Matt of tower dungeons that had levels to them. Maybe you climbed it as you passed the trial?

They weren't the first to arrive, but they weren't the last. They came to a stop, the people that were already there looked at them but everyone was still sitting on their own flying ships not descending down. Matt could see some people down below though, they were wearing the dark palm insignia on their back. They were probably waiting for everyone to arrive first before ordering them to move, they needed all ten groups to take part in the expedition.

While they were waiting, Matt took his time to look at the other core formation participants from the group. The closest group to them had a red-haired man sitting in a throne, he was drinking wine and some beauties were serving him food. You could see his muscular chest as it was only covered by a vest that was open and had fur at the collar area. He didn't even react when he was getting stared at and was enjoying himself, he didn't look like someone that was forced to come here.

There were two ships with the same insignias, they looked like firebirds making Matt think about a phoenix. More than likely this clan was a fire-based one, when he looked to the other side he just saw more regular old uncle looking cultivators with more ships as well. There were multiple core formation cultivators there, there probably weren't many downtrodden clans like the Zhang clan that came with just one flimsy core formation Patriarch.

The other clans gave them some attention, mostly because everyone on their ship was wearing a strange looking battle robe that gave them a ferocious look. The time started passing as everyone waited, the dark palm sect people looked a bit annoyed as they waited. With his increased hearing Matt could hear what they were talking about, apparently, everyone was here besides one clan that was taking their sweet time.

"Well that clan Matriarch is a bit... but she will be here, if she didn't turn down the young master, she wouldn't be here. Such a shame, she is quite the looker."

One of the dark palm elders said while chuckling to another member of his clan. Speaking of the devil, the moment the sect members started talking a large flying ship appeared. It was very long and had many white sails all around it, light green energy was radiating off it and you could feel the dao of the wind coming off it. Matt craned his neck to take a peek, he noticed that most of the people on the large ship were females. He tried focusing on the strongest person there, looking for core formation members he managed to spot two.

The weaker signal was coming from an older looking lady, she looked quite docile and was wearing a modest robe. The only thing out of the ordinary was that she looked like a baked potato. Matt opened his eyes wide, quickly looking through the people on that ship his eyebrows twitching. He looked at the woman next to the baked potato elder, she had a healthy tan to her and she was wearing a short light

green robe with ample cleavage showing and she had quite a lot to show there. The female was quite curvaceous but that wasn't the interesting part, her nails were long her hair was light pink and she had a lot of makeup on.

\*Is... is that a Gyaru...?\*

Matt looked through the females on the flying ship, they all had bleached hair and tanned bodies. The makeup looked funny on some while fitting on some others. They all were showing some amount of skin and looked like typical 'gals' with the strange-looking hairdos. The girls had facial accessories like shiny things plastered close to their eyes that didn't go well with the overused mascara and eye-shadow. He went back to staring at the Matriarch, she wasn't as overdone as the rest of them having the makeup fit her face giving her a more mature look.

Before he could examine the woman further he felt an oppressive force wash over the whole area. He never felt something like this before, he got goosebumps and started feeling weak. He felt like someone stuck underwater, trying to breathe but not being able to. This was the first time Matt experienced an aura superior to his own, this was indeed someone in the nascent soul!

"Feng Clan, you are late!"

For people not knowing what a **Gyaru** is, it's kind of a subculture in Japan where the girls get really tanned, put on large amounts of makeup and bleach their hair. Probably best to google it for pictures, its a prominent look in manga and anime there too.

Also made a discord <https://discord.gg/QZ5rpuC> Though not sure what I'm doing there xD

## Chapter 82

This was truly an uncomfortable feeling, Matt felt like puking as the suppressive force crushed into him. His clan members were worse off than him as they started collapsing onto the ground, not being able to hold on. The oppressive force vanished soon after and a floating person appeared. He was floating right in front of them, his hands behind his back while his back was straight up.

"Our sincere apologies Grand Elder Guo, we were attacked by some beasts on our way here."

The older woman said while cupping her fists and bowing before the dark palm sect elder. The woman next to her just turned her head to the side, seemingly annoyed by the whole thing which made the older one sweat bullets not wanting to offend a nascent soul expert. Elder Guo just floated in the air, he was a baldy with a long goatee and a really wrinkled up face.

"I see that your Matriarch hasn't learned her lesson yet, you're lucky that time is of the essence."

The woman was quite lovely looking and had a high cultivation level while being fairly young just having turned thirty-nine, though she looked like she was in her early twenties. A woman like this would have many suitors from strong clans going after her, even though her complexion was a less desired one than the pale one. She mostly found the old masters disgusting and the younger ones kept giving her perverted looks, so she always turned them down.

One day she caught the eye of a young dark palm sect master, this wasn't any regular member but the son of the sects Patriarch. She, of course, didn't want to have anything to do with him, finding his

character not up to par with her standards. Her clan members couldn't force her to marry the man even if they wanted to as she was their Matriarch. The sect started blackmailing the whole clan after a while, culminating in the matriarchal clan being recruited for this expedition that had a very low chance of succeeding. This was seen as a way of getting rid of the person that didn't give them face, without having to get their own hands dirty in the process.

Matt didn't know any of this though, he was just staring at the people that clearly had some bad history. Soon the nascent soul elder went deeper into the mountain, ordering the clans to disembark. He had scanned the nascent soul cultivator, finding out that he was only in the early stage. The area was littered with tents and hastily constructed buildings, the dark palm Sect cultivators were all over the place. There were many core formation cultivators around, even more, foundation establishment ones making Matt wonder why they even had the clans do their dirty work for them if they had so many resources.

He was a bit surprised after seeing the gyaru ship, even the old elder lady looked peculiar with a lot of makeup and glitter on. Due to him staring so much, the leader of that ship finally noticed him. He kind of froze at the moment their eyes met, the woman took a look at him and then moved her index finger right below her right eye. She then stuck her tongue out at him, while closing her left eye and pulling down her the lower eyelid under her right eye. Matt didn't know how to react so he just remained in place, the woman moved away after a while after having stuck her tongue out at him.

\*Well... that was a bit strange...\*

After the strange reaction the woman gave him, Zhang Dong waved his hand forward, giving the signal to disembark. They all jumped down from the airship, only a couple of Zhang Clan members would remain on it, waiting for their people to return later. Their clan did turn a lot of heads though, the peculiar-looking robes that they were using were quite unusual in the eyes of the other cultivators. The youths inside the robes puffed out their chests and took long strides forward as they followed their Patriarch, fear wasn't something that they felt now. They just wanted to bring honor to their families and return safely.

It didn't take that long to arrive in front of the humongous tower, they all looked up but couldn't see the end, clouds were just blocking off the view. There was a large gate in front with some cryptic writings above it, it was mostly faded away and unreadable. From what Matt could decipher it had something written about chains and unity, but couldn't really decipher it further.

Inside the 'tower' there were more people, there was a wide corridor and on the walls, you could see many murals depicting some fighting between beasts and people. Torches lined the passage, only the footsteps of people could be heard as everyone walked forward without saying much. Not like they didn't want to talk, but they were getting escorted by the core formation sect members with the nascent soul grand elder in the front, so they didn't really want to say anything that could offend the man.

After a while they came up to another large door, this one had more ancient writing on it. To the side were some stairs, they lead to the 'testing' area that would teleport them somewhere. Matt looked around the place, it looked really old but the large door did indeed give off immortal grade fluctuations. It looked more like a giant castle gate than a door, this was probably the one that had the immortal grade treasures behind it.

“Listen up, soon we will arrive. You all will be handsomely rewarded for your participation, as agreed you can keep anything up to the heaven grade from the secret ground. If you find anything in the immortal grade you are to relinquish it, you will get payed in spirit stones instead.”

The people in the room rolled their eyes at the mention of the immortal grade items. They knew that if they tried to take something like that out of here, they would get eradicated by this overbearing sect. The number of spirit stones that they would offer would probably also be a scam. But not like they could do much about it, might made right in this world. At most they could hope for some immortal grade pills that they could swallow before leaving.

You could cut the tension in the air with a knife, the dark palm sect continued with their self-righteous mumbo jumbo. Some clans were here on their own volition, but there were also clans like the Zhang and Feng that were forced to participate. Matt sure hoped that the clans with various agendas wouldn't start fighting against each other in there. He was thinking about a couple of possible outcomes after the initial teleportation but wasn't sure which one it would be. He sure hoped that it wouldn't be one of those battle royale settings.

\*Well, I did all I could and this system is even denying me more points now...\*

He looked at his Chūnibyō corps, he was the only one wearing a white robe which made him stick out like a sore thumb amongst them. He wanted to give them a pep talk, but couldn't really interrupt the sect elders monologue. Soon they were led up to the platform room, there were ten of them. The platforms were circular in shape and had many runic patterns scraped into them, making it look like something magical.

“Remember your training everyone, don't forget that we are all with you.”

Matt said after they finally had some time to talk, the other clan members exchanged some small talk. You could see people patting each other on the shoulders, some girls holding their hands while preparing for the unknown. They all could very well die in there, get teleported to different places and never see each other again. Matt walked over to his two disciples, trying to get some weight off their shoulders.

“Listen to your superiors when we are inside, don't worry I'll be with you as well.”

The two nodded, they were wearing the masks already so he couldn't really see their facial expressions but thanks to his tranquil mind skill, he was sure that they were keeping their cool. These siblings were quite tough even though they were so young, he felt that if they made it through this in one piece they would probably soar to new heights. Matt was trying to play it cool, but he also felt butterflies in his belly. This was it, everyone was ready and the dark palm sect elder was slowly walking up to activate the teleportation mechanism.

“Remember, this is a test created by the immortal Senior that design this secret ground. Any forms of contact with the outside will be blocked so you will be on your own once inside. You will get rewarded accordingly when you return.”

\*Guess this is it, I should be able to take down anything up to the great circle level, there shouldn't be anything above that level in there, right?\*

He thought that the enemies inside shouldn't be above a certain level due to only allowing people of the core formation to go inside. It would be quite unfair if they made ten core formation cultivators fight a nascent soul one inside, they would just get squashed like bugs. He looked at the dark palm sect member walk to the center, there was a strange-looking console there. The man placed his hand on it and then closed his eyes.

The console started glowing, slowly illuminating the room with it as rune-like patterns started appearing on the platforms everyone was standing in. The floor slowly lit up, going from one platform to another as the contraption got activated. The people started hearing a buzzing sound each time a platform got fully lit up, the ground looked like some kind of magical circle. After each podium got activated Matt felt a strange sensation wash over his body, more light covered all of the people around him and the scenery around started getting blurry. Finally, everything went dark as the people vanished from the spots they were standing in, the sect members just looked at the vacant platforms and snorted.

"Are the new communication treasures responding?"

A couple of people walked out from the shadows and approached the console the grand elder was standing in. Truth be told the sect didn't expect much from these backwater clan members, the plan was to let them go inside the testing grounds just so that they could test out some measuring equipment they had some of the clan members carry inside. They wanted to get some information about what was happening inside before sending their own people in to actually complete the whole task.

The sect members brought out some communication jade slips, trying to connect to the ones that were inside the secret ground. Then they brought out some other magical items, their brows wiggling a bit as they shook their head to the elder.

"No response for now grand elder, we will need to wait and see if a signal comes through later."

"I see..."

Elder Guo rubbed his chin, not really expecting anything from this test run. They were poking inside an old immortal's secret ground, it was reasonable to assume that if they wanted to communicate they would probably need items in the immortal grade. They used some high-grade items this time around, but it seemed that it wasn't working either. Now they had to think if it would be wise to send their own people without knowing what was inside.

"Very well, keep sending the signals maybe one will go through."

He didn't think that the idiots that were stuck inside would amount to anything. They were either ones guided by greed or weaklings that couldn't defend themselves like the Zhang clan. This was survival of the fittest, the sect was trying to protect their own assets first. They didn't see a problem in sending some treasure hungry cultivators to their doom if it furthered their own agenda.

At this time Matt felt like he was riding a rollercoaster, the teleportation was a lot different than what he expected. It wasn't instantaneous and he felt like he was getting tossed around like a ragdoll. His feet suddenly landed on the ground, he had to muster up all his strength just not to fall down to his knees, cold sweat covering his back.

"Where did we end up?"

He looked around, the area he was in was a forest, not something that he was expecting. There was one problem though, there was no 'we' here. He looked left and right, he even jumped up high to see if he could spot someone from his clan or from another one. There was no one here though, he spread his spiritual sense outwards trying to scan for life forms but could feel it getting blocked by something he couldn't really see past a kilometer from where he was standing.

"Damn, if everyone got split up the team training and the formation training was pointless..."

He facepalmed and then got ready to take his flying sword out to see if he could find someone. There was another problem though, the blasted spatial ring wasn't opening the same thing that blocked his spiritual sense was cutting off the access to his items. He had everything in there along with provisions, weapons, change of underwear. Luckily he was at least wearing his longsword at his waist and he had ordered everyone to take out their weapons before arriving, just wanting to be ready if a fight broke out. But other than that, he had nothing. All his healing pills, magical items that he saved up for this expedition were in his ring.

"I've made a huge mistake..."

Come join the discord, we have uncomfortable silence <https://discord.gg/GDTwD4P>

### **Chapter 83**

Matt took out his sword, ready for a fight not knowing if anything would jump out at him from the bushes. This reminded him of the forest area where he was transported to this world in the beginning. He wasn't in an open field now though, but deep in the forest which looked more like a rain forest than a regular one. The trees were quite high and thick, blocking the sunlight with their large leaves.

\*Where am I anyway, why is there a sky in here, am I in that big tower?\*

He tried scanning the surroundings with his senses again and picked up some life signs, but something was messing with his abilities so he couldn't really tell if it was a human being or not. He brought up his system map to check, but after pulling it up he just got an error message.

Error Error System map is being blocked by an outside source Error Error

\*Wasn't this supposed to be some kind of super system, why isn't it working in here?\*

He wanted to give his system window a smack but he would just be slapping the air. He also tried using his crafting abode but was constantly getting the nearby enemy prompt. It never went away though, making him think that the system might be considering this whole secret ground an enemy of some kind. The second option would be, that it was getting blocked like all the other system functions by the unknown force.

He decided to check the nearest life signal in the area, hoping that it was some of his clan members. He wouldn't take any chances though, he was ready for a fight. He hid his aura as much as possible and started sneaking with the sword in his hand already drawn and ready to slice and dice. There were some nice footwork manuals that his clan had, not everything required water elemental affinity so he could use some of the neutral ones.

His feet shuffled in a pattern as he moved closer, even if he stepped on some twigs they wouldn't snap alerting any enemies to his location. He came up to a big tree and could feel that the thing that he felt was on the other side, he could even sense some movement from it. He slowly wiggled next to the tree, trying to not get spotted by the potential enemy and peeked out to check.

\*Wait... is that a... Goblin?\*

Yes, it was something that Matt knew well, it was a creature that was a popular mob in a lot of games and novels alike. The goblin came up to his waist and was quite thin, it had a protruding belly and was wearing only a moist loincloth to cover its nether regions. It had no boots as you could see the calluses on its feet, the nails looked more like claws. It was carrying a short sword that was rusty and probably would break the moment it hit something hard. The other interesting thing besides that it was a goblin, was the system indication above its head.

Common Goblin (Formation Establishment Late stage) [ Summoned creature ]

\*Why is a trash goblin mob in the formation establishment stage, even in the late one...and what is that summoned part?\*

It was still weak, he could take it on without any problems but how would his clan members fair when the strongest person was at the great circle of foundation establishment. He really hoped that his clan members were sent to some other spot with weaker enemies if they run into a big group of these goblins they would get wiped out. While thinking about that he scanned the area, there were no other life signals close by so he decided to test things out.

He came out of his hiding spot, letting the Goblin spot him wondering what the creature would do. Would the thing gauge his superior battle aura and run away? Or would it blindly attack him instead? It did the latter part, it's beady eyes going red and it just charged at the larger man that was holding a sword. Matt didn't falter while just waiting, the monster charged jumping upwards and grasping its weapon with both hands as it brought it down with an overhead swing. The goblin was flying through the air, focused on its enemy but suddenly the man in front of it vanished. Appearing right next to it, the thing was mid-jump so it couldn't really stop itself now.

Matt slashed upward with his sword in a lazy fashion, cutting off the weaker goblins head. The creature's momentum sent it crashing into a tree, its head went flying upwards and landed a couple of meters away from the fallen lower-body.

Common Goblin Slain ( Formation Establishment Late stage ) Earned 5 Spirit Points.

"What? How was that only 5 points?"

He wasn't sure if the system was just lowering his point count due to his cultivation level, or if he was getting fewer points because of the monsters having that 'Summoned' part in the name.

"This thing acted like a game monster, the moment I got into its line of sight it got aggroed."

He rubbed his chin and then poked the dead body with his sword, wondering if this thing would have a beast core in it. But after a few moments the body started vanishing into light bubbles, nothing remained beside the used up loincloth and the sword that the creature was welding. Matt looked at the

chipped weapon, getting surprised that it was a mortal graded item and even at the middle level. It looked like trash but was apparently deadly.

“This is bad if my clan members get jumped by these things...”

He started to worry, this goblin looked weak but was carrying good gear and could hold its own against a foundation establishment cultivator his Qi condensation juniors were in trouble if they were scattered around this palace as well. Time was of the essence so he decided to search for his team members, he wanted to take the rusted weapon that could be used as resources but couldn't put it into his storage ring.

He started running into more goblins, taking care of them with his sword skills. There was a problem though, the further he went into the forest and killed more of these trash mobs, the less he knew where he was. The area was covered with bushes and greenery so he had no way of telling where he was, his system map didn't work and his aura detection technique was getting blocked as well.

\*Damn, I should have learned some regular tracking skills...am I running around in circles?\*

He brought up his system window, but he couldn't use the cash shop either getting the same error message as before. This showed him how reliant on the system he really was. Before coming here he thought that if he ran into some trouble, he would just spend some points on some skills or items and that would be it. But now, he was left with only a sword in hand and couldn't even use his storage ring to get anything out.

\*Guess next time I'll get a backpack...\*

He thought while slicing the thick bushes with his sword using it like a machete to get through. The further he went in, the more goblins he came across, they were variations of the creatures. There were warrior variants, scouts and archers making him feel like he had changed genres and was now in an RPG world and not in a xianxia one. The goblins weren't the only things in here though, there were your typical slime monsters that spit acid at you, snake monsters that looked like vines. Luckily his detection skill still worked it just had limited range, so he could tell when something was trying to hide and pounce on him.

\*Still, the monsters aren't giving me many points...\*

He didn't get much more from even the warrior gobbos that were in the great circle stage, just between 6-10 points for them. He would need to kill hundreds of thousands of those things to get his upgrade at this rate, but he had other things to worry about. Where were his people? Was there something to eat around here? He had no water or food, though being a core formation expert he would last a couple of months without that by just meditating. Still, he would feel hungry and parched, he needed to at least find some water. This was a rain forest area so there shouldn't be a problem, it was even raining already.

He finally saw some light as he was walking out of the forest, he could see a narrow river and some rocks that lead into a hill. In that hill, he spotted a cave, something he could use as he didn't want to be stuck in this rain all day. It was also getting dark, so he headed inside. He was sure that there would be some kind of monster living in there, though he hoped that there wasn't goblin poop all over the floor.

Large Fang Bear ( Core formation early stage ) [ Summoned creature ]

He got startled a bit, this was a core formation creature but he could still handle it. The monster growled at him and tried charging as it used its huge body to attack him. The cultivator just gathered his spiritual energy into his longsword and held it in a somewhat fencing position, he then thrust it forward releasing a condensed shockwave from the tip that punctured a hole in the monster's head.

\*These things sure like to charge at you with no plan eh? and only 500 points for that thing?\*

The bear dropped dead instantly, the glowy lights forming from it as it vanished into the ether. Matt wondered if everything in this dungeon area was a summoned creature, maybe he would have to find himself some fruits or berries to sustain himself. Also, he needed water, though that problem was solved by the clear spring that was close to this cave that he was in. It was still raining and was getting cold, the inside of the cave didn't lead anywhere, the only things he found inside were bones from some animals which made him think that some of them could be eaten and hunted.

He had been trekking for two days now, there was a day and night cycle and some strange creatures came out at night. He was concerned about his people, but even after spending the entire previous day and night, he still couldn't find anyone. This place was huge and he couldn't use his flying sword so he had to move on foot, there was also another problem.

When he tried to use his range javelin skill, throwing it high into the air. It started flickering and dissipating after about 100 meters. He wanted to see if this palace had a ceiling or if perhaps someone would notice his attack from afar. But due to this, he noticed that ranged attacks would fizzle up prematurely. Cultivators that were dependant on long-range skills would probably be severely weakened. The spiritual energy seemed to weaken the moment it left the cultivator, he was lucky that he always could go back to his body refining skill which left him unscathed from most attacks.

\*Guess I'll stay here for the night.\*

He wasn't sure how long he was in here, but it had been at least a day. He spotted some bamboo and having the knowledge of survival videos on his side, he knew exactly what to do. He found himself a sturdy looking bamboo pole and sliced it up so that the segmented parts weren't damaged. He then poked a hole on one side, which would be used for drinking while the bottom was left untouched. He was surprised at how sturdy the bamboo was, guess it was some special spirit bamboo. He also used the bamboo narrow top part as a cork to the bottle so that the water wouldn't spill outside and ended the whole construction with wrapping vines around it so that he could even carry it over his shoulder.

He filled it up, but before drinking, he examined the water wondering if he'd catch some parasites if he drunk it. Luckily for him, it looked clean and this bamboo was quite special as well, as it could resist his lightning energy somehow and was partly heat resistant. He could heat it up like an electric tea kettle, which meant that he could even make some tea if he found some good leaves. For now, he just drank the boiled water and meditated, he didn't want to stay here for longer than he needed as he still was lost. He couldn't find anyone and he was even meeting core formation monsters from this point on.

The night went by without much happening, so he filled up his water bottle and went further in. He started running into stronger and stronger monsters the more he traveled, there was quite an abundance of core formation monsters now. They weren't giving him many points though, but not like

he could spend it on much at the moment with the cash shop closed. After three more days of travel, he felt something. There was a large gathering of life signals in a spot about a kilometer away from his position, from the type of the signal he reasoned that it were probably goblins but there was one that was a lot stronger than the others.

“Is it a boss? Maybe a goblin king?”

He couldn't really tell as he was still far away, so he slowed his pace and hid his aura sneaking up at the goblin encampment. He shuffled up getting closer and closer while almost falling to his doom as there was a large river below him while the goblins were on the other side, separated by a deep chasm. He could see their dwellings built into the side of the chasm, there were stairs leading up where he could see more of the green skins. They were gathering in a spot and they looked like there were preparing a feast with a large cauldron in the middle.

But then he noticed something, there was a different life signal coming from there, it felt like a human. He used his enhanced vision to zoom in on the area, spotting a person there. This person was getting carried by two larger looking goblins, though they looked more like a hobgoblin. The person had their hands and feet bound to a large log and the monsters were carrying them out like a hunted deer. He could see the person's status, so he knew that they were alive, so he would help them. This was the first human that he came across after almost a week of traveling alone, maybe they had some answers. Also, he wouldn't just let the monsters eat someone if he could stop it.

## **Chapter 84**

The chasm was about five hundred meters wide, Matt reasoned that he should be able to jump this distance if he took a good running start. Before engaging the enemies he took his time to examine the situation, he could still see the levels and names of the monsters thanks to his system and analyzing skill.

\*Okay, there are a lot of the small goblins everywhere... don't really have to worry about those...\*

Besides a large number of regular goblins, he could see some hobgoblin warriors they ranged from the early to middle stages of core formation. There were also a couple of goblin shamans around also in that power range, probably those were the long-range caster types perhaps they could heal their monster allies as well. There was also a really fat looking hobgoblin with a stained apron by that large cauldron, looking like a green lunch lady. The strongest goblin from the bunch was a chieftain class and was in the late stage, he was sitting in a large throne-like chair not doing much besides looking at the human that was getting carried and about to get cooked.

\*Don't see anyone in the great circle, so it should be okay... But I was wrong about them acting like game mobs. They are somewhat organized and even brought in a living human to eat. \*

The goblin encampment was large, they had buildings and towers placed in front of the wide chasm. The area from the other side was walled off by a simple wooden log wall, sharpened spiked logs were shoved into the ground so that other monsters couldn't just charge into it. They had some shacks acting as buildings past that wall but by the way that gorge was looking, they had burrowed into the landscape as Matt saw openings and lights coming out of the side of that fissure. There were logs inserted into the rocky side, allowing the goblins to move along but it didn't look safe at all.

\*Can't even use my range attacks to snipe them, guess this is going to be close and personal.\*

He didn't really have much time to prepare a throughout plan, the person on the log was about to get boiled alive. Thanks to his system, he could actually see who it was, name included.

Feng Liena core formation late stage [ Poisoned ] [ Weak ] [ Bleeding ]

Matt didn't know when he started seeing status effects, but the woman in question looked like she was about to die. There was no more time to lose, he took a running start and started charging in the direction that the goblins were preparing their feast, hoping that he could vault this wide chasm. His feet produced thudding noises, breaking the ground and leaving cracked footprints in the hard soil.

The woman in question was close to passing out, just like Zhang Dong she had been split up from her clan members and found herself alone in this place. She was a pampered princess so she relied on others for things like shelter and food, so she didn't really have many survival skills. The only thing that she had on herself were her two fans that produced wind attacks when swung around. She found it difficult to use her techniques here as the wind blades weren't as effective in this strange place, still, the weak foundation establishment monsters didn't pose a problem so she moved along.

After two days of walking in high heels, she was getting annoyed, there were mosquitoes everywhere the monsters constantly attacked her so she couldn't even take a break. Her skills were getting hindered by some outside force, so the encounters with the more evolved monsters were exhausting her spiritual energy fast.

About an hour ago she had an unfortunate encounter with an evolved Vine-Snake. This creature as the name stated, liked to take the form of a vine just hiding and waiting for some prey to come. While Liena was sitting by a tree, trying to rest after defeating some monsters the snake pounced. Her sluggish reaction cost her dearly as two puncture wounds appeared on her thigh. She managed to cut the snakes head off afterward but the paralyzing venom was already working. She felt feverish, all of her detoxification pills were in her storage ring that she couldn't use.

The goblins came soon after, probably alerted by the high pitched screams after she got bitten. She tried to use her cultivation to halt the poisoning process to a minor degree of success. Liena got overwhelmed by the combine goblin attacks, cut wounds soon appeared all over her body. After she fell, the monsters took her away to their chieftain, who had ordered to gather up any non-monster intruders that they came upon.

The goblins didn't need food that much, the energies in this strange place kept them alive. But they still felt hunger, so any being that didn't turn into ethereal energy would be taken back to the encampment to get eaten.

Feng Liena was battered and bruised, but still alive. She was barely awake, still squirming while tied on a long log and carried by some disgusting looking monsters. She thought about the dark palm sect, cursing their name. She promised to herself that if she somehow survived she would do everything in her power to destroy that blasted sect along with its pig of a young master that forced her into this position. She was placed over the boiling cauldron, she would slowly get steamed by the boiling liquid and then maybe lowered into it. While she was about to pass out, she thought back to her clan members hoping that they would forgive her for pulling them into this mess along with her.

Her sight was getting blurry, she couldn't distinguish the faces of the drooling goblins anymore. But on the cusp of giving in to sleep, she heard a loud noise, it sounded like something heavy crashing into hard rock. This was Zhang Dong, that didn't quite make it past the half kilometer jump and crashed into the side of it. The goblins looked to the noise, grabbing their weapons as they prepared for battle. After the initial sound, they heard another one, a loud thumping noise followed by additional banging that continued and got closer.

Matt's head burst out from the ground, right in the middle of the festivities. He held back the urge to shout out 'Here's Matty' as he jumped out and delivered a devastating right hook to the closest hobgoblin, punching his head right off, his fist shining with a golden metallic luster. The wind pressure created from his fist strike made some of the lesser goblins fly backward, kicking up a storm.

\*First things first...\*

He thought while kicking the boiling cauldron to the side, right onto the fat goblin cook that screamed out in agony. He quickly grasped the log that the female cultivator was on and tossed her over his shoulder. He wanted to jump back over the chasm at first but due to his previous blunder, he feared that he might hurt the woman. He ran in the opposite direction, wanting to get the girl to safety first before facing off against the monsters.

The goblins weren't having it though as they all started chasing him, with murder in their eyes. The girl felt that something was happening as she was now moving in another direction and someone was carrying her. The trip was quite uncomfortable as the person was zig-zagging all over the place dodging arrows and some fire bolts that the shaman goblins were firing of.

Matt vaulted over the wooden wall and pulled out his sword. The girl got tossed into the air even further, she couldn't see much but could feel that the rope bindings were cleaved by something. Then she found herself in someone's arms, the person carried her like a princess and she could feel herself getting snuggled into a wide manly chest. Strength was leaving her body, but she could see the outline of the man's face that was saving her followed by some calming words.

"I've got you, everything is going to be okay"

She passed out after that, her body going limp as Zhang Dong escaped from the goblin encampment. It was more important to get this woman to safety, he didn't know how bad the poisoning was he needed to treat her wounds fast. The goblins wouldn't let their breakfast just up and run, so they started chasing after him. But Matt was a lot faster, the small goblins had short legs and wouldn't be able to catch up as he bolted into the thick bushes taking long strides, cracking the ground with each step he took.

After running for about twenty minutes he stopped by a waterfall, he could see that there was a cave hidden behind all that water. This looked like a good place to lay low till he treated the woman, the falling water would also probably block the smell of blood that was coming off her. Though not like he was afraid of fighting the monsters, just first aid came first.

He moved inside the cave, there were some strange green mushrooms that illuminated the inside. Luckily there was nothing strange living in the cave, so he placed the woman down on the ground. He started tearing up his white robe, making white bandage strips out of it as he still had no access to his storage ring and his clothes would just replace themselves anyway.

The first thing he did was striping her down, he felt apprehensive about it but he just had to bandage up all of her wounds. The woman was quite stacked, she could give his previous love encounter a run for her money. The most glaring thing he saw was a wound on the woman's thigh, he could see two puncture holes right there and puss leaking out.

\*This looks like a snake bite... but the venom has already spread through her body at this point.\*

He was no doctor and the people in this world mostly used pills for treating everything. He knew that sucking out snake venom from a wound was more or less bs and didn't work as the venom spread through the body quite fast. There were some people that claimed that you could neutralize venom by electrocuting a person, but it was never really proven to work.

\*Well, not like this is the old world though.\*

Matt had gone through the whole Zhang clan library, so he had a lot of knowledge in his brain. There was one method he could try because he didn't think he could produce antivenom, or make pills with a similar effect. Firstly, he used the purified water from his water bottle to soak in some torn up robe parts. He started washing the female cultivator from all the dirt, blood and grime that she got over time. He bandaged all the cuts, slowly turning the woman into a cute looking mummy. Then came the second part, there was a technique where you could share your vital energies with others.

The technique in question required skin on skin contact, so Matt sat down with the woman taking up the spot in his lap. He was bare chasted due to having ripped up his robe. He brought his arms around her, her soft body was now pressing into making him quite excited. He would nourish Feng Liena's body with his inner energy. The technique was slow working and you didn't need much practice to use it, it was also the only healing skill that he could use due to his low elemental affinities.

Time passed as he leaned back against the cold stone wall, the calming waterfall could be heard from inside the cave. After an hour, Matt was more or less sure that the goblins had lost their trail or just given up on the chase. He looked down at the curled up female in his arms, she looked quite cute if you got past the copious amount of make-up that had washed off by now. She was shivering and quite warm, probably having a high fever due to the snake bite.

\*Well, at least the bleeding status vanished.\*

His healing technique had managed to close off most of the wounds, but it was quite slow working she would probably need a lot of rest before everything healed up. More time had passed and Matt sighed, he couldn't move from this spot. The only thing he could do was look at the glowing mushrooms and whistle to himself as staring at the naked body of the woman in his arms was a bit too stimulating.

\*Ah, I hope everyone is doing well...\*

Around this time, a group of two hundred twenty cultivators was marching through some rocky terrain. There wasn't much besides rocks and debris around, but there was something in the distance. There stood a large fortress, it had gigantic walls that connected into watchtowers. There were four gates coming from each side of the structure that was cubical in shape. The placement of this fortress was strange, it was as if someone took it and dropped it in a deserted area. The structure looked sturdy and all, but it could be surrounded from all sides easily with no natural defenses in place whatsoever.

“So, is this the place that voice told us to gather up?”

Zhang Zhi asked while standing with his clan members, all of the officers were together and fine. The youths behind them had all of their weapons out and looked like they had battled something previously.

“It said that after clearing the first stage, we were to move to the fortress defense stage.”

One of the officers replied while wondering what that meant, but that castle-like structure looked like a fortress. There was no one in the surrounding area besides the Zhang Clan, they might have been the first ones clearing the first stage.

“Mmm... very well, everyone get into formation we will approach slowly, keep your guard up.”

## **Chapter 85**

Two days prior:

Zhang Liu collapsed to his knees while holding onto his belly with one hand, the other was used to push himself off the cold floor as he tried not to vomit. The teleportation had twisted his insides making him feel like he had just finished riding some over the top rollercoaster. Some of his friends weren't as lucky as he could hear Zhang Hong barfing right next to him, though he was still wearing his mask.

He quickly gathered himself, moving off the floor wondering where they ended up in. He glanced about and could see the clan elders assessing the situation while the juniors were picking themselves off the ground.

“Quickly, everyone gather up, The General is missing!”

Everyone quickly jumped up to their feet, getting into formation as they all practiced. They did a headcount and everyone was there, but their Patriarch was missing. The elders used their detection skills to scan the area, but couldn't find their leaders aura signature anywhere in the vicinity.

They were in a circular cavern, the ceiling was about ten meters high and filled with stalactites. The place behind them was blocked and there were five corridors in front of them, leading to the unknown. Every corridor had a number above them and was lit by some torches and similar glowing fungus that Zhang Dong had come across.

“Everyone, check your equipment and gather with your lieutenants.”

Said Zhang Zhi who was the second in command after the Patriarch, taking up the mantle in his absence. The Zhang Clan had designated a chain of command for situations where people got killed or split up. Matt didn't want to have clan members arguing on what to do, splitting up or infighting when one of the leaders was missing. The chain of command was quite rudimentary, starting with the first platoon and the twentieth was the last one going in order.

Zhang Hong had his helmet down now, rinsing it with some water that he took out of his spatial ring. No one really thought there was something wrong with that, as they didn't know that their patriarch was having problems with those at this moment. The twenty lieutenants gathered up at the five passages, they had a choice to make. Should they split up or move into one passage and hope for the best.

“The Patriarch said that we shouldn't split up, or at most split the teams in half if we had to.”

Matt warned his people about the splitting up trope, which frequently weakened the whole group. Most of the time the smaller groups would encounter some overpowered monsters and get wiped out, due to having less manpower. Other times they would set off traps which ended in a similar fashion. Luckily, the Zhang clan members had their patriarch's detection skill so they decided to look into the aura around the entrances.

There were a lot of demonic and death energies around four of the corridors, with one of them having significantly less of them. This was the fourth corridor and after some deliberation, everyone agreed that they wouldn't split up and try to follow this path together. The passage was surprisingly wide and the ceiling left a lot of room to maneuver as well. The first three platoons were in the front with Zhang Zhi's team at the front, Zhang Jie's team was in the middle with the rear end guarded by the last platoon.

The sounds of their boots on the hard rocky floor could be heard, they walked for hours without anything happening the long corridor just continuing without end. Everyone was vigilant, but after trekking for so long they were wondering if this blasted corridor would ever end. Suddenly you could hear a strange crackling sound, everyone stopped in their tracks. They looked around but couldn't see anything in front or behind them, but then they looked up. There were many holes in the ceiling, those openings were giving off the strange noises.

They spotted the holes just in time as a greenish liquid was discharged from one of those openings, the people jumping to the sides as they couldn't activate their defensive formation in time. The moment the strange liquid came in contact with the floor it sizzled and started to dissolve the bedrock. The Zhang clan members then saw many centipede-like creatures slithering out from those holes. They were all about two or three meters long and started pouring out of the openings like a tide.

The cultivators managed to remain calm while getting into the defensive formation, quickly activating the water shield with about half the people in the large group. The rest that were the designated long-range attackers pulled out their weapons and trinkets. Some of them had bows, others had staff like weapons that aided with their Qi management. They started firing off their long-range attacks, blasting the creatures with pressurized water that mostly took the form of water serpents.

The insect monsters spit their venom on the shield but couldn't get through it. The creatures got whittled down quite fast by the organized defensive and offense combination, the monsters weren't that strong either just somewhere at the Qi condensation levels. There were quite a lot of them, falling down from the roof gnawing on the watery shield to no avail. The officers didn't have to act, so they just remained vigilant only acting if something stronger showed up.

The creatures kept coming for quite some time, the large hall quickly filled up with the creature carcasses which started dissipating into bubbles not so long after. In the end, a stronger version of the centipede monster arrived, it was about ten meters long and in the foundation establishment stage. It was taken out without any problems though, while the Qi condensation members did their thing Zhang Zhi pulled out his katana and bisected the creature in one go, showing off his swordsmanship in the process.

The monster attack wasn't anything dangerous, but without this shield, they might have been done in by the venom that the creatures used. They suffered no casualties this time around, showing off their teamwork in the process.

"Strange, these creatures are just vanishing... no beast cores either..."

The people were bewildered by this but they moved on, not wanting to wait here afraid that there might be more of these beasts. They continued walking for hours, getting attacked by the insect monsters on occasions. The further they went in, the more intense the fighting got, the creature's levels and numbers had also increased.

At the end everyone had their hands full, the officers had to chip in as they fought the larger monster centipedes that thrashed around, causing rocks to fall on their heads. Soon enough they could see the light at the end of the tunnel, prompting them to increase their pace. They ended in a room that looked similar to the first one, it was circular and had more tunnels leading out of it. But there was also a spring to the side, this spring had Qi recovering properties. If Matt saw this room, he would probably describe it as a safe zone.

More than half a day had passed since they set out, the juniors were feeling slightly tired so this would be a good spot to rest up. There was enough space to set up their tents, people took turns in guarding while everyone got to rest for a couple of hours. They were still in a closed-off dungeon with limited light, so they had no idea if it was day or night time.

"Where do you think Master is? Hope he is alright..."

Zhang Xue asked her brother while munching on some bread.

"I'm sure he is fine, Master is the strongest!"

The boy replied while shaking his fist at the ceiling, then just bit into his own piece of bread.

"I wonder if the other clans are also stuck in a place like this..."

Zhang Bao chimed in, as all of the 9th platoon members were sitting by a makeshift fire, eating. Everyone was in deep thought, the place looked gloomy and they wanted to get out of here as soon as possible.

"Stop overthinking things, just focus on the mission."

Zhang Tai replied as he stood up, getting ready for more marching through new corridors. The clan elders were examining them with the same method, it seemed to work out the first time as the monsters weren't overly powerful. Soon everyone packed up and they headed into the corridor that was the safest, what waited for them was more monsters. This time around it were skeletons, but the Zhang clan members made quick work of those. Without the need of keeping the defensive formation up, they could just unleash their wrath on the braindead monsters.

This pattern continued, they passed into another save zone, rested up and then moved on to fight a different type of enemy. They were lucky enough to never run into a corridor filled with traps or a dead end, probably all thanks to their detection technique which was the MVP of this expedition. After close

to two days they ended up in a similar circular room, but this time around there was only one corridor leading out.

This seemed a little fishy, but not like they could turn back now as they felt that this might be the last one. Everyone got ready, with weapons drawn they all went in. The moment they entered the passageway unlit torches started lighting up, the passage went up and they all saw the large number of torches getting lit. It looked like something was inviting them to go there, this corridor was a lot shorter than the other one only taking five minutes of time to get to the end.

They didn't get attacked by anything on the way up, this was the first red flag. At the end, there was a large room, bigger than the rooms with the springs in them. There was a big closed gate right opposite where they came out, but there wasn't anything in this room. They looked up and to the sides but couldn't find anything out of the ordinary, some people stayed in the corridor while others went to check out that gate. It was quite sturdy, it didn't look like much but they could tell that damaging this thing would be impossible for them.

They decided to gather everyone in the room, trying to brainstorm the next move. But just at the moment when the last person entered the room, they heard a rumble. The passageway that they came from quickly closed itself as a giant rock wall slammed the thing shut. Everyone was at high alert as they got into their defensive formation. Quickly putting it up, not even waiting to see if it would be necessary.

They could hear strange clicking sounds and gears working as the whole room was rumbling. At first, they thought that perhaps the gate was about to open, but then some members looked up and could see that the ceiling was splitting apart.

"Above us!"

Everyone reacted, the defensive formation running at full capacity as some kind of creature descended from above them and slammed into their shield. The monster was really ugly, looking like a fusion of man and a scorpion. The lower half was a scorpion while the top part was humanoid. It had a hideous head with many sharp teeth protruding from its mouth, its tail flailing around and slamming into the defensive formation that shook from the impact. The creature was holding a weapon in its humanoid hand, that looked like a torn off pillar, it also possessed two claw-like appendages below the human torso. The monster's size was immense, it would be able to easily hold a person in one of its claw-like hands. Though the bigger problem was, that the creature was giving early stage core formation energy fluctuations.

"Don't falter, switch to the attacking formation!"

The lieutenants knew that the only way to defeat this monster was their large Spirit Serpent Formation, with everyone taking part. The monster kept pounding on their defensive formation, but they had trained to quickly shift between the two as well. The shield rippled, pushing the monster back for a couple of seconds before it started compressing back towards the Zhang clan cultivators. The monster flew back slightly, its large claw-like legs forming a skid mark as it got pushed back. The water-energy started taking the shape of a water serpent that towered over the boss monster.

The two large entities roared at each other, before charging out. The biggest problem for the Zhang members was that even though the room was large, there wasn't that much space to maneuver for this large battle formation of theirs. The water serpent slammed its head into the other creature's body while it tried to dig its crab-like claws into it. The formation was quite stable now and it would take more than that to take it down, also the way to get rid of battle formations was going for the cultivators inside and not for the energy construct itself. The creature was a bit too dumb for that, as it kept slashing at the watery body that just mended itself back.

It was looking good for the Zhang clan members, all their training came into fruition as the large serpent tail sent the creature flying into a wall. They slithered away, while the monster was momentarily stunned through the impact. The water serpent opened its mouth, gathering up energy as it charged its finishing move up. The boss monster didn't recover in time as when it looked at the enemy with its many eyes, it only to saw a blue beam coming its way. It raised those large claws to defend its upper body but to no avail, as the beam attack possessed an attacking power over the early stage of core formation quickly dissolving the monster into fine particles. To the Zhang member's surprise, the wall behind the monster didn't suffer any damage from their most powerful attack. The monster was slain and the cultivators rejoiced, but then they heard a strange robotic voice.

"Area 7 Girtablilu has been defeated, the first stage has been cleared. Please continue to the tower defense stage."

The members looked at the dissipating monster, the closed gate opening soon after the strange voice delivered the message. The people had no other place to go but forward, so after eating some Qi recovering pills the headed to the second stage.

## **Chapter 86**

A monsters head rolled off its shoulders and plopped down to the ground. A silver-haired man was standing to the side with a sword over his shoulder. The night had passed and the female's fever had gone down, he had moved out to gather up some larger leaves. He managed to make a makeshift bed for the girl so that she didn't need to sleep on the cold rocky floor and placed a large boulder at the entrance of the cave so that no strange creature would wonder in. He ripped up his self regenerating robe to make a blanket, but that left him bare-chested yet again.

\*I'm going to catch a cold like this...\*

He came across a scouting party composed of some goblins and hobgoblins which he promptly sliced apart. He decided to pay them a visit, maybe there would be something that would explain the situation at that goblin encampment. He was a bit apprehensive about leaving the woman back in the cave, but she should be okay for the time being. The monsters didn't really show any good tracking abilities, they didn't even find them after a whole night had passed.

"I guess it's time to slay some goblins."

He vanished from the spot and appeared up on one of the tall trees. He started jumping onto the thick branches, heading towards the enemy headquarters. He noticed a pattern in how the monsters operated in this 'training ground', they tended to react to noises and started attacking you the moment you got into their line of sight. Well, at least the more stupid ones did the ones above the core

formation and with special classes had some intelligence to them. The goblin chieftain, for instance, didn't chase after him and the girl leaving it up to his followers instead.

\*Well, maybe its a boss monster and needs a special trigger to aggro?\*

He started thinking about the monsters as MMORPG mobs, that had a limited range and wouldn't chase you after you got out of it. Maybe someone from earth was reincarnated here and he made this place to work as a game? This would probably be something that he would do if he got bored enough with time.

Matt came to a stop, he was back at the front gate of the goblin encampment. The small green skins were leaning up against their makeshift gate, sleeping on the job with some rusty looking spears. He scanned the area again, wondering if something stronger than a goblin chieftain would be in here.

\*Well, I guess I can let loose here...\*

He formed a fist and raised it up, delivering a blow to his peck looking as it turned to golden metal at the moment of the impact. The enemies he would be facing shouldn't be able to pierce his metal-like skin so he could test out his techniques without worrying. He nodded to himself and took out his sword, forming a thin layer of lightning energy around the bladed part for added sharpness. He jumped up, causing the large wooden branch to snap in the process. Lightning energies gathered around his frame and expanded as he activated his newest Heavenly Lightning Terrain technique.

The sleeping sentry didn't even react before he got bisected by the energy sword, the downward slice forming a fissure on the ground as the wind pressure and lightning energies continued on, crashing into the large wooden gate. The makeshift doorway burst open, many large splinters raining down and delivering some residual damage to the unsuspecting goblins inside.

Matt heard some kind of horn being sounded, large amounts of green midgets poured out of holes in the ground and from the large wooden shacks in the surrounding area. They were greeted by electrical discharges the moment they entered Zhang Dong's lightning terrain. The technique was less powerful due to the Qi dissipating properties of this area but it still worked as intended passively delivering damage to the invaders while Matt delivered the finishing strikes with his sword.

He was constantly aiming for their necks or hearts, each strike meant death for one of the green attackers even the more powerful hobgoblins couldn't do anything against this human intruder. It was more or less a one-sided massacre, blood spraying everywhere but soon dissipating into nothingness along with the summoned monsters. The goblin chieftain was sitting in his makeshift throne, looking at the human attacker while gnawing on some kind of bone.

Soon enough though, he roared out in fury the scream causing Matt to halt his actions momentarily. He had taken out most of the hobgoblins and shaman goblins in the vicinity, maybe this was enough to trigger this mini-boss to action?

"Oh, are you approaching me?"

The monster's small beady eyes went red and it snorted something in an unknown language at the human, Matt kind of imagined what his reply was. The goblin chieftain was about the same height as Zhang Dong, he had some strange tribal tattoos all over its green skin. There was a big gash from his left

eyebrow going up to his lip, letting you see some of his teeth as it hadn't healed fully. The monster was carrying a huge bladed weapon, it looked like a slightly elongated cleaver with a hooked part on the tip.

The monster kicked itself off the ground, quickly closing the distance between itself and the attacker. Some smaller goblins that were in the way got trampled and turned into meat paste instantly. Matt didn't feel like evading as he took the attack head-on, the ground trembling under his feet as the monster's cleaver collided with his sword. Matt didn't budge a muscle as his feet remained firmly planted on the rocky ground, the monster gnashing his teeth at the human in front and then giving out another outcry.

"Ugh, your breath stinks."

The goblin chief tried using a bite attack but it was unsuccessful as he received a punch to his face instead, the monster's nose was now indented as he flew backward and crashed into a wooden shack. More goblins appeared to back up their leader, but they weren't much use after getting sliced up by the enemy's blade.

\*I feel like I could keel these trash mobs faster if I had a second sword...\*

He picked up a goblin sword from the ground, it used to belong to one of the hobgoblin warriors so it was a bit better than the rest. He went into a stance, holding one of the swords higher and the other one lower. This felt a bit awkward, the monsters dashed at him but he just started dancing around them quickly slicing the weaker monsters apart. This did indeed make him kill the monsters faster, but he felt that he lost some measure of control and his defense suffered as he had to pay attention to his second sword as well now.

\*Maybe it will be better if I put a third one into my mouth...\*

He looked at another sword that was on the ground, the handle was just wrapped up with something and didn't look sanitary at all.

\*Ehh... think I'll pass...\*

He threw the borrowed sword at one of the goblins impaling it to a wall and then heard a monster roaring. This was the Chief that burst out, swinging his blade at Matt. He looked slightly different, he was now a head taller and all red. Muscles bulging and an angry face as he tried to overpower his attacker once more.

\*Is this the second phase?\*

Matt glanced at the monster, but it was still in the late stage, it had the berserker prefix added though. He was slightly more powerful and faster, but not nearly enough to bring this cultivator down. He sparred with the goblin Chief for a while, using the creature as a training dummy. He didn't have anyone to spar with back in the Zhang Clan, so this would be a good training session. But after a while, he found the monster's attacks to be quite sluggish and easy to evade or parry. It was more brawn than brains so the pattern was quite easy to get used to, so soon enough he delivered the finisher sending the beast's head up into the air.

There were still some monsters left though, so he used this chance to test his another attack out. He placed his palms together making it look like he was praying, his Heavenly Lightning Terrain technique

started closing up decreasing in size and gathering around him. The lightning energies inside the terrain started acting up though, becoming more random and chaotic. The Qi started getting compressed more and more while the enemy goblins charged at him. The moment they closed in on him, he separated his palms making a 'T' like pose with his palms pointing upwards.

The energies burst out with an explosion of lightning energy, everything outside where he was standing lit up like a Christmas tree and was surrounded by bright blue energy. The goblin silhouettes vanished within the energy dome that was formed, quickly dissolving into fine particles as he delivered a wide-area attack. After the energies dissipated, he was standing on a little podium of ground, everything within a wide radius was blasted into nothingness. There was a large hole around him now, some burnt up hatchets and other broken items. Anything past that was blown back as well, he destroyed the upper encampment of the goblins in one attack not leaving much behind in the process.

"Wait..."

In his battle excitement he forgot that he wanted to search this place for clues, he scratched his cheek while looking around the desolated area wondering if anything of value was left behind.

"Well... luckily no one saw that..."

He started going around the place, managing to find the boss monsters hatchet weapon that was of a high earth grade. He also managed to find a fan type weapon suited for wind elemental users, this made him think back to the lady that he saved, this probably belonged to her. He was glad that it survived his explosion. He didn't find much more of note besides that, the goblins were all dead now. He even went into one of their burrows, but most of the tunnels had collapsed after his qi explosion. He didn't really want to dig through the debris, and the fan weapon made him think about the sleeping woman that he didn't want to leave there for more than he had to.

\*Time to go back, there were some fruits on the way here, I'll get them for that girl, she might be hungry.\*

After being here for a week, he started thinking that his clan members were probably in another area altogether. This was probably a place to test the party leaders, making them fight without having an army to back them up.

\*Though, still wonder what those guys are up to... nothing left but to move forward.\*

He thought to himself while going back to his temporary state of residence.

Back in the cave, Feng Liena was dreaming about her childhood, she was running around with a ball in her hand tossing it at her father who did the same in return. She was smiling wide, hugging on her daddy while enjoying her day to day life. But then things changed, she was taken away the scenery changing. She was now ten years old, a woman was screaming at her making her do various exercises, shouting that she had to get strong for the clan.

The Feng Clan was a Matriarchal one, this meant that the ones on top were all women and they didn't allow men into the upper echelon. After a woman from the Feng clan got married to someone outside a deal was made, every female offspring was to be sent back to the clan after they reached the age of five.

This was a favorable agreement for both parties as regular patriarchal clans preferred offsprings of the male gender, so they were okay with sending the females back while receiving the boys in return.

The girls were trained hard, causing them to be rough and rigid. The Feng clan didn't really care about having their cultivators be very womanly, as power was the driving force. This was also the cause of their appearance, most of the girls didn't want to be treated like jade-like beauties. Thus they produced the more tanned gyaru look, to mixed reactions of other people around them. They also tended to be quite tomboyish and aggressive.

Feng Liena opened up her eyes slowly, she felt quite refreshed for some reason. She remembered that she was captured by some monsters, but the rest was a blur. When she opened up her eyes she saw a large man above her, he was bare-chested and reaching out with his hand to do something. She reached out to him, placing her hands on the man's cheeks. The silver-haired man had a strange expression, that quickly turned to shock as the female cultivator gripped those cheeks with all her strength and delivered a headbutt straight to his face.

"The hell do you think you're doing!"

## **Chapter 87**

Matt had returned to the hideout with some fruits and water in his hand. He placed the cleaver he had gotten and the two green fans that belonged to the woman on the side. He looked at the sleeping beauty and noticed that the makeshift pillow he created from his robe and leaves was to the side, so being the nice guy that he was, he tried to move it back under her head. That was when she woke up though, her face quickly switched from one of surprise to one of rage as he felt his nose get hit by her forehead.

Feng Liena noticed that she made a mistake as the moment her head connected with the 'pervert's' face, she felt like she headbutted a lump of spirit iron. He did get a bloody nose due to the hit, but she got a lump on her head as well. She fell back and finally noticed that she was covered in bandages all over, the wound on her thigh that the snake monster had bitten in was mostly gone.

"God damn... that hurts...what was that for?"

Matt wobbled back due to the sudden hit, his nose all red, luckily no bones were broken. Liena looked at the cave, her robe was to the side still covered in some blood but there were signs of it getting washed. She noticed the man's robe that was ripped all over, the bandages clearly came for that. There were some scattered fruits on the floor and she remembered that there was someone that looked like this guy back before they entered the secret ground. The gears started turning in her head as she looked at the situation, she moved her head a bit to the side, her mouth twitching between a smile and a thrown.

She slowly recalled what transpired yesterday, the snake bite, the goblin attack and the soothing voice that called out to her during the rescue. She then just moved her hands to her hips and started laughing.

"Oh ho ho, sorry there little bro. I thought you were just some pervert."

Matt looked at the woman that started laughing like some old man, blood was running down his nose. He was a bit surprised that she managed to injure him through the headbutt.

"L... little bro?"

Feelings one's age through their aura wasn't anything special, so the woman knew that the man in front of her was younger. She looked at her robes that were to the side, Matt didn't actually know how to wash things properly so he kind of soaked them in the river with not much success. Then set them to the side after drying them out with the use of his Qi abilities.

"Ah, could you turn around?"

He wanted to ask her some questions but then saw as she grabbed her robes from the side. Those robes were slightly torn up from the goblin attack. Normally he would be able to fix them in his crafting abode, but his system still wasn't letting him in there.

"Ah..sure..."

He nodded and turned around, wondering if he should just leave the cave but as he was about to do so, the woman started speaking.

"You were with one of the other clans right? What was your name again?"

Matt stopped in his tracks as the woman spoke, the rustling of clothing happening right behind his back. She had gone from hostile, right to being quite buddy-buddy, guess she liked to do things at her own pace.

"Yes, I'm from the Zhang Clan, the name is Zhang Dong..."

He didn't turn around, he already saw the woman naked so didn't really feel embarrassed or anything, just wanted to be courteous. The girl hadn't introduced herself yet, so he tried not to say her name that the system already showed him. He had a clear idea about Liena's capabilities, she might have been only in the late stage of core formation but she had a higher graded cultivation method.

"Zhang Dong... think I heard that somewhere... oh, you're that young brother that trashed all those clans single-handedly. Never liked those old coots, they always gave me those lecherous looks. You can turn around."

Matt craned his neck back, he had some questions he wanted to ask the woman. When he looked at her, she was just standing there and munching on a peach-like fruit that he found. He tried it out previously, it was quite rich in spiritual energy and was sweet. But as he was moving his hand up and opening his mouth to speak, Liena spoke up first once again.

"I must thank you for the timely aid, but I could have gotten away myself!"

Matt was holding his hand up high, his index finger outstretched as he wanted to say something but couldn't quite put his thoughts to words. His mouth opened but then closed again as he watched the tanned woman stick her chest out, proclaiming that she would have been just fine.

"Uhhh... s-sure..."

Matt didn't really know what to think of this person, he thought she would be the silent jade-like beauty type. Or maybe, some sensual older sister type. She felt a lot more chipper than he expected, it felt more like he was talking with a dude than a chick. She even started punching the air with her small fists, showing off her battle strength as wind elements gathered around that cute fist of hers. He thought that this lady would be a lot more violent after the first headbutt. Most of the time in novels, they would

misunderstand the protagonist and start battling or calling them a pervert. This girl on the other hand after the initial misunderstanding caught on quite fast and figured out that he was the one that saved her. The problem was the little brother part...

“So you see little Dong, you just need to leave the rest up to big sis Liena. If you follow my lead, I’m sure we can get through this blasted forest in no time!”

\*The hell, little dong?\*

This needed to stop if it continued he would be a designated henchman of this older sister. He didn’t really mind if she tagged along with him, but it would be another thing if it was he that would be tagging along with her. Soon enough, he would have to carry her stuff around and act like a retainer.

“Okay, let’s get one thing straight Feng Liena. I’m no little Dong... I’m more of a Big Dong... no wait... that came out wrong. Let’s just forget about the names.”

He moved his hands over his chest and leaned back against the cold cave wall, making his face look solemn and all cultivator like. He tried furrowing his brows to look extra serious and menacing.

“I have been wandering around this forest for about a week now, you’re the first person I’ve come across. Do you have any clues as to where we are? I think this might be part of the test that the immortal that made this place came up with, I reckon our clan members are in a different section taking part in a different type of test.”

Feng Liena moved her thumb to her chin and looked with her eyes to the side as she contemplated. Matt looked at the woman, was that steam that was coming out of her ears? The woman wasn’t much of a thinker, the old cultivator lady and her retainers did most of that, she only needed to cultivate diligently. So, she just stomped her foot on the ground making the rock below her shatter as she shouted out.

“Ahhh... who cares! We just need to beat up some beasts and move forward! Don’t worry little Dong, I have it all figured out!”

She proclaimed her finger pointing at the ceiling as if she wanted to point it at the heavens. Matt realized that his first party member wasn’t all that bright, he sure hoped that the woman wouldn’t be a burden. Abandoning people wasn’t his style, so he wondered what would be the best way to move forward. He tried asking about some other things, but the moment he spoke up...

“Miss Lien...”

“Big Sis!”

“Missus Lie...”

“Big Sis!”

“Lien...”

“BIG SIS!”

He dropped his head, the woman was probably used to getting called elder sister back in her clan. He wasn't sure why she was so adamant about giving up her title.

"Fine! Big Sis Liena... how about we travel together, I'm sure we can achieve more if we travel in a group. The elders from the other clans must be around here somewhere, maybe we can find them before those beasts get to them."

The woman crossed her arms over her own chest, copying Zhang Dong's way of standing. Though due to being quite stacked, her forearms squished into those two mountains making Matt's heart skip a beat. She nodded a couple of times while looking to the side as if she was considering his proposal.

"I agree, but on one condition!"

"Which is?"

"I'm the leader and you have to call me big sis~"

He wasn't sure why the woman was acting like a middle schooler but due to being an introvert he was getting tired of the prolonged conversation that was going nowhere. The woman didn't seem that stuck up, was she really the stuck up young Matriarch that denied any men that approached her. She sounded quite friendly, well besides the headbutt part, but that was an understandable reaction in that situation. He just shrugged and nodded at her request, he didn't really care about things like being 'Team leader' at least his new companion was cute.

The two people headed out, Matt constructed another water bottle so that Liena didn't have to drink from his. It felt a bit uncomfortable when he was making it as she kept staring at him when he was skillfully wrapping the vines around the bamboo bottle. Did this woman never go outside or something, she was like a little kid with stars in her eyes looking at the construction process.

They started running into more monsters as time passed, Matt could detect their life signals so after getting an okay from his new big sis he was now the scout. The woman didn't get to fight that much as Matt still wanted to get the points from the kills, even though they were minor.

There was another strange phenomenon that they came across. After killing some trashy mobs, they turned to spirit bubbles as always. Soon enough though, he felt a high concentration of similar energy particles. He looked at the spot it was coming from and could see a monster getting created or summoned in that spot. The fresh creature looked around and went on its way like it was a natural thing.

\*They have a respawn time as well? So there is no way to kill them all?\*

He wondered if the goblin town he previously cleared out would be populated again. This would be a good thing if he had time to farm for things like this high grade hatchet weapon. He took it with him not as a weapon, but as something that he could absorb later. The regular creatures only had lower graded gear with them, only the boss monsters had the good stuff with them.

While adventuring forward the two people spotted something, it was a giant pillar of fire just shooting into the air along with a gust of wind that indicated an explosion. The two looked at each other and quickly headed in that direction, it looked like other cultivators were fighting. They arrived at the spot

after a couple of minutes only to find a charred corpse and gore bits all over the place. The torn-up robe had a familiar-looking emblem on it.

\*Isn't this the emblem that pimp guy's ship had? Did he get killed, or was it another member from his clan...\*

That person had more ships with him and back in the teleportation chamber, Matt made a mental note to count how many clans were participating. His clan took out just one spot, Feng Liena's took up two with the busty big sis here and with the baked potato granny that she came with as the second core formation expert. The red-haired male came with two other core formation cultivators which left him with three spots. The remaining spots were taken up by two other clans, with two spots each. The Zhang clan was considered the weakest from the point of these other clans as they only brought one core formation expert with them.

"That's one down...I hope we find the rest before these monsters get to them..."

The explosion was fresh, so Matt could sense a fight in the distance. He followed the energy reading quickly, hoping that he would be there on time.

## **Chapter 88**

Matt slung the large cleaver weapon over his shoulder and headed out while Feng Liena followed after him. He could feel multiple beings in that area, they were mostly in the core formation. After the two arrived closer to the scene, they could see the battle unfolding.

The first person Zhang Dong saw was someone he was familiar with, he could see his name thanks to the system and it was Huo Qiang. It was the red-haired man that he saw before entering the secret ground. There was another person with him, an older looking gentleman with mutton chops that looked injured. He was wearing the same clan pattern on his torn up robe, it being of the same clan that the burly red-haired man belonged too. The two were standing back to back while surrounded by some monsters, it weren't goblins this time around but orcs. There were quite a lot of them and Matt could even see an ogre amongst the group. Most of the monsters were in the middle stage but there were some in late stages of core formation.

The two cultivators were both in the late stage of core formation, so all things considered they were quite strong. There were many green skins that were evaporating into dust after getting slain but they just kept coming at them. Matt wanted to jump in and help the two guys out, but when he looked to the side, his big sis was just scoffing and walking in the opposite direction.

"W-wait, where are you going? We have to help them..."

Matt asked while looking between the battle zone and the female cultivator that had furrowed brows and a rather cute frown.

"Pff, just leave those bastards be, we don't need to help people like them out."

The woman moved her face to the side, Matt caught on fast deducing that there must be some animosity between her and the people that were fighting. Though this didn't really sit well with him, the more party members they got the better their chances of survival would be. He was sure they could talk

it out in the end, if not he could always show his hand to reel them in. He tried out some reverse psychology to get his team leader to follow him into battle.

“Ah, it’s fine to be afraid elder sister. There are so many of those monsters, it’s only natural that you are hesitating. Just leave this to your little brother, you can just watch from afar.”

You could see the pink-haired girl fuming with rage the moment Zhang Dong insinuated that she was afraid of the monsters. He didn’t stay long enough to hear her complain as there was no time, he just bolted for the battle area and felt that the lady followed behind him soon enough, at least she could offer him a bit of range support with those wind techniques.

The two fighters weren’t aware of Zhang Dong and Feng Liena as they were fighting for their dear life. The two belonged to the Huo Clan, this was a fire element type clan with the younger-looking youth being the strongest son of the current clan Patriarch. The man next to him was one of his bodyguards that his clan sent out with him to this secret ground. The dark palm sect had requested help from them and promised riches and even cultivation resources if they managed to figure out the testing grounds. Being the proud clan that they were, the Patriarch decided to send quite a force consisting of the three strongest core formation experts from his clan beside himself.

They all miscalculated that the whole expedition thing was a hoax and that the dark palm sect didn’t actually expect anyone to return from it. Being the stuck up clan that they were, they expected riches and an easy payout even though it was known that the previous exploration attempt failed. They naturally thought that the reason was that the people sent were just too darn weak, the Zhang clan was just a middle-sized clan and the Huo Clan was a grade above it in strength even before the previous one lost most of their fighting potential.

Huo Qiang was quite lucky in the beginning, he found one of his clan elders just a couple of days after being spirited away into the wilderness. After about a week they even found the second one as well, so now they were all together and fighting with the monsters in their own little group. But, the creatures just kept coming and coming. They had to constantly move and fight, the monsters were everywhere and they were getting harder to defeat the more time passed.

The life-saving trinkets and talisman started getting used up, they only had a few out the rest was locked in their storage rings. Soon enough they came across the large Orc tribe village, the three masters weren’t that good at sneaking around so they were spotted by the green skins while trying to avoid the settlement.

The monsters poured in like moths attracted to the flame while the three tried to escape, but they found themselves surrounded. One of their clan members tried buying them some time so that they could escape. He burned his cultivation base making himself burst into a flaming inferno opening up a path for his two clan members to escape. The plan didn’t work though as even though they managed to run away from that group another one was waiting for them around the corner and they were surrounded by them again.

“What’s wrong with these beasts? Don’t they fear death at all?”

The red-haired man said while the gauntlets that he was wearing on his hands glowed red. He delivered a devastating blow to one of the nearby orc’s sending the creature flying back, it’s head broken as its

body collided with a close-by tree. The two cultivators were quite strong, but the monsters just kept swarming them not caring for their own safety whatsoever. The two men were getting tired slowly, their spiritual energy was getting drained as they landed attack after attack, killing the monster mobs one after another in quick succession.

“Young Master, you must save yourself. You are the future of the clan, you must not perish here!”

The mutton chop beard elder said, his fists were also covered by some kind of glove weapon along with his legs. From the way the two were carrying themselves, it looked like they were close range specialists. The older man had a robust build as well, his body was already battered and bruised from the prolonged fighting. He was tasked with protecting this young master of his, he was a one in a million genius of the Huo clan, his only fault was that he was quite the womanizer.

The elder was contemplating doing a suicide rush as the other clan member, but before that could happen he heard a strange sound coming from afar. It sounded like thunder and lightning, but there were no clouds above them. The monsters were focused on the other two cultivators so they didn't pay attention at the white-haired cultivator that was charging at them from behind, coated in lightning.

Zhang Dong burst to the scene, swinging the large goblin cleaver with one hand and his charged up sword with the other. Feng Liena just stood up on one of the large trees and started blasting the creatures with her ranged attacks, not keen on getting into a close melee fight.

The orcs finally noticed the other intruders as they were flanked by Matt's charge, he managed to decapitate a couple of them with his two-sword style that still needed some work. The Huo clan cultivators saw this as a chance and started battling their enemies with more vigor as some backup had arrived. They recognized the white-haired man from the clan assembly but didn't know why he was helping them. They were sure about one thing, this Zhang Clan Patriarch was a lot stronger than they had thought, by the way, he was cutting into those monsters, he must be in the great circle they thought.

“Thanks for the assistance brother!”

Huo Qiang shouted while charging up his fist, you could see small red dots gathering around the man's fist. The metallic gloves he was wearing were made of a silver looking alloy, they had various runic patterns etched into them and as he gathered the fire energies they gave of a crimson glow as well. He struck a nasty looking orc with an open palm strike, caving the monsters whole chest in and blasting it back into the orc group that was charging at them.

The fight continued, the bodies of the monsters continuously vanished with the help of the Zhang Clan Patriarch and his lovely helper that was putting in the back. Soon enough the large ogre appeared, it went after the red-haired man while swinging a tree, using it as a club. Qiang's punch connected with the makeshift weapon, the tree catching fire and turning into a mass of splinters.

Mutton chops was doing a bit worse than the rest of the group, he was still in the late stage but if you ranked everyone here, he would be last in terms of spiritual energy. He was already battered as he and the other retainer were being overprotective of their young master and they used their bodies to defend him. He was about to get impaled by a similar-looking hatchet weapon that one of the orc warriors was

aiming at his head, but just before it landed a wind blade came from afar and deflected the attack, this was enough for the man to land a killing blow on the creature that attacked him.

He looked in the direction the attack came from and saw the Feng clan matriarch, she was standing on one of the branches and looking quite haughty. The battle continued, the cultivators managed to wiggle out of the spot that they were surrounded. This gave them some leeway as they didn't need to watch their backs anymore and could unleash a wider range of attacks.

The monsters weren't letting up though, but with time they got whittled down by the combined might of the four cultivators that started working as a team. Matt looked at all the weapons that the monsters dropped, if he could just gather those up he might be able to reach the great circle with his body refining skill. Though he didn't really want to start absorbing it with people next to him, plus he would need to carry the pile of hatchets and strange-looking weapons with him.

\*If it only didn't take so long to absorb one of these...\*

"Well, if it isn't Feng Liena, have you reconsidered my proposal?"

Huo Qiang asked in a cheery tone as he walked over to the busty gal. Matt could see the woman's expression changing from a neutral one, to one of rage and disgust. He didn't know that a beauty like her could furrow her brows that much, that frown was quite impressive.

"I would rather marry a donkey than someone like you! How many concubines do you even have?"

Feng Liena stomped the ground while scoffing at the proposal, the red-haired man just looked at her and shrugged.

"Oh, just about ninety nine, you could be the hundredth one~"

He laughed to himself while looking at the woman whose face started going red, she was really fuming. She even took out her battle fans and went into a battle stance, the mutton chop uncle intervened putting himself between his young master and the woman.

"Halt, you will not harm the young master!"

A fight was about to break out, the old guy was taking his job very seriously and he would pounce on the young lady the moment she showed animosity towards his young master. Matt just facepalmed while looking at the scene, guess these people weren't good at working together. He raised his fist up into the air it crackling with lightning, he activated his avatar form on it along with his condensing skill. He didn't need to cover his whole body with the technique, being able to use it on separate body parts which cost him less spiritual energy.

He slammed his fist into the ground, making the group of three turn their heads. The slam caused the ground to shake, the residual blast kicked up a storm, the people using their forearms to protect their eyes from the sand that was blown up.

"Enough! Stop fighting, we need to work together to get through this... don't you get what this place is by now?"

Matt made sure to add some spiritual energy to make his voice sound extra menacingly, his fist glowing and discharging electricity into the surroundings.

The three people gulped a bit after witnessing the strike, they clearly knew that if something like that landed on them they would turn into meat paste. They realized that the white-haired man was clearly the strongest from this group, probably at the great circle of core formation.

“Little Dong... didn’t know that you were this strong... big sis is impressed!”

Matt wanted to run up and bonk the pink-haired dolt on the head after hearing that, she kind of ruined his cool move with just a few words. He gave out a sigh and moved over to the group, he wanted to ask some questions and also force everyone to cooperate as he was still sure that this was a place where you couldn’t just do things alone.

## **Chapter 89**

In another place.

The Zhang Clan members approached the large fortress. The walls were immense making the cultivators feel like tiny ants, the moment they came close to the large gate it started shaking. The people took up their combat stance, ready for battle. The doors opened up from within, the loud creaking noises made some people from the group feel quite uncomfortable as they fought the urge to plug their ears up.

They thought that perhaps some enemies would burst through that door, but after they opened nothing but silence greeted them. Zhang Zhi waved his hand forward taking two squads with him, forming a small scouting party. The insides were quite barren, the cultivators couldn’t feel any life coming from the surrounding.

The rest of the group slowly crept in, there was still a chance of a surprise attack coming like from those centipede monsters. Also, a boss monster might appear in that closed-off room, so they kept vigilant as everyone entered the large empty structure. The outside was quite basic, consisting of four walls connecting to four towers. Each wall had a large gate in the middle, it was made from some strange material and quite resistant. The fortress looked unsuspecting, the only thing out of the ordinary was the place it was in and its size.

The inside of the structure had an inner area, the structure looked like a smaller castle that was protected by more walls. The Zhang Clan members started looking around, they found barracks that had basic living quarters where they could sleep in. There was a kitchen area as well as a large well that was also close by, so they wouldn’t run out of water anytime soon. The kitchen had a large storage area which surprisingly had some food in it, there were formations that kept it cool and from rotting.

Zhang Zhi and the other officers went into the castle-like structure, which had many smaller rooms and one larger hall. The moment the people walked in they heard a strange sound, green light filled their eyes as something appeared out of thin air. It was a miniature version of the fortress, just made from light. The people backed away, looking at the green projection, if Matt was here he would probably be able to figure this thing out as it was something a gamer would find interesting.

These old fashioned cultivators didn’t know what they were looking at, there was a panel with some numbers in the corner. There were some blue dots spread out throughout the hologram, and there were exactly 220 of them. More people came into the room, in hopes of figuring out this strange spiritual treasure. The officers went closer, Zhang Jie was there as well and being quite curious she

poked at the panel where the points were, this prompted it to glow and show her a tiny miniature version of a ballista with the number 25 hovering above it.

The people were surprised, the small siege weapon could be picked up by them but when they let it go it vanished and appeared back next to the display panel. After investigating more, one of the people dragged the weapon to one of the towers the hologram that was red started turning green for some reason. When he let it go, the weapon appeared to be stuck to the tower now. Soon enough a commotion could be heard outside.

“What’s wrong? Report!”

A junior member appeared soon enough, it was a familiar-looking chubby fellow by the name of Zhang Hong.

“Reporting sir! Just a moment ago we felt a surge in spiritual energy by one of the towers and a crossbow like weapon appeared out of thin air!”

The foundation establishment elders looked at each other, then to the miniature version of the fortress. They quickly looked outside one of the small windows and could see the weapon now being placed on the tower wall, ready to fire and with some ballista bolts included. They tried repeating the process and managed to place another one of those siege weapons on a different tower. But when they tried doing it once more on the third one, they couldn’t pull the small weapon hologram anymore.

“...Wasn’t this number higher previously...”

Zhang Jie said while looking at the control panel, the number was, of course, the number of points they had for the building. They figured out that this number correlated to the one above the ballista, they had 15 points left and it cost 25 to build.

“But how do we increase this number now... and is there a use for those weapons out there...”

The people examined the siege weapon, it looked a bit strange in the way that it couldn’t be shot manually. It was closed off and they couldn’t insert any of the bolts that were lying next to it. Later on, the clan would find out how these tower defense items worked, but for now, they all headed inside.

Junior members were stationed on the walls and towers, but the whole fortress was just too huge so they had to spread themselves thin. This thing was clearly built for more than two hundred people to run, they needed at least a thousand people for it. The first night went by fast, nothing happened no monster attacks and no enemies in sight. The cultivators started wondering if the voice had something else in mind with the second phase. The elders were in the control room, figuring out the game like controls while the juniors looked at the gate opening and closing on their own.

Just as the next day was coming to a close one of the sentries noticed people walking towards them. Everyone peeked out from the safety of the fortress, they could see a small group moving towards them. The group was filled out by tanned ladies with way too much makeup, they looked disgruntled and tired. From the 220 strong group only about half of them remained.

“Open the gates, help the wounded!”

The gates were opened, the Zhang Clan was quite good at the healing arts and they also had various restorative pills. Their Patriarch ordered them to support the other expedition participants if it was possible. They were told to offer assistance, but react accordingly if the other clans or cultivators were hostile.

The dark-skinned females were on their toes as they saw the large gates opening and cultivators pouring out. They recognized them to be one of the people that came with them to the secret grounds, mostly due to the eye-catching gear that made them look like a bunch black power rangers.

“Don’t worry, we are here to help, come inside of the fortress for treatment.”

Zhang Jie said while moving in with her platoon along with a couple more. The Feng clan members looked at each other and nodded, there were a lot of injured among them. They thought that if the other clan was hostile, they wouldn’t offer them any help in the first place and just slaughter them instead.

“The Feng clan offers their respect.”

One of the older cultivator women bowed with cupped hands while all of them headed inside. Most of the deaths were from the Qi condensation members from the Feng clan. They went through a similar dungeon like the Zhang Clan, but they weren’t prepared as well as them for the things that were inside. Somehow they managed to get to the boss room while using up quite a lot of defensive trinkets and losing some of their members on the way here. Some died to traps, some to the monsters that kept pouring in.

The last boss was a snake-like creature, spitting venom and thrashing its tail at the female cultivators. They managed to slay it with the help of some battle formations and treasures that allowed them to deliver an attack at the core formation level. Without the help of their treasures, they would have been wiped out by the strange-looking creature.

The Zhang Clan offered their help, placing the most injured people in the barracks while offering them their healing arts. They kept their pills to themselves, mostly worried that they would run out too fast if they used them all willy nilly. Luckily most of the cultivator women that survived to this point, weren’t in critical condition. Most of them would recover in a couple of days, with some meditation and aid of the water-based regeneration healing arts that the Zhang Clan implemented.

As time passed more and more of the other cultivators started showing up, most of them being in a sorry state. Life in this world was harsh, most of the cultivators on top didn’t really care about their weaker clan members. You really had to show that you were worth it, for anyone to throw a bone your way. The other way was through family ties, but even then the most promising offspring usually monopolized everything from his or her lesser siblings.

The Qi condensation members of this expedition were the most likely to be tossed aside. The losses were immense among that power bracket. Even though the Zhang Clan started off with the least amount of members of all the participating powers, they didn’t lose anyone while the other people burned through their defensive and offensive treasures to survive their boss battles.

The most people belonged to the Huo clan though, they did have 660 members participating. Though their numbers were cut by more than half, one team only returned with about thirty members. If you

did a headcount, there were 220 Zhang Clan members, 326 Huo clan members, 233 Feng clan members. From the remaining four participating parties, only one team from each returned amounting to about 250 members.

The moment that the last person set foot in the fortress, the people heard the strange robotic voice once more.

“Attention, the second stage will commence in exactly twelve hours.”

“Please get ready for the first wave.”

The message repeated itself for a minute before silence fell on the cultivators, everyone looked at each other a commotion ready to break out. What was that strange voice, what was the first wave? From their experience, they knew that it wasn't anything good.

The Zhang Clan members were the first group to arrive, so they explained a couple of things. The Feng clan members showed to most respect for the help, but the rest was a bit reserved. Everyone from the top cultivators gathered in the big hall with the hologram to discuss the next step. Everyone got clued in about the strange magical treasures, the clan also revealed that they thought that the blue dots were the people that were around the fortress. The other people were a bit suspicious that this clan with the strange-looking combat robes, was just revealing all of their secrets, but they were just following the instructions of their Patriarch.

“That is why I hope we can all work together, the strange voice said that something will start in twelve hours, we need to prepare and station our people on the walls.”

Zhang Zhi chimed in, while some other older-looking cultivators contemplated their next move. There were too many separate forces here, no one knew if they wouldn't get stabbed in the back by the other people in this room if push came to shove. The Zhang Clan wanted to spread people around the walls to prepare for battle, they were the only force without casualties so they could head out at any moment.

“How about we station out people on the walls... we found a lot of bows and arrows stored in the fortress...”

The leading figure from the Huo clan was a grizzled old man, his beard was white and he had multiple scars on his face. His frame was imposing and he didn't look like someone that would follow orders.

“Don't think that just because you were here first, you can order us around. The Huo clan will wait and see what this 'wave' is, then we will decide.”

He scoffed at Zhang Zhi, spitting onto the ground before turning his back and walking to the side. The other fire clan members came to their leader's side, they outnumbered the Zhang clan two to one with their foundation establishment elders so they didn't really fear them.

The leading person from the Feng Clan was an amazon looking woman, her midsection was covered by armor with her legs and arms exposed letting you see her bulging muscles. The brown skin just made her veins pop out even more.

“Well if it isn't old man Tao, don't mind him. He was born constipated like that.”

She laughed out in a loud voice, making a lot of people uncomfortable in the room.

“But I agree, let's put our clan members on the walls and wait for this wave.”

She gave Zhang Zhi a wink while licking her lips, the man felt a shiver run through his body when the almost seven-foot-tall woman did that. Though she seemed friendly enough and ready to cooperate with their members. Soon two camps formed before the first wave, one consisted of the Zhang and Feng clan, while the Huo clan absorbed the remaining members mostly by threatening them with sheer force.

“The first wave will commence in 5...4...3...2...1...”

The robotic voice proclaimed and almost instantly the cultivators could hear rumbling in the distance.

## **Chapter 90**

Zhang Jie and her team were standing next to some battlements looking out into the distance. The woman was using a telescope-like treasure that let her see far into the distance. There was a lot of dust getting thrown up as something approached in their direction, after a moment some shadowy outlines could be seen.

“Those look like the beasts in that corridor.”

Zhang Jie said while the monster outlines changed to actual beasts. There was a swarm of centipede monsters coming at them, they were gnashing their jaws with their feelers wiggling. The beasts were running at full speed and would soon arrive close to the wall that the Zhang Clan was occupying. Due to there being two factions in this fortress at the moment, the sides of the fort were divided. The Zhang Clan and the Feng Clan occupied the north and west area along with the two towers that were placed at the north wall. The Huo clan got the south wall towers.

The monsters were only charging at the north wall at the moment, but Zhang Jie didn't feel threatened as even though there were a lot of those insect monsters coming at them, they were quite weak.

“They are far weaker than the ones we met before... Line up at the battlements, bring out your ranged weapons!”

Zhang Jie shouted to her platoon while other team leaders did the same. The cultivators didn't only have bows and crossbows that they could use for range attacks. There were various treasures that allowed the cultivators to fire off their Qi that had more penetrative power than your typical arrows.

While the junior cultivators were waiting for the seniors to give them the signal to fire, something strange happened. The ballista that was placed on one of the towers started moving on its own. Zhang Liu jumped back in fright as the siege weapon turned in the direction of the monsters and started firing large bolts. The projectiles were like small logs and the moment they connected with the advancing monsters they blew them to bits.

“This weapon is reacting to the beasts...”

Zhang Jie was there when the ballista was placed on the wall, this made her realize its use. The other siege weapon was further away on the east wall, so only this one was firing. She decided to observe it some more while also giving the order to bombard the beasts with their ranged attacks. Various

projectiles rained down on the monsters along with colorful energy-based attacks that some of the cultivators fired off.

The creatures were quite weak, each hit meant a dead monster that vanished into nothingness almost instantly after collapsing to the ground. These creatures were only at the Qi condensation first and second stage, so they were nothing more than target practice for the junior members. One of the senior members would probably be able to decimate these weak monsters on his or her own if they wanted to. For now, they remained vigilant as the beast tide continued and the monsters couldn't get closer than five hundred meters outside the fortress.

The ballista weapon continued firing, releasing a large bolt every ten or so seconds. Zhang Jie noticed another peculiar thing, the ballista bolts that were next to it started vanishing. The large ammunition evaporated into nothingness after a shot was fired. Soon there was nothing left and the weapon creaked to a stop and remained motionless. This prompted the platoon leader to frown, but she had thought about something and decided to put it up to a test.

"Peng, Hong... there were similar looking bolts in one of the rooms we searched, bring as many as you can carry over here."

She gave out the order, to the two that weren't really good at range attacking in the first palace. The macho and fatty nodded and bolted to the storage room where the ammunition was placed in. There was a peculiar thing about these bolts, they couldn't be placed in storage rings. The two juniors had the largest frames from the team, so they would be able to carry more of those mini log sized bolts.

Peng was carrying a bunch of them, propping them between his forearms and head with his arms raised in the air. Hong did the same, almost tripping on the way back. After the two were back, they just dumped the ammunition in the spot that the previous stash was in. The ballista twitched the moment the items were placed next to it and resumed firing.

Zhang Jie nodded as her theory came out to be true. She instantly assigned the two to restocking the weapon, though with only one of these ballistas on the wall there wasn't really a shortage of the bolts. The weapon also had a slow firing rate, so one person would probably be enough.

The first monster wave didn't take long, ending in under an hour after the last arrow impaled a monster in the rocky ground. The robotic voice soon announced that it was over.

"First wave complete...next wave will commence in twelve hours..."

Everyone stopped and looked out into the distance. They could see the monster tracks left by the centipede many small legs along with a lot of arrows loitered around the place. Only the north wall that the Zhang clan was occupying was attacked, but every cultivator in the fortress moved to see what the commotion was about.

Soon some people were dispatched to retrieve all the ammo that could be recycled or used again. Zhang Jie returned to Zhang Zhi to give a report about the self-working weapon and the reload mechanic that it was using. All of the top brass returned to the hologram room, they wondered if there would be some way to place more of those weapons on the walls. There was a tiny problem though, the not so friendly Huo clan was also there. The Zhang clan officers deliberated if they should share their intel with the other clan, but under the order of their patriarch that said to work with the other clans, they gave in.

“You can place weapons on the fortress with this magical treasure?”

The one speaking was Huo Tao, he wondered why the other clan was sharing this information with them. Normally you would hold such information to yourself to gain an edge over your opponent, or at least trade the info for something in return.

“Oh ho ho? Shouldn’t you at least show some gratitude you old fart? We are giving you precious knowledge, how about you kowtow at least five times?”

The one walking was the large amazonian woman by the name Feng Daiyu, she was lazily sitting in one of the chairs with her legs spread apart and a cup with some alcohol in her hand.

“Shut your mouth, you she-devil!”

Huo Tao went red in the face spitting out some profanities at the well-built woman, that just looked amused by the man’s outburst. After a moment she stood up, moving her neck side to side her bones and muscles releasing some cracking noises in the process.

“Ha ha, Want me to give you a spanking like last time? I bet the revered Huo clan would love to see their esteemed elder eating dirt~”

The woman laughed out loud while getting closer and closer.

“You just got in a cheap shot, this time it will be different.”

You could see a large vein expand on Huo Tao’s forehead, his hands showing fists as he waited for the woman to get closer. Soon the two were standing right opposite each other, the woman was taller than the scarred man but he was a lot wider. His frame was muscular and imposing, but the woman didn’t seem frightened at all. She was showing her pearly whites, grinning from one side to the other while the other foundation establishment people around the room got sweaty palms.

The fight was about to commence but soon the woman and man that were staring daggers at each other felt a chill run down their spines. It was like some kind of beast was staring at them, making them unable to move.

“That’s enough!”

The one shouting was Zhang Zhi, after all the training and all the improvements that the Patriarch made in the techniques he was practicing, his battle prowess was second to none amongst these cultivators. The two glanced to the side, the man was giving off an oppressive aura as he was grasping the handle of his sword.

“You might not like it, but we are here together. You heard the strange voice, there will be another wave soon and I bet there will be another after that one.”

He slowly got closer and closer to the two fighting peacocks, he walked between them and then towards the large glowing map in the middle as he got their attention.

“We have to assume that the monsters will get stronger with time. I’m sure you know that our clan previously took part in this expedition right?”

Zhang Zhi turned around to face the two bickering parties, his brows unmoving as he looked at the two.

“We have been here for about two weeks now... but even in the previous expedition, our elder members only started dying after a month or so...you know what this means?”

Huo Tao glanced at the man in front and rubbed his chin.

“You’re saying that they arrived here just as we did... and started faltering after a month’s time?”

The man wanted to blame the failure of the previous expedition on the lack of strength, but the other cultivators had to be at least competent if they managed to get through that dungeon area. That boss monster that they faced wasn’t anything to scoff at. Their clan didn’t really have much information about the secret ground, the sect didn’t give them much and the clans that took part in it previously were mostly gone. The time it took for the people to die didn’t prove much, though it could be an indication of the increasing difficulty of the task.

“What if they left this place and just perished elsewhere?”

“That could be true, but what if they didn’t and the monsters attack just continued? They are weak now, but what if something like that thing appears?”

By that thing, Zhang Zhi meant the boss monster that every clan fought. You could reason that if there were things like that hidden here, they could also appear at this fortress.

“I believe that the key to this is this magical treasure.”

Zhi proclaimed while moving the attention from the people gathered in this room to the large hologram map. He noticed that the points went up by 50 after the beast wave ended and he could demonstrate by placing another ballista on a tower. Tao rubbed his chin even more after witnessing the siege weapon appearing out of thin air.

“If you are willing to cooperate, we will tell you what we know.”

Zhang Zhi spoke, trying to hook the others in.

“Work together...”

The Tao members knew well that even if they battled it out, the losses would be immense even if they felt that they would win in the end. It wouldn’t be bad to wait for now and gather more information about this place. They could decide later if they needed to cooperate with the other cultivators, there wasn’t any bad blood yet either.

“We can assist each other for now... but I want some of those weapons on our side!”

Huo Tao proclaimed and got a nod of acceptance from Zhang Zhi, Feng Daiyu just looked at the smaller man and gave him a strange look. The man gulped a bit as he had the impression that he was looking at a beast that saw him as a juicy piece of meat, she even licked her lips. Soon everyone got clued in about the points and re-loading mechanic that the siege weapons had. After some time passed the second wave was upon them, the creatures came from another side of the fortress and had an increased number and strength.

