

Unfathomable 501

Chapter 501

‘So now I have to keep a lookout for a magical shield, where could something like that be? I’m not sure I have any time right now, luckily they left me that thing. My little informant didn’t give me much information though, at least I’ll be able to move from here soon...’

Zhang Dong was reflecting on what had happened some time ago. For the time being, he was stuck sitting at the bridge between Empires protecting his people. They were building massive walls and inscribing defensive formations everywhere. The new fortress that would be defended by his people needed to be able to block the way into his lands.

It had been a whole month since his hostile takeover. This time he needed to mostly spend hovering in the sky with his radar out. It was similar to the time he had to protect his sect from any spies and just like before there had been some attempts. Various tribes from the demi-human side were trying to gather information while wandering closer in smaller groups.

Yet no large-scale skirmish had erupted, the demi-human presence was slowly being drowned out as they retreated north to where their second fortress was. It was quite a stressful month for him as the Emperor of the demi-humans might have decided to attack. Valentine was forced to cough up some information but it didn’t really help much.

The Emperor seemed to just be the strongest member of all the demi-human tribes. Every ten years they would host a tournament where everyone could participate. The winner would become their leader, only strength counted in their society, and family ties were nonexistent. His kids would need to defeat their father if they ever wanted their position and could easily be then vanquished by a rival tribe member.

This Emperor apparently had been in power for over five hundred years. At this point, no one was confident in beating him in an honorable way. Even when the battle tournament started only the foolhardy participated and were massacred while tribe leaders like Valentine sat back and watched. Only if they spotted some kind of weakness in their leader would they attempt to sink their claws into his neck.

Besides the power structure and the notable tribes, there was not much that Valentine could disclose. The Emperor was apparently so overpowering that his new informant could not list any weak points. How strong this enemy was compared to someone like him or the Azure Emperor was unknown.

Then there was the issue with his new partners that were not out of the picture yet. Perhaps after he found their holy shield they would suddenly require divine armor from him. Luckily his task was made easier by them handing over a tracking device. After he proved that he would be helpful they put some trust in him.

“Hm? Speaking of the devil.”

While contemplating his next move he noticed a certain item that was vibrating. He quickly waved his hand and a crystal orb popped out. After injecting some mana into it he was greeted by the face of his wizard friend, Argus.

"Greetings my friend."

"Hey Argus, what can I help you with?"

"Ho ho, I can't ask for any more help, you have already done so much for us, I just wished to give my gratitude again, those emblems that you gave me worked like a charm!"

"Is that so, did any of the sects or clans complain or were they accomodating?"

"They were surprisingly cooperative, your name alone was enough to make them kneel, this will truly aid us immensely in our quest!"

Zhang Dong smiled at the wizard that had been more relaxed ever since their first meeting. It seemed that his commanding officer Lucius was now actually listening to this powerful mage for once.

"Good but be wary of the Heavenly Crane sect and the Long Clan, they might not put as much respect into my name like the others."

"Aye, we will keep that in mind."

"Just keep Lucius out of trouble, if he attacks those people you'll be in more trouble than necessary."

Argus started laughing but Zhang Dong was serious. The Heavenly Crane sect would probably have enough power to go against the magic knights that had lost some of their knights in the last battle. He expected the people from the magical kingdom to be victorious if it ever came down to it but that would weaken his side.

'The Heavenly Crane Sect has a lot of their sub-sects in the eastern regions, they probably have already suffered some losses from the Emerald Phoenix Empire but as long as they can keep them busy it should be fine.'

After the conversation was over a group of elders from the building faction arrived to make a report. The whole area around the bridge had been worked on by his people with no time for sleep.

"Patriarch, we are finished with the first main stage of the construction, the base formations are ready for you."

"Good, let's go."

He nodded and moved towards the gigantic wall that had been established here. The bridge that the wall was blocking luckily had a ceiling. They had just enough to make it halfway there but with the addition of the defensive formation, it could be fully blocked off. Now he just needed to add some of his own spiritual energy to jump-start it.

Thus he floated right before the long construction and onto the middle tower. With the two largest on each side, there were exactly nine smaller ones on the inside. He took a seat on the middle one that was also a lot larger than the other ones around it. This was the center point of the protective formation and needed to have most of the defenses.

'I hope this will be enough...'

The coffers of the sect had been emptied to develop this defensive structure. The demi-humans didn't stock up on resources that cultivators used so receiving compensation was hard. The only thing they could do was to ransack the abandoned clan abodes and sect grounds that were devoid of people.

Soon the mostly gray walls started pulsating with power. Magical circles together with various characters started to light up as the whole formation system was activated. In the middle of it was Zhang Dong, just sitting down and concentrating. He needed to drain all of his power so that if the enemies came they would not easily break these defenses.

Not far away were Huo Qiang and Zhang Zhi. Both of them were guarding their leader and friend against any surprise attacks. If someone was informed about what they were doing then this would be the perfect moment for an assassination attempt. By raising the protective barrier he would be weakened and need to recover for a few days.

Luckily for him, his sect would not be willing to part with their Patriarch. Thus everyone that was able surrounded the glowing orb of light that was rising above the central tower. Zhang Dong had surrounded himself with a shell of golden energy. Arcs of lightning were shooting out and quickly bombarding the whole place with his essence.

The energy that started out as chaotic lightning started to quickly connect to the various lines of power. These lines that were previously faint and pale started to churn with energy that made all the various magical runes glow even more. Soon there was a strange sound that indicated that the protective barrier became operational.

Zhang Dong that was previously surrounded by an orb of holy energy started to slowly float down to the ground. His breathing was somewhat erratic and beads of sweat covered his forehead as he had used up almost ninety percent of his spiritual reserves. Yet before he could gently drop down and rest a sudden glint entered his eye.

"Die!"

A thick black spear shot out from underground after the barrier was created. It was aimed right at Zhang Dong's heart and already breaking the sound barrier after it was shot out from underground. The one responsible for this act was a large humanoid being that had a face similar to a mole. His body was quite muscular and his hands were replaced by sharp claws.

Yet before the black spear could reach its target it was stopped by a combination of molten lava and water. First, a giant fist made of plasma energy collided with it that belonged to Huo Qiang's soul beast. Secondly, after losing some of its speed it was devoured by the water dragon belonging to Zhang Zhi.

"It's just as the Patriarch said, block his escape!"

To the demi-human mole man's surprise, they had been waiting for his appearance. Thanks to this being already Zhang Dong's domain he was able to scan it with his mapping function. A week or so ago a small squadron of mole men had attacked their encampment. During that scuffle, their leader hid underground and waited for the right chance to strike.

The risky trap had been deliberately created by them. They had ordered some of the sect members to talk loudly about how he would be powerless after the act was done. Now after the leader took the bait

they could finally remove him from the chessboard. With how the barrier was successfully created he would be unable to flee even through the ground.

‘I see that they don’t need me for every little thing anymore.’

He observed the fight from a distance, Zhang Zhi, Huo Qiang, and three other nascent soul masters were giving chase. Together with all the ranged support from their new defensive cannons and the flying ships the mole-man had no place to hide. By superheating the ground with his soul beast, Huo Qiang was able to force the enemy outside where he took his last breath.

With how the barrier was constructed it didn’t allow anything to escape even through the underground. This was one of the reasons that he decided to draw the mole-man into this area. If this tribe leader was unable to break through the newly created protective shielding, then the worms they used to get through the tunnel wouldn’t either.

While he was truly tired he could still check for any damages that the protective barrier sustained. Even after the scuffle, it was still fully operational and quickly recovering from any damage it sustained. With the test out of the way, he could now focus back on the second problem which were the demi-humans stationed in the north.

‘With the fall of their fortress they might start taking us more seriously now, the training wheel period will now be over...’

With that in mind, he removed himself from this area. After recovering it was time for more upgrades to his golden fortress, the old vampire castle was already half stripped for resources and all of them would be getting moved. The time to proceed with the war effort was at hand and soon after Wang Long’s demise was on the menu.

Chapter 502

“Give me a report, what have our strategists come up with?”

“Greetings Patriarch!”

Zhang Dong walked into the room, in the middle there was a large holographic map with various colors on it. The side that represented his lands was colored blue while the middle where his brother the Azure Emperor resided was green. In various other locations, it was quite red with a focus on the areas connecting to the other empires.

“The region that we had managed to take from the demi-humans is stable, we have experienced an attack coming from outside but our forces were able to handle it with minimal losses, no force has attempted to travel through the bridge. We assume that the other demi-humans have informed their leaders already and are probably unwilling to risk losing forces by going through the bridge directly.”

“That does make sense, have our scouts discovered anything? Are they building up a force up north?”

“It is so Patriarch, the enemy is probably building up their forces before attempting to reclaim the area, we expect the recent skirmishes to be nothing more than scouts meant to test our forces.”

“Mhm.”

Zhang Dong nodded while looking at the map, he had wanted the enemies to just attack him through the bridge where his defenses were the strongest. Regretfully they weren't all just brutes and were smart enough to wait for more people to arrive. It wouldn't be strange if after they charge from the north another sizable army would appear through the bridge to attempt a pincer attack.

"Very well, concentrate on building our defenses outwardly; we can not have that location fall. How about the other regions, any words from the east side?"

"Yes Patriarch, we have received information that the sects and clans are being pushed towards the center of the empire."

"Has the Heavenly Crane Sect moved in yet?"

"No, they have taken a passive approach but are allowing other sects to join their ranks."

"As expected, they don't want to spread themselves too thin without knowing the other sides full might."

Zhang Dong nodded as the second strongest sect in the Empire was acting in a similar fashion to the strongest. They didn't care about the lower regions or protecting them, most of their wealth was gathered in the zones with higher spiritual energy concentrations. There the spirit stone mines were more plentiful and the spirit herbs grew in abundance.

"Do we know something about the East attackers or about the ones coming from the north?"

"Yes, Patriarch, the ones to the east have identified themselves as residents of the Emerald Phoenix Empire and are very similar to our own people. They are also cultivators similar to us but their way of progressing is different."

"I presume they have been ransacking the cities they managed to occupy?"

The person giving the report nodded as Zhang Dong was familiar with that group of people as he had spent some time in that Empire. They were a reflection of the Azure Empire so they would act the same way as the cultivators here. This was like a secret ground that became open for a short amount of time. They were like locusts that hoped to devour everything before the path home closes.

'They have learned to cultivate in lands with lower amounts of spiritual energy, so now that they have come here they will gain a boost to their strength. I can't move into that region before taking care of the Demi-humans and Wang Long...'

While the Emerald Phoenix Emperor and his people could not be taken lightly they were predictable. They wouldn't push in too hard and slowly try to gather all the resources they could get their hands on. He believed that they would wait and gather information before pulling all the stops. Getting used to the increased spiritual energy would also hinder their siege as a lot of their Elders will wish to cultivate in a more favorable environment instead.

"What of the beings from the spirit sea? Have they been identified?"

"No Patriarch, we only have rumors and the map we speculate that these beings can't function on land as we do and instead will continue to spread their influence in the uncharted waters."

The north side of the empire was connected to a giant ocean that could not be crossed, anyone that attempted to make the trip had never come back to tell their tale. The way was clearly barred and only opened up after this scenario had started. Probably if he tried sailing those waters he would arrive in another area with those supposed fish people.

'If they can't reach into our lands then its fine but the only problem is...'

The map here was showing a fog of red moving from the northeast towards the northwest where Wang Long was supposed to be. When crossing over to the demonic lands there would be a possibility of running into these invaders. It was also possible for Wang Long to interact with them first.

'It would be nice if they could just kill him for me but they will probably be nothing more than a spirit point farm...'

The sea creatures could perhaps be a perfect farm just made for a system holder. If they couldn't come over towards the landmass then Wang Long could retreat to safety after killing a few.

'I can't just wait, I need to strike while the iron is hot as long as we keep winning the sect will also continue getting a morale boost.'

The United Element Sect was his faction and this feature had several uses. One of them was giving him passive spirit points by keeping everyone happy. Yet this wasn't all as after reaching a certain threshold the whole sect would be given a power boost that was affected by their morale. During battles, he could also choose to spend points to give his people passive buffs if he so wished.

'The more we win, the more they believe in me and give me points but if many people die then the whole thing could crumble...'

Zhang Dong disliked treating his people like numbers and statics on the screen. This was the unfortunate truth of this system he just had a general idea of how his people were doing, it was all like a strategy game. It made things easier for him to run his faction but also dehumanized the people living there.

'I hope when this is all over, I can just put all of this to rest...'

After going through the map again he retreated to his system menu. There he accessed the faction window where he found the Golden Dong Palace. After frowning at the name he had given it he looked at the resources that were being stored there. They were steadily increasing thanks to the castle Valentine brought over and almost all of it had been transferred.

'All of this seems too easy but this was probably done by design.'

The floating golden castle was very convenient. It was an end-game item that he received at the start of the scenario that was supposed to last for a hundred years. Probably after a few years of losing their borders, everyone would gather closer to the center of the empire, and even the invaders would not be able to contend with the nascent soul masters that had all gathered up under one banner.

Then when they counterattacked the person with the system would be able to constantly farm spirit points and finally ascend. This of course didn't go well with him as he wasn't really planning on ascending. Whatever was out there he didn't really want it, spending a thousand years of his lifetime with his current family didn't sound that bad.

'I just hope that I'll get a choice in all of this...'

Yet he needed to have a plan B for whenever the overlords decided to show themselves. Perhaps going above the limits that this place was created with would be the only way of saving everyone that he loved. The first step in that quest for true freedom would be taking care of Wang Long.

'I just hope my dear ol' brother won't throw a fit after his treasured family relic vanishes...'

Zhang Dong thought to himself while vanishing from his current location and appearing in the palace made from golden material. He appeared in a secluded room that only he as the owner of this place could access freely. After renovating the large room he was left with something that looked similar to his old man cave.

It was somewhat similar to the area he saw at the old secret ground. A gaming desk with a lot of screens was here along with any old technology that he was able to bring over from that place. Here he could monitor all of this palace without even clicking on the screen.

"So how is it going, Bob?"

"The Golden Dong Palace is 77% operational."

"Good, so we have enough energy to leave this place, right?"

"Affirmative."

His AI partner had been uploaded into this flying fortress to take care of all the difficult calculations. While all of the cannons could not be automated Bob could take care of the teleporting. This required a lot of processing power and precision, if someone was to get sent into a rock their atoms would become a jumbled mess as they died almost instantly.

'It only needed to be at 75%, that castle was worth the trouble!'

He wanted to pat himself on the back for choosing to ransack the vampire castle for valuable resources. Together with all the various building materials the destroyed sects and clans left they were able to restore this place into working order.

'The Long Clan doesn't seem too bothered by anything as usual...'

His flying fortress was able to somewhat monitor the Long Clan on the outside. He could tell that from the day he had entered the palace a lot of nascent soul elders had been stationed closer to his location. They were keeping tabs on him but weren't aware of what was happening on the inside.

There was one reason that he needed to leave this place, it was impossible to fully prepare this flying fortress otherwise. Most of what was missing were the defensive structures on the outside that he could not restore without the Long Clan noticing. Everything that was upgraded was on the inside but if he didn't want to be a flying target he needed to get those cannons ready.

'That Goliath thing is also bothering me but... perhaps if I show my independence my dear brother will fill me in on the secret.'

With that in mind he decided to flip the switch to alert his people, it was time to take the fight to the demi-humans once more and hopefully end this whole war prematurely.

Chapter 503

“Huh? What is that... why is everything shaking?”

“Is the Emperor angry? What is happening!”

A group of people was looking at some shaking tableware. Just a moment before they were having a heated conversation about the state of the world and now the entire floating city was trembling. This was not something anyone was used to and they certainly didn't think that the floating city could ever be breached. Thus the only explanation could be an internal conflict of some kind.

“C-could the Emperor be battling with his brother?”

“The Golden Dragon? He wouldn't dare!”

“B-but I've heard that he matches the Emperor in power...”

“Even if he is the Emperor's match, he would need the backing of the elder, without it he will have to go against every single martial master in the city!”

An old man shrugged while smiling, in his mind, if the Golden Dragon decided to go against his brother now, it would be suicide. He had no backing and came from a lower sect with no power. How could someone with so little backing be brazen enough to attack the most powerful man in the empire?

“Oh, perhaps they are having a friendly spar instead?”

Another option was given by a young man, this sounded plausible but not quite probably. Why would the two top cultivators of the clan allow their spiritual attacks to affect the populace in the city? They would normally do something like that in seclusion to hide their techniques to be released to the world and copied.

“That's probably not it... but isn't the shaking getting worse?”

At first, only the tables were moving around but soon the small restaurant they were sitting in began shaking as well. With a fear of the whole place collapsing on their heads they all started to leave, perhaps when they got outside they would be able to figure out what the problem was.

“What is going on?”

They were not the only people outside as many clan members started crowding the open streets. Some of them that were of core formation and above started taking to the sky. There was a certain strange spiritual pulse coming from the direction of the Azure Palace.

“W-why is there such a bright golden glow? Could it really be the Golden Dragon?”

To everyone's surprise something behind the Azure Palace that they had no access to was brightening the sky. It was as if the a miniature sun was rising from behind it and slowly going up, but when it revealed itself it was something different that they had never seen before.

“W-what is that Golden Structure...”

“Wait, there is something written on it... ‘Golden Dong Palace’? Isn’t that the name of the Golden Dragon? I... Is he really revolting?”

“T-that...”

Everyone here was used to certain privileges, even though their cultivation levels were high they were not really used to fighting people at their own levels. Whenever anyone went out into the world they were treated like kings or queens. The whole world bowed their heads before them, so in a situation like this where a capable enemy might have surfaced, they were starting to panic. In their minds, if a usurper arose they would be prepared for battle.

“Wait, that palace... it’s glowing...”

“Hasn’t it been glowing already?”

“No you idiot, the glow is different... it’s.... teleportation?”

While the people were panicking and expecting the floating castle to start firing projectiles everywhere it just vanished. The golden glow subsided as the structure was submerged in a pale blue light before disappearing.

Everyone here could tell that it had performed a teleportation spell but how was it able to get outside their protective barrier that was supposed to block all teleportation attempts? Was this something the Azure Emperor agreed on or was the Golden Dragon powerful enough to ignore his older brother?

...

“Emperor, we have lost it...”

“What do you mean?”

“W-we can’t find the Golden Palace within our lands, it must have traveled further outside.”

“That is indeed surprising... my brother is full of mysteries...”

Long Qing was sitting on his throne while looking at something that looked like a holographic screen. There a moment earlier he could see Zhang Dong’s palace rising up above his own and then vanishing. He had assumed that his brother was just cultivating in his new home and would come out soon, but instead, he had escaped from his range of influence.

“Why would he leave?”

Long Qing posed the question to the elders here as he didn’t understand his brother. Why would he leave the most prosperous region and the safest place in the Empire? There was no reason to go out there, it only complicated things as now the relic of the past was not there anymore. Without it, their city had lost some of its defensive capability but not to the point of going after it.

“Perhaps the young dragon wishes to prove that he can be self-sufficient?”

“So is it hubris then? Very well, we will wait for him to have his little adventure, he will return here sooner or later, send a few elders to keep watch of his moves, and report back.”

The Emperor waved his hand as if he was tired of the talk. In his mind, this didn't change much of the future plan. His brother had the golden palace with him so there was no danger of him losing his life. Even if he did, that wouldn't change much. While he was glad to have received a sibling on his level he would not cry when he was gone.

“Yes, Emperor!”

“What a troublesome little brother don't you think so, my Empress?”

Long Qing gave out a sigh while turning to his wife that seemed a bit too quiet. As he called out to her, the smile on her face quickly appeared once more.

“He is truly an interesting individual, my Emperor.”

She nodded while moving closer to her husband but from the corner of her eye she was focused on the area where once the Golden Palace resided.

...

“Woah, that burned through almost all of the energy reserves... luckily we are out...”

Zhang Dong along with all of the sect members that were inside the Palace were feeling drained. Everyone had to inject some of their own spiritual energy into the flying relic from the past. With everyone's help, they were able to teleport outside the lands of the Long Clan but not enough to return to their own Sect Grounds.

“Bob, give me a status report!

“Energy is low, redirecting all power to the anti-gravity module.”

He was still sitting in his command room without anyone else around him. Some of the screens that were used to monitor the various rooms were flickering. Red light accompanied by an alarm was signaling that they were on a collision course with the ground. If this huge structure were to crash without any energy within the protective barrier it would be a disaster.

“Shit...”

There was no time to think about his own health as the weapon to finish this war was about to be destroyed. To the side was a large pale orb that he had already used to add power to the teleportation function, now he needed to do the same with the flight modules.

‘Warning... Warning... Warning...’

“Yeah, yeah be quiet for a second Bob.”

He placed both of his hands on the basketball-sized orb and soon after it started sucking away his spiritual energy. To make the process quicker he decided to inject it at a faster rate which caused the orb to start cracking. Zhang Dong was not the only one, various members of his sect had been spread

out throughout the structure to act as potential batteries and now they were giving it all they had to keep this mobile fortress afloat.

“R-run!”

On the outside, a group of villagers was having a bad day. Out of nowhere a giant building made of gold appeared out of nowhere and began falling on their peaceful village. Most of them were in a state of panic, some started running away while others accepted their fate. If the large structure collided with the ground the ensuing shockwave would wipe everything that they knew and loved.

“W-wait, it... it’s stopping?”

One of the elders from the village looked up in shock as the golden palace started to glow from underneath. It looked like some kind of round disk started to flicker in and out of existence before finally settling itself into place. This disk started growing to the point of being wider than the entire structure before it finally stopped in place.

A gust of wind hit their faces and caused some of them to tumble to the sides. When looking back up they could not see anything besides the underside of this glowing palace. It was bigger than their entire village and just floating above their heads like some kind of divine construct.

All of them dropped down to their knees to bow their heads. Even without knowing what this thing was they knew that it probably belonged to some powerful sect or clan. Their only hope of survival was to lower their heads and hope that the master of this flying city was merciful with them.

Yet as they remained on the ground nothing seemed to be happening. The building above their heads was giving out a warm glow with a calm harmonious sound that felt somewhat relaxing. Some of the people that were injured could even feel that their wounds were being mended.

Finally, after about fifteen minutes a person on a sword appeared from within the palace and was followed by more people wearing similar robes. Anyone that was previously looking up lowered their heads once more out of fright. Now their fears came back, what if these people decided to murder all of them, in these troubled times a small village like theirs would not be remembered or avenged by anyone.

“Raise your heads. We would like to apologize on behalf of the United Element Sect, we hope that this will be enough to cover the damages.”

The young man that was speaking possessed white hair and was quite the looker. The moment the girls from their village laid their eyes on him they were captivated. The man didn’t stay for long as he tossed a sack to the ground before quickly returning to the golden palace he came from.

It didn’t take long before the giant structure above their heads began moving away. While it might have seemed slow it was actually moving fast when considering its large size. Finally, after it was gone the village elder decided to look inside the sack.

“T-this is... spirit stones and gems... why this is a fortune!”

To their surprise, it was filled with precious items that were more than enough to cover the repair costs of a few collapsed roofs that occurred after the strong winds collided with their home.

“The United Element Sect... truly a peculiar lot...”

Chapter 504

‘This does make things a lot easier now... I hope the other clans and sects will overlook this...’

A few days had passed after their escape from the Long Clan territory and his flying fortress was slowly traversing the Empire. Even though its speed was close to a plane’s it would still take a lot of time to get to its destination. There was also a tiny problem of them stopping at various locations that was prolonging their trip.

This was the fifth stop that they were making and it was not due to any energy problems. After the hovering palace was stabilized the golden egg that was powering it all with holy energy was enough. The reason they were stopping so many times was to stock up on free materials.

At this very moment, a beam of light was shooting out from under the palace and slowly sucking up partially destroyed structures. Zhang Dong was sitting in his office chair replica while sipping from a mug of tea while his sect members did all the work. They dismantled buildings to toss them into the tractor beam that then sucked up everything for recycling.

‘I guess if those demi-humans didn’t come through here this wouldn’t be possible...’

He felt bad for gathering up all the materials that were left over by fleeing sects and clans. All of them were just there unattended and without an owner. The thing making it rationalize it was the cause these materials were going to. They would all be used to combat the invaders that destroyed everything in the first place.

‘Whoever lived here would probably not be able to get their belongings back or even return here before someone else snatched it all... I’ll have to mark all of these places down and reimburse them after the war is over.’

What he could do to ease his conscience was to make a note of every region he borrowed materials from. If the original owners were still alive and everything coincided with the old records then he would pay them back in full.

The buildings would probably be worth less than his sect’s cultivation materials or knowledge for improvement. His biggest worry was that he couldn’t really ask for permission and could only assume what the other party wanted from him yet for the time being this was the best option.

Thanks to this approach his golden palace was being quickly built up to its full potential. But there was something bothering, even though it was quickly reaching a hundred percent it didn’t seem fit for a collision with the enemy empires.

All of his previous resources were spent on getting the inside of the palace in working order. This amounted to a whopping eighty percent number in his faction window. The rest was just twenty which normally would be something to be happy about, yet this number was somewhat small. How could the outside armaments only be this good?

‘Is this really it? I might have to move some of the cannons from the ships if this is the extent of their capabilities...’

After spending the resources he was somewhat disappointed in what he received. The first problem was that there just wasn't enough firepower here. Then the second problem concerned the amount of damage the few large guns he was able to get with the help of this system.

'They won't be able to cover the whole fortress... like this, it's not much better than the Argonaut... it's also far slower than it and will be a sitting duck'

While the fortress was sturdy and it would take a while to get through the protective barrier it wouldn't be much of a problem for a high-level cultivator or a battalion of faster ships. It wouldn't be much else but a large transport for people at this point that would have to hang in the background.

'This can't be it... perhaps?'

Zhang Dong had already gone through the pain of taking this thing out of the Long Clan. If he couldn't use it as a spear to throw at his enemies it would be a devastating setback. All of the resources that went into this thing could have been used elsewhere and he also would need to potentially offend his older brother.

During his pondering, he continued to look at the percentage number going up while the floating palace was sucking up a deserted city. Soon he would have enough of the recycled resources to complete all of the available armaments and rooms that were on the inside. There was something he was hoping for when he reached that number and his luck was as good as ever. When the last structure was repaired and the counter hit a hundred he was given a new option.

"Haha, why was I even worrying? There is always some kind of new upgrade!"

This was truly a game-like system, even the flying palace could be upgraded after meeting the right criteria. While this was the first of the enhancements he expected there to be at least a third form that might require something harder than just pumping it full of recycled parts.

"So I've got two options... hey Bob, can you show me how the palace will look with each upgrade?"

`Affirmative, uploading schematic to an external screen, please wait a moment.'

After waiting a few seconds he was presented with two golden palaces that looked different. The difference was quite noticeable as one of them was much bulkier with thicker walls and an increase in size. The other one was more similar to the current one with a more streamlined upgrade.

'The larger one looks better at first glance but...'

"Hey Bob, can you show me some stats?"

The two palaces started getting smaller while a graph appeared next to them. These painted a picture of what he could expect if he decided to go with the bulkier castle. Its capabilities shifted towards defense, it lost some of its speed while gaining more powerful shields and defenses. The second one on the other hand was more inclined towards attacking, it would be faster and the cannons would hit for more.

"So that's the big question, do I want to have a giant impenetrable slow-moving fortress or one that can blow everything to Kingdom Come?"

This was not such an easy decision to make, the slower version was more robust and would probably not be easily breached. Yet its armaments and mobility were inferior, and the teleportation features became more limited as well so escaping from a battle would be hard.

But what he wanted was something to become a shield for his people while he became the sword himself. Even though he would be given fewer options for attacking that was just a limit placed on the system itself, it didn't limit anything that was outside.

With a strong enough shield and defenses, he could bring over his engineers. There were many ships in production along with cannons at his disposal. Attaching them to a larger fortress that had sturdier walls would not be as difficult.

'It will be a lot easier to bring over some artillery than reinforcing the outer walls themselves and I bet I'll be able to upgrade the side components to alleviate the lack of mobility.'

There was another reason for him going with the more defensive upgrade, the engine's power limit with that form was above the more mobile one. With more spirit energy at his disposal, he could safely bring over more of his own upgrades from the sect. Then perhaps when he reached a hundred percent in this form of the ship, he could reduce some of its deficiencies.

"Hm... I guess this is a good time as any, Bob upgraded the Golden Palace."

"Affirmative, which variant should the Golden Dong Palace be upgraded to?"

"Do you have to say the full name in that monotone voice... but anyway, the larger one... oh right it has a name, upgrade it to the Bastion variant, but hold on a second, patch me through to the communication system first."

"Affirmative."

"Here is the Patriarch speaking, I want everyone to go outside the palace and wait for further instructions, worry not this is only a little test."

Before he continued with the upgrade he decided to have everyone move outside. He was mostly sure that no one would suffer inside of the palace even if it started changing but there could always be some kind of accident if he didn't announce it. People would start panicking when the walls started to expand and perhaps trip and fall on something pointy. It took about ten minutes for everyone to evacuate and he was finally able to continue.

His people gathered outside, some were floating up on their flying swords while others remained in the small ground area outside the main gate. Soon they realized that some kind of transformation was taking place as the whole palace began to shake.

By this time they were already used to the strange things happening on the inside of this golden palace, so their reaction was a lot milder. Some of them were just happy that they were finally allowed to step outside the flying fortress for the first time in months. Their joy was short-lived as the whole flying contraption started expanding in all directions.

First, the ground that was the foundation of this flying fortress started getting bigger to accommodate for the increase in size. The walls became thicker and higher, six towers appeared around the old palace

and surrounded it with these new walls. On the inside, more free space was created with strange squarish plots of land that seemed to be for something.

The interior of the palace was changing in a similar fashion. The rooms started expanding to the sides along with the ceiling. This was all done via the spatial formation that warped the space inside to create larger rooms that should not be able to exist normally. However, the biggest difference was to the golden egg that was powering the entire flying fortress.

"I can feel the holy energy rising..."

On one of the monitors, Zhang Dong could see the golden egg expanding in size. He was attuned to everything that was holy and the increase in power output was more than doubled. With the increase in the exterior size the flying relic would use it all up but he wasn't worried as he was greeted by more system prompts that he began to read.

"Hm... so that was just the start of it? Think I'm going to need to 'borrow' more materials..."

Thanks to the first base upgrade he was now given an option to reinforce all the existing components with the use of spirit points and building points. These he would be getting via passive production and recycling as always.

"Everyone, we will be taking a small detour so return to your posts, we have a lot of work to do!"

"Yes, Patriarch."

Everyone quickly replied while hastily jumping through the main gate that was once again open. On the inside, they were baffled with all the free space that looked brand new and ready to be filled out.

Chapter 505

"This 'borrowing' business is really paying off."

"Patriarch?"

"Oh, it's nothing, just continue..."

Zhang Dong was looking at the ever-increasing counter of his points going up. Since the first transformation of his flying fortress, he was going through the deserted cities and sucking up all of the resources. Sometimes they encountered small groups of demi-humans but with him around they weren't much of a problem.

Thanks to them appearing in some places they were even able to test out the new defenses and cannons. The demi-humans that they were up against were remnants of the red-skinned ones. With their violent nature and lack of intelligence, they tossed themselves against the large flying fortress in the sky.

It seemed that they were lacking a danger sense, or could not identify spiritual energy to measure their opponent's power levels. Their bone spikes were unable to pierce through the translucent shield that this upgraded bastion had. It was holding up well against the members that were on the lower edges of the nascent soul. Thanks to this test he now knew that it would be possible to survive a prolonged siege.

The cannons on the other hand did slightly worse. While they had a lot of destructive power the aim wasn't that great. They were not designed to hit fast-moving enemies that were in a small group but when placed against a tightly packed army they would probably be enough.

'Zhi had to go out and finish their leader off but I can still place more of those cannons, trading out precision for ammo spam...'

Everything seemed to be moving in his favor, in the time it would take for him to arrive back at his lands this fortress would be outfitted with enough defensive power to act as a proper mobile bastion. With its help, he would be able to slowly force his way into the demi-human territory and perhaps take them out for good.

'If I'm lucky I might be able to do everything before the last boss arrives, but I can't count on that...'

He had already committed himself to the rapid war effort. The sensible approach would be to wait and fully upgrade this flying fortress to its last stage. For that to happen he would need to abandon his push into the enemy territory which would allow them to reconsider their tactics.

Even then he would still have a powerful impenetrable war machine that would probably allow him to easily win. The biggest problem with that approach was Wang Long who was a dark horse in all of this. His strength after killing everyone from the Soaring Dragon Sect was unknown and he would only get stronger.

The more time he had the more Zhang Dong worried, the system allowed anyone to reach an astonishing power level in a matter of seconds and his version was probably inferior to Wang Long's. The only real advantage he had was his sect that he built up through the years. Without them around this flying monstrosity would not be able to function.

'I just hope I'm not leading everyone towards their destruction...'

Zhang Dong knew what needed to be done but he was worried about the cost of lives that were at stake. His counterpart Wang Long treated these people like NPCs in a game, for him on the other hand they were just people. All of these people had their own thoughts and dreams but were also reliant on his will.

As the number one cultivator in the sect, they would not deny the call to battle if he issued it. There was no use in talking to them as they would certainly rely on him to make a decision. If he proved unwilling to make one, he would be a failure of a leader. Thus it was time to take the initiative again, the battle to end this war prematurely needed to commence sooner rather than later.

...

"So, Valentine has fallen, how many chiefs does that make now, huh? You there, answer me."

A large man was leaning on his fist while sitting atop a throne made from bones. He didn't look very pleased with the people here. The person that his large finger pointed at trembled but was forced to speak up.

"We have lost four Chiefs, my Emperor..."

"Four huh?... How could four of the ten great tribe Chiefs have died? Is that name only for show?"

Silence fell upon the whole place, the sound of volcanoes exploding in the distance was the only thing that anyone could hear. Yet, before the man on the throne could raise his voice again another large person walked up and kneeled.

“Emperor, send me, I will bring you the heads of whoever is responsible!”

The man had a large horn protruding from his forehead, his body was covered by some kind of green moss. This being’s features were similar to that of a tree, small branches were shooting out from his body along with leaves that seemed somewhat malnourished.

“We from the Treant Tribe will massacre the prey and...”

“... Who told you that you could speak?”

“M-my Emper...”

Before the tree being could finish the sentence it felt a massive force coming down on it. The sturdy-looking body made from hard and practically indestructible wood started to splinter. The tribe chief had made a grave error in speaking out, he had misread the Emperor’s mood and he would pay the ultimate price for it.

The other horned beings that were here started moving away as the entire throne room began to shake. A pillar of dark purple energy shot out from the center of where the tree demi-human was disabled. When it reached a high enough altitude it called something, a tiny sparkle up in the sky was now coming their way.

Everyone started to panic as they realized what was happening. The Emperor was truly angered by this tribe leader and if they didn’t escape they would also feel his wrath. Luckily for them, their leader didn’t seem to care as he remained seated in the same nonchalant expression while performing the strange magical art.

“N-no p-please Emperor, s-show mercy...”

The person from the Treant tribe called out but his calls were meant with silence. Instead, he could feel something approaching from the sky and on a collision course with him. When glancing up his vision was overtaken by a large orb of fire that soon collided with his crumbling body.

Everything suddenly exploded, even the powerful Chiefs were unable to hold on and had to retreat from the blasting zone. After opening their eyes they could not comprehend the amount of damage that was before them. The Emperor’s palace that had been there having a giant gaping hole in it, the only thing that remained in place was the Emperor himself who was still sitting on his throne with a bored expression on his face.

“That changes it to five...”

They could hear him mumble something but were unable to raise their heads to answer. After seeing this monster’s might they were unable to do anything but shiver. Finally, after a small pause, their leader decided to stand up.

“I had hoped that they would have posed as an appetizer for my prey but he was already matured... I hope that he won’t be a disappointment ...”

The Emperor that had a nice set of three large horns on his head surrounded himself with the same dark-purple energy while floating up. There he rose up so that all of the people that were still alive after a blast could see him.

"I will venture into the hunting grounds myself, all of you will join me, whoever retreats will die by my hand! No more mistakes, you all are a disgrace don't even think of returning here alive if you fail!"

During the speech, the Emperor became louder and louder. His ferocious voice traveled through the whole area and started causing earthquakes. Yet some of the rubble started rising up from the ground. A small ball of rocks was quickly uncovered by the Emperor to reveal a pointy horn. The same that belonged to the Treant Tribe leader, it had survived the attack of the leader and was ready to be passed on to the next generation.

"You!"

The Emperor pointed to one of the other tree tribesmen that were trembling. This person that was pointed to had no other choice but to step forward and accept his fate. Normally it would be a great privilege to accept the tribe leader's horn but it would lessen this tribe member's ceiling.

It was thrown towards the tree-like person's forehead and quickly attached itself to it. The change was quite instantaneous as their body grew in size. In just a minute the person grew twice in size and was a mirror image of the old leader. His power had increased exponentially but it would not be able to reach a higher point than this.

"Your tribe will redeem itself by attacking the second path to the hunting ground, don't fail me."

"Yes, Emperor, it will be an honor!"

The new leader of the tree tribe just bowed their head and tried not to say anything that could provoke this Emperor's ire. The message went through if his tribe failed in taking back the area where Valentine resided they were good as dead. It would be a battle for survival that they needed to take seriously.

"The rest of you will follow me, gather all of your best warriors, we will gorge ourselves on those bastards and remember, the golden one is my prey, whoever dares to touch him..."

During his short speech the earth continued to rumble but finally when it was over things started to calm down. But suddenly from the distance, a loud sound of galloping could be heard by everyone. No one else but the Emperor was looking in that direction and he was not surprised by the sight he was seeing.

A large Chariot was approaching his position, it was being pulled by two large flaming horses. Their eyes and legs were constantly covered by burning flames and it seemed as if they were running through the air. Each time their hooves connected with the air it was as if they had traction and produced a sound.

In a matter of seconds, the large chariot sped by the large demi-human leader but instantly stopped when to his side. The two steeds that were giving off a strange aura were even bigger than the man himself. Yet they were clearly subservient to his will which they showed by lowering their heads.

Without missing a beat, the three-horned Emperor jumped onto the battle carriage. There were no reins that he needed to hold, instead, he just crossed his muscular arms together while the flaming horses bolted toward their next destination...

Chapter 506

"An emissary from the United Element Sect has arrived?"

"Yes, Patriarch."

"Did they say what they want?"

"No, they proclaimed that it's an important letter from their leader."

"From that man? ... Let him in, everyone be silent, do not antagonize the messenger, we can't allow anyone to irritate the message-bearer, if they carry the official word of their Patriarch it's as good as him coming here themselves!"

Every person in this large meeting hall nodded at the words of their leader. It was common knowledge that the people carrying direct orders from sect leaders could not be offended. Even if they were weak in cultivation, if any harm came to them, the other sect had a reason to retaliate or ask for payment in money or blood.

"You have my gratitude for accepting me at such short notice."

"Greetings, what brings a member from the esteemed United Element Sect to our humble abode? You must be tired from your journey, perhaps you would like to join us..."

"You must forgive me but this matter is of utmost importance, I have been tasked to deliver this scroll with haste."

"Is that so?"

The group of elders that were sitting on large chairs and the Patriarch that was at the back end of this large hall frowned slightly. The person that they were trying to be cordial with ignored them and just gave the scroll over to one of the retainers that would bring it to the Patriarch before turning away. This display was already sending them a message as he didn't stay for the reply and just left quickly.

"Who do they think they are?"

One of the old elders slammed his fist into the chair he was sitting in, the armrest immediately gave out and burst into a million splinters.

"Calm down elder, what can we do? We can't offend that Zhang Dong ... he is in good graces with the Emperor and you have also heard the reports..."

"Aye... they are strong, far stronger for any of us to go against."

"Why don't we just look at it first before we make a decision? Perhaps they just want payment for patrolling our borders?"

"How much would they even want..."

Even though everyone here wanted to be positive they couldn't imagine that this wasn't something bad. They have heard of the monsters roaming the lands of the Empire. The United Element's Sect's militaristic might was also increasing at an unfathomable rate. They had apparently secured a far away location further in the north where these monsters had a base.

"What does it say?"

"...Read it out loud..."

The man in charge went through the writing quite fast and quickly threw the scroll over to the retainer that almost letting it fall to the ground. Just as he was ordered, he started reading the content of the message.

"We of the United Element Sect request the aid of the Dragon Gate Sect in the coming battle with the demi-humans, The Dragon Gate Sect is required to send out troops to the ..."

The man started to read while sweating along with all the other elders. This was a call to battle that was usually sent out to subservient clans or sects. It was very simple, they needed to send a large portion of their troops to aid the United Element Sect's war effort. They were to meet up with a group of other sects where they would be informed about their task.

"... If you refuse this call to arms it will be taken as an insult to the sect leader, Long Dong the Golden Dragon, brother of the Emperor..."

In the final statement, they were more or less forced into the battle, if they didn't then they would be offending the Emperor himself. If this happened then they would not be able to hide anywhere, escaping to the middle of the Empire would not be an option as they would be offending the Long Clan by refusing to join.

"W-what will we do?"

"What can we do?"

Replied Xu Qing while rubbing his brows, the leader already knew that similar messengers had been sent out to all the other sects in this area. The United Element Sect were organizing a full-blown offensive against the invaders in the northwest and everyone under them would be required to join.

"Send word to everyone, we must agree on the members that will be sent!"

Xu Qing made his decision that was not up to a vote. They had also been helped by the United Element Sect that was guarding their borders. If not for them he knew that the Demi-humans would have been at their doorstep.

"This might not be a setback but a chance, if we can show our worth then our Sect will prosper!"

This Patriarch also had his own agenda, Zhang Dong's faction was strong and it was also part of the Long Clan. If they could show that they are trusted allies then their future would be assured. Other factions like the Demon Subduing Sect or the Limitless Sword Society would be also forced into this but only those that brought results would be rewarded in the end.

Those three sects that were situated around Zhang Dong's core area of influence weren't the only ones that were receiving the call to arms. Places like the Divine Fist Sect that he previously helped out were also given the opportunity to return the favor that was granted them in the past.

...

"Is something bothering you?"

"No, it's nothing..."

Zhang Dong was looking out into the distance where his two children were playing with Bahamut in its small cute form. Next to him was his Wife Liena who had a concerned look on her face. The decision to gather the other sects that were still strong to their aid was posed by the other elders.

From their point of view, it was natural for them to join this important battle. They had been given protection by the United Element Sect while other grand factions like the Heavenly Crane Sect had taken a more passive approach. They had been saved from having to escape into the center of the Empire.

'It's normal for the strongest sects to utilize the weaker ones as their foot soldiers, no one will blame me but it still doesn't feel right...'

"My husband, you have always been too lenient, are you still bothered by the decision the elders came to? As the Patriarch you can go against them if you so desire, I will support your decision but..."

"Yes... it's the 'correct' decision, we lack the manpower for a decisive strike and have no idea of knowing what the demi-humans are planning."

Zhang Dong gave out a sigh while looking toward his wife. This was one of those hard decisions that he needed to shoulder. People would die because of it but it was something that had to be done to prevent their enemies from slaughtering everyone in their wake.

"Then why are you sulking! You are in the right, those bastards are indebted to our Sect, they should be grateful for having this honor!"

He wanted to chuckle as from the point of view of his wife there was no problem at all. She was a pure cultivator and was brought up with a certain set of beliefs that could not be changed. Yet her husband wanted to alter some of those beliefs and laws. He did not want the person with the biggest fist to just force their principles on others.

This was quite the conundrum as for this dream of his to come true he required to be the strongest person in the world. Only after getting rid of every enemy and perhaps even the Azure Emperor would he be able to start changing the world. But would that change anything? Even if he was a benevolent dictator, he would still be a dictator. Unless he managed to change the people's mindset after he was dead they would go back to the ways of old.

'Is it even possible to end all this bloodshed or are just humans too flawed?'

While contemplating he looked at his wife who was all for the forceful draft. Then his gaze went to his two young children that were now slowly soaking up the culture of this world. Their minds could still be molded into another reality but for this too happen he needed to get through this big hurdle first.

"I guess you are right my wife, what has to be done, has to be done, after it's all over then the time for change will arrive."

While Liena smiled he slowly leaned over for a surprise smooch which rewarded him with quite a blushing wife. Even after all of this, she was still acting like a schoolgirl whenever he showed her any kind of affection. He wanted to engrave this moment in his mind as it would be the last time in a long time that he would be able to.

This was a short rest period for his forces, while the other sects gathered their cultivators he had some free time. It was the last time he would be able to see his kids before endangering his own life. If he failed then they would have to retreat to the Azure Palace. While his brother was only interested in the Gold Dragon title, his children carried the same bloodline. This bloodline was probably important enough to grant them access to the floating city.

'But would they last against Wang Long or the other Empires?'

In reality, he didn't believe that if he failed that this world could be saved. Wang Long's system had already made him one of the most dangerous people in this world. He would only continue to farm points and get stronger. He lacked morals and would not put himself in harm's way to save others. It would be hard to kill him and the longer he lived the worse it would become.

'If I can't end it then everyone could die or be enslaved...'

While looking at his lovely wife he recalled the battle with that person. Wang Long had shown an interest in Liena and was worried that he would hold the same perverted feelings for her as previously.

"I was truly blessed with such a wonderful wife and two cute kids."

"S-stop that."

"But it's true!"

Zhang Dong laughed as he tried to push the worries to the back of his head. There wasn't much time left for him but he wanted to make it count. The next day he would be leaving and Liena would remain in the sect as the main protective force. He had used his position to keep his family safe but it wasn't the same for everyone else.

'I will be victorious...'

Chapter 507

"Is that all of them?"

"No Patriarch, we are getting more support than we had previously assumed."

"Oh? Did they send more of their elders than we expected or replaced them with inferior members from their ranks instead?"

Zhang Dong was hovering up in the air along with Zhang Kuo. Below him was a temporary encampment filled out with tents and various abodes that had spatial technology. This was the area where they decided to gather all of the troops from other sects and clans.

It was previously occupied by a whole city but after the demi-humans passed through it was turned into rubble. This rubble was then absorbed into his golden bastion that was daily growing in power. Yet to achieve the next transformation he would need to wait, the rate of the upgrades had substantially slowed down and it would probably not reach the third level anytime soon.

“No Patriarch, all the sects and clans have followed our instructions and given up half of their fighting forces, they have been all accounted for.”

“But unless I’m bad at counting... aren’t there too many people here? I can even see Qi condensation juniors...”

Zhang Dong had scanned the entire area and found many weak cultivators arriving from all sorts of places. For this coming battle, the weakest he recruited were foundation establishment adepts, anyone below that would not really be able to participate in the coming battle.

“These people have heard our call to battle and decided to aid us for their own reasons.”

“Own reasons? Are they the ones that lost their homes or families to the demi-humans?”

“Yes, Patriarch.”

“That explains a lot, Kuo do we have a place for them in our army?”

“Some are strong enough to join the battalions, others could be used for various errands and support but their allegiance is questionable. Some of them probably see this as a chance to increase their fame.”

“Hm...”

He looked at the people here, even without using his system he knew that some of them probably had ulterior motives. This wasn’t something new, the easiest way to earn support with a large sect would be to help them. Many of them probably hoped to get taken under the wings of the rising powerhouse that was the United Element Sect.

‘Do they expect us to accept them as outer sect disciples after it’s over?’

“Let them stay, for now, offer each one a small reward after the siege is over but not too much... Examine the problematic ones and do the usual, we can’t allow ourselves to have assassins in our ranks.”

There was no reason not to use the larger forces to his advantage. He could always place them in the defensive formations as human batteries. Everything in this world ran on spiritual energy and cultivators were small nuclear power plants exuding this energy.

“As you command.”

‘Things are ramping up but will it go as well as with that Vampire guy? Will that guy actually come?’

In the previous battle, he had managed to be victorious for a reason. His forces were stronger and he also had help from powerful allies. This time around it was slightly different as everything was on his shoulders. There was no one on the level of those demi-human leaders that he could ask for help, besides one person that is.

“Hm?”

“Excuse my late arrival, Lord Lucius was against this idea but luckily I’m not a Knight nor a noble!”

“Glad that you could make it Argus, your help is much appreciated.”

“I wish that my motives were unbiased but I do have my reasons for helping you.”

“That hurts, I thought that we have become the best of friends, you hurt me deeply!”

“Ho ho ho.”

Argus laughed but Zhang Dong knew the real reason that he had arrived to help him. This reason was part of the previous lie about the holy sword. The grand wizard was hoping to find another part of the relic at the other fortress of the demi-humans. It somewhat made sense that if one part was at the first castle then the other would be in the possession of those body refiners.

‘Would be nice if Lucius and the other knights aided me but I can’t be too greedy.’

His helper was here on his own accord but he could not expect Argus to prioritize the battle. Probably if things got troublesome with a quick teleportation spell he would be gone in a second. He was there to find the relic and perhaps would leave if that detection device stopped working.

‘I could try to imitate the frequency again but that aegis thing is a shield, it’s signature might be different...’

Zhang Dong had thought of using his unwilling allies in another pact but didn’t want to overdo it. If the Wizard here gave him some ranged support from a safe distance then it was more than enough. His opponents were usually weaker when attacking from an outside location.

“Well, if you need something just ask one of my retainers or you can make yourself at home. Take this seal, show it to anyone if you have any problems.”

Before Argus left he was given the Patriarch’s seal of approval, with it there would be no one obstructing his way. There were still a few limits as he would not be allowed in areas like the engine room with the golden egg. Soon Zhang Dong pointed toward the giant floating golden palace that was hovering over them. Argus had seen it already and was salivating while looking at it. It was clear that he was a man of knowledge and something of this scale would be a very interesting research topic.

“Astonishing... I will see you later then, my friend.”

After taking care of his friend he floated up to examine the state of his troops. As the illustrious leader, he didn’t really need to do anything at this point. All the other nascent soul masters could do all the grand speeches and move the forces around for him. His presence was the only thing that they needed to be aware of.

‘Ah, there they go again, treating me like the second coming of God...’

Yet again he was receiving bows from the cultivators with less power. This wasn’t true worship as the only thing they were doing was out of fear. All of them were conditioned to fear the strong. If they were

convinced of a large power disparity the cultivators of this world would lower their heads. Sometimes if the gap was not something that could ever be crossed they would abandon all hope.

'I can trust these people to flee the moment we start losing... not very trusty allies but it's better than nothing.'

He believed that a large chunk of the people here would abandon their posts in the face of true adversity. Yet some of them were just looking for a place to die, husbands with dead wives, brothers with parents or siblings that had fallen to the demi-humans. They had a similar trait of having a certain look in their eye, a face of someone that was ready to end it all.

'Those will probably better be suited for large-scale defensive formation augmentation than the frontlines...'

Even though he tried to justify his decision of allowing people like these to join the coming war it didn't go well with his morals. If he could he would just go there alone like in the old days, regretfully his strength was not at such a level that he could take on a full army of demi-humans with multiple leaders.

Before these types of thoughts clouded his mind he pushed them aside. For the coming siege, he needed to become heartless or suffer the consequences. There was no place for a weak mind when going against a strong opponent. The only positive notion in all of this was that he was going against a ruthless enemy who seemed to lack any morals. There was no chance of clearing things up with diplomacy like he was able to with Lucius.

...

Minutes turned to hours and a few days had passed since they had gathered here. Their current location was the closest region to the northwest lands populated by the demi-humans. The large scale flying ships that his sect painstakingly produces were slowly rising up into the clouds. They carried various cultivators, young and old, male and female.

They had all gathered here with one enemy in mind but with various things motivating them. Morale was high as everyone cheered at him as he placed himself at the front of the arrow formation. Right in the middle was the grand relic, the Golden Dong Palace. Even though to him the name was a joke to the people it carried a meaning, the name of one of the strongest masters in the whole Empire.

'Everything will be fine.'

He reassured his trembling heart while trying not to look nervous before this massive group of people. Without performing a long-winded speech he took out a brand new shiny sword. It was recently forged by him from some of the superior metal that he discovered in his new fortress that also came equipped with a proper forge.

This forge was not quite as advanced as the crafting abode but it had its uses. One of them was the smelter that could produce high-quality ingots for forging purposes. Thus by spending a truckload of spirit points and other resources he created this holy sword. At first glance, it looked like a golden prop that a person would place over their fireplace but in reality, it was a true masterpiece.

It was created by Zhang Dong to magnify his current strengths. It included the knowledge of the three Daos that he was a grandmaster of and could only show its full potential when wielded by him. With this magnificent blade in hand, he was ready to go against his new enemies.

“Follow me, brothers and sisters, towards victory!”

He pointed his sword towards the cloudy sky that was above them. With a swing forward the same clouds started parting. The cultivators from the other sects and clans couldn’t even blink as they saw Zhang Dong cleave the sky in two.

The path that was created in the sky was their destination and the place where the Demi-humans were gathering their forces. The flying ships started speeding forward while the loud humming sound of the flying fortress signaled its activation. Everyone started shouting as they advanced toward their final destination, it was time to rid their lands of this scourge.

Chapter 508

“Push them back! Don’t let them reach the ships!”

“They are unable to get through our formations, attack and kill them all!”

The ground exploded along with the demi-human that was trying to run away from a large fleet. Instead of the maddened charges into their enemies, the invaders were finally retreating. The ground they walked on was quickly becoming barren and devoid of any life as the constant cannon fire riddled it with massive holes.

Yet, some of them were unwilling to turn their backs on the enemy. They were clearly lacking anyone in a proper leadership position. Part of them continued to fight while others just kept running. It didn’t help that their numbers consisted of mixed tribes, with their leaders dead they could not find common grounds.

‘It’s going well but these lands won’t be livable for a while...’

Zhang Dong along with some other sect elders floated in the sky. They were observing their soldiers performing their tasks while they conserved their strength. All of the nascent soul masters here could easily perform the same task as the flying ships but they needed to remain vigilant. Only when the demi-human leaders appeared would they be allowed to act.

A few days had passed since their fleet had left the initial location. Not soon after they encountered the first resistance force. These demi-human remnants were unable to get past the hail of spirit bullets and defensive formations. Their advance couldn’t be stopped and they slowly approached the second fortress at the other bridge.

If they were able to capture it, then Zhang Dong believed that he would be able to keep everything in check. Even if their Emperor appeared, with a proper defensive line he would be unable to press his forces into his lands. In the chaotic passageway anyone would be a sitting duck, not even the strongest nascent soul master would be able to survive. Even if they did, he could always teleport to confront the strongest demi-human himself.

“How are our new friends doing?”

While observing the battlefield he decided to message Zhang Kuo who was the commanding officer of the flagship, Argus 1. Through the years they had managed to make five more of the same class of ship.

"The mercenaries and vagabonds have been giving our troops some ranged support and are acting as a good distraction, their fighting power isn't substantial but their numbers make up for it to some degree."

"Good... leave them be for now but prioritize our own sect members."

To Zhang Dong's surprise, they received even more reinforcements after progressing through the lands. Word of their advancement into enemy territory had reached everyone in the empire. This resulted in even more cultivators wanting to participate.

The reason for them participating was clear, they wanted to gain fame, glory, and treasures. This wasn't that odd, sometimes when larger sects went on sect cleansing excursions other people would join up to reap the rewards. They would be integrated into the vanguards and used as meat shields. It was a dangerous strategy but one that could allow for quick progress.

"I'm not sure that death is even on their mind, luckily they came of their own volition so we won't have to pay them anything."

There was a downside to this kind of force, they would certainly make a run for it if their side started losing. Sometimes these cultivators would even try to rob the allies if they started to flee. This kind of force was a double-edged blade that could turn on them at any moment. Yet with how much stronger the United Element Sect was, this would probably not be a realistic concern.

"Do we have any information from the front?"

"Yes Patriarch, the demi-humans have started to flee towards their fortress, their forces have been seen retreating from other areas in the north as well."

"Are they gathering their forces?"

"We believe it is so."

It was uncharacteristic for the demi-humans to gather at one location. They tended to work in smaller groups only composed of people from their own tribes. Even when working together they would abandon the other tribes to save their own.

'If someone is gathering them in one spot...'

Zhang Dong had a bad feeling about this, everything pointed towards one answer, there was someone strong there. Either the Emperor had ordered them to finally work together or he might have appeared himself. From all the information they received there were no other demi-humans that could order the tribes to work together besides their Emperor.

'This could actually be the final battle then...'

He had hoped to arrive at the other fortress before something like this happened but he might have been too slow. This golden fortress that was upgraded wasn't very fast, they would need a few more

days to arrive at their destination. This gave enough time for the demi-humans to gather their forces to defend.

‘But will they all sit still and just defend or...hm?’

“Flying enemies coming from the Northeast!”

While he was thinking about a potential fight with an end boss, a group of flying enemies appeared. They belonged to the demi-human tribes but looked different from the remnants they were encountering. Their facial features were more aligned with lizards and all of them were sitting on flying mounts.

“Are those wyverns?”

At first, it looked that his new enemies were riding on small dragons but they lacked certain features. Bahamut, his dragon familiar had a set of arms to go together with the large wings that were attached to his back. These creatures on the other hand had webbed wings where their arms should be.

“GAO!”

“Oh, you want to go have fun with our new friends?”

Bahamut was flapping his small wings next to him, it was clear that the little dragon wanted to help out. After a small nod from Zhang Dong, the small creature bolted towards the far away swarm of wyverns. The demi-humans had little time to react to the bright light that indicated the transformation into the giant dragon.

‘There really isn’t much to do for me here...’

Zhang Dong remained in his upright position and with his hands behind his back. It felt a bit strange to sit back while his allies did all the work but he needed to conserve his energy. With the looming threat of the Demi-human Emperor, he needed to be in top shape.

‘Is the Emperor a body refiner as well? He will probably be hard to kill if I engage him from close range. This new sword should be even able to cut my body apart, hope that’s enough

While he was trying to strategize he paid attention to what his forces were doing. Bahamut had dived right into the middle of the swarm of smaller winged creatures. The people that were riding them were holding spears and bows. Yet even when those projectile weapons connected with his dragon’s golden scales, they could not penetrate them.

This improvement of a soul beast was much stronger than its past counterpart. With ease, it devoured the smaller creatures and their mounted owners. The sect ships gave some support by firing their large cannons but the dragon could not be denied. Bahamut continued to toy with them around all the way until something close to his size appeared.

‘Hm, what is that... a giant scaled bird?’

To his surprise it was not a dragon instead, it was a large black monster bird that was covered in scales. On its back, it was carrying a man that was holding a large spear. This man was part of the lizard race and had a large horn protruding from his head.

‘A demi-human tribe leader? ... Can Bahamut handle him by himself?’

Zhang Dong wanted to rush in but instead, someone else decided to show up. Huo Qiang jumped onto the back of the golden dragon as if he was going to challenge the demi-human to a mounted battle. His familiar wasn’t amused but was convinced by his master to allow the red-haired brute to have his fun.

“This Huo Qiang will be your opponent!”

While his friend normally only used his fists for combat it didn’t mean that he couldn’t wield weapons. He was still a nascent soul master that had gained insight into many combat arts and could also proficiently use armaments. Thus before the clash started a large spear appeared in his hand that mirrored the demi-human one.

This demi-human was on the level of the other leader types but thanks to his faction system and Bahamut, Huo Qiang could level the playing field. There was one important thing that this flying fortress allowed him to achieve, it could generate the same buffs that he could activate at his main sect.

Just like when they got a power boost when Wang Long attacked, all of his sect members could be given buffs. Everything used up points but with the golden palace generating them constantly the buff could be activated throughout the whole battle.

For the time being, he just watched as Bahamut bit into the monster bird’s long neck. In response, it tried to sink its beak into the dragon’s side but was unable to penetrate through those golden scales. Both of the large beings started thrashing around while the two men riding them clashed with each other as well.

The spears connected to generate a massive burst of energy that caused all of the other flying monsters in close proximity to explode. They just couldn’t stomach a clash between two experts at such a high level.

‘Huo Qiang’s opponent is stronger than him, but...’

It was obvious that if this was a fair fight that his friend would lose in a direct confrontation. The only reason that he was holding on was due to the buff and his partner that he lent him. Bahamut was clearly stronger than the monster bird that this lizardman was riding on and with it out of the picture it was two against one.

Surprisingly after the creature was dead the rider spawned their own wings. It seemed that he was some kind of human wyvern hybrid. While the wings allowed him to fight up in the sky they weren’t as good as a cultivator’s flight technique. The mobility that Huo Qiang could output allowed him to continue the clash for much longer than he would be able to.

‘Are they testing us or did one of the tribes want to hunt the strong prey?’

The fight was coming to a close, together with Bahamut, Qiang was able to push his enemy back. Yet this was suspicious, it was as if these demi-humans were stalling for time. They had a strong force but it was nothing compared to his and the leader would soon be dead.

“Kuo, start advancing, we have lost enough time here...”

With a bad feeling in his gut, he turned away from the fight that was ending. If he was correct then there was no time to lose, they needed to get to that fortress and clear it out.

Chapter 509

‘They are really putting up a defensive effort this time around...’

The invasion of the United Element Sect continued into the lands that the demi-humans took over. It was a strange feeling for Zhang Dong that usually was the one on the defensive, there weren’t many times when he was the aggressor.

After they had managed to clear out the wyverns and their leader they continued to push deeper to the north. There they encounter more varied demi-human resistance. After the flying lizards, they encountered a batch of snake-people. They were similar to nagas or gorgons that he remembered from games and had female-looking upper bodies.

There was even a group of green skins that was similar to fantasy orcs or ogres. Together with some other remnants, they put up a defensive perimeter that blocked their advance. When looking at the map of the empire they all could tell that they were actually trying to halt their advance.

Yet the forces weren’t strong enough, at most they could put up a fight for half a day before pulling out. Each time they lost more than half of their forces, this only made sense if they were stalling for time. Ignoring this blocking effort wasn’t possible, the demi-humans would circle around and attack their backline if they were allowed to.

‘Should I go ahead by myself?’

His mind was filled with various troublesome thoughts. What if his enemies were transporting some kind of massive weapon through the bridge? What if that Emperor appeared out of the blue? But, could he just handle him alone when he arrived? If he got locked down by their leader then his whole army would collapse.

“Patriarch, we have a problem!”

“What is it now?”

“We have spotted tree-like beings trying to go through the lower bridge, they are trying to take back the fortress they lost!”

“A surprise attack from the back? Have the defenses fallen?”

Zhang Dong would have liked to use a teleport to travel to that area to help out but he needed to remain here. The main enemy hadn’t appeared and he was getting a feeling that this was only a diversion tactic.

“Our soldiers are managing it, the demi-humans are ferociously trying to get to the other side of the bridge but our forces are driving them back.”

“Good, monitor the situation, we must continue... and we must do it faster, I shall return to the fortress.”

The transmission to Zhang Kuo went silent while he decided to go to the engine room. With how things were progressing they might be running out of time. While he wanted to conserve his power for the final battle, to make it easier on his people they needed to advance faster.

“Everyone, this is your Patriarch, we will be pushing toward the enemy stronghold faster.”

After informing the people of his new plans he placed himself in a lotus position in front of the golden egg. From his spatial ring, he removed previously prepared golden pills that would boost his spiritual energy reserves. He had expected such a possibility and it was time to use up one of his trump cards.

A handful of those pills made their way into his mouth. Due to a recipe that he developed himself, they tasted like candy and made the process of eating a lot easier. His body began to rapidly give off a radiant glow as he pushed all of his holy energy into the improved fortress engine. With a new injection of power, the whole massive structure started vibrating and moving faster.

It was the slowest of the flying vessels in the armada but with the injection of more energy it could equal things out. The large anti-gravity ring that was humming under it began to get bigger and the speed increased to match the other ships. With the fortress moving, it brought along the giant barrier that would be hard to cross by the demi-human attackers.

Their trip continued with a lot of resistance from the combined tribe forces. They didn't let up with the assaults but the powerful sect Elders along with Bahamut were enough to stop anyone from breaching inside the barrier. Together with the constant barrage of cannons they were making their way towards their destination.

Slowly but surely they were getting in range of the other demi-human base. Yet before they arrived the golden palace stopped glowing and the anti-gravity disc under it reverted to its previous state.

“I was too slow...”

Zhang Dong threw a batch of recovery pills down his gullet before quickly appearing outside. They had stopped above a destroyed city that was devoid of any life. He remembered this place, it belonged to the sect he visited when he was chasing after Wang Long. They had not heeded his warnings and didn't retreat in time after he left and this was their fate.

This was not the reason why he stopped with his hasty approach. The reason was that he felt something, a powerful being had appeared and had managed to cross through the bridge at this very moment. When looking at the map that presented him with the enemy locations he could see a bright red dot that was previously not there.

‘Could that be their Emperor?’

The warning signals were going off in his head as he felt the massive amount of spiritual energy that this person had. Compared to the other demi-humans he was truly on another level. While everyone else was a body refiner without that much outward energy, he was different. The spiritual energy that he had was not inferior to his own, it might have even been slightly above Zhang Dong's.

‘So this is one of the end bosses?’

Considering that this had been a scenario created by the person that made the system, one of these Emperors might have been the true last boss. They all could be at similar levels but perhaps one side was supposed to be defeated earlier than the others. Could this Demi-human Emperor be the true last boss or was he perhaps on the weaker end of the spectrum?

‘Lucius and Argus aren’t as strong as this guy... but they supposedly have a king that should be stronger.’

“We shall return to the previous formation, prepare for battle!”

He could contemplate all that he wanted but the battle needed to be fought. Even though the enemy had reached their side, getting here wasn’t a total waste. This Emperor was here but it seemed that a large chunk of their forces was still going through the bridge. While there they would not be able to pose a threat.

The first thing that he noticed when he was outside, was that the demi-humans that were trying to stop them all cleared out. It was as if they were inviting them towards their fortress that Zhang Dong could already see from this location.

‘That’s an ominous-looking tower... but it kind of looks, decrepit?’

The structure looked like it was hastily put together by people that didn’t know how to construct things. There was spiked iron wire everywhere, even the black stone walls were wrapped around it. The structures were large and gaudy with strange red tribal drawings everywhere. From what he could tell, this place belonged to the green-skinned demi-humans that were similar to orcs

‘So that’s their leader?’

Then he finally saw him, he was floating up in the sky on top of something that looked like a chariot made from thick bronze-like metal. The person riding it was wearing a similar bronze armor that was probably made from some kind of superior metal. It wasn’t shiny, instead it seemed to be covered by dried-up blood and scratches from bladed weapons.

On top of his head, he was wearing a large helmet that was similar to ancient roman ones the remembered from some old history lessons. Yet the most characteristic thing about this man were the three protruding horns that made him look like some kind of demon.

‘Does that make him three times as strong as the other leader types?’

Even without getting closer, he could tell that this being was more than twice his size, probably over four meters tall. The horses that were pulling this chariot that seemed to have been lifted from a Roman arena were even bigger than their master was. Yet his appearance was similar to a human’s, with the exception of the horns and mouth filled with pointy teeth.

“So, my prey has appeared before me, this does please me.”

Before he could examine his opponent further he heard him speak. Even though they were many kilometers away from each other, he could hear his voice clearly. It carried power along with his Dao which caused the earth to quake. This quickly gave a read on the man’s abilities which were something that he didn’t encounter before.

“Turn back if you wish to spare your and your people’s lives. There is nothing that awaits you here but death.”

“Hah, you wish me to return, where is the fun in that? Only when a warrior encounters their equal can they truly become alive! Now come, entertain me, my prey. I hope you won’t be another disappointment like the ones that came before you.”

There were two large armies on both sides. His side possessed the numerical advantage but the demi-humans outperformed the average soldier. In a direct battle, the enemy would be superior but his side had various other pieces of equipment to make up for their lack in combat strength.

Yet they were the aggressors this time around, they needed to secure the bridge and block it from ever being used by the demi-humans. That their Emperor appeared was always a possibility but luckily his eyes were only focused on Zhang Dong. This only made the next decision easier.

“Kuo, I’ll leave the fortress in your care, I will lure their leader to a secluded location.”

“But Patriarch...”

“Follow my orders, if we both fight here our forces will be caught in the middle, without their leader their forces shouldn’t be difficult to handle, I trust in you and the elders to be victorious.”

This time around he would need to give it all, Bahamut quickly flew over to its master to act as a proper mount. The demi-human Emperor was fast approaching, with each step in the air those massive horses took, the whole area started shaking. It was as if they were running on the ground and crushing it at the same time.

After appearing on Bahamut’s neck both of them left the safety of the protective barrier. Just as he had theorized the enemy Emperor instantly gave chase to where he disappeared to. Soon enough both of them found themselves in a desolate area with nothing but earth and rubble, it was time for the showdown between the two leaders to finally start.

Chapter 510

“Bahamut!”

Zhang Dong pointed out with his sword to order his familiar. The large golden dragon opened up that large maw to produce a stream of heated energy. It flew towards the large demi-human Emperor with the intention to drown him in hot divine flames. Yet, before they collided with the target they were smacked away to the side by a large cleaver.

This large weapon was probably as thick as a human and this person was wielding two of them around. The moment the stream of heat approached it was batted to the side as if it was smoke. He could see dark purple energy crackling around those blades. The space was being shifted in a strange way when the blades were used, it was as if the holy breath was still going forward but the area around it shifted.

‘Is he able to bend space around himself?’

Zhang Dong had a lot of knowledge concerning the various Daos in this world. He didn’t go into much detail into all of them but even he was able to use some lesser gravitational spells. This Emperor that he was fighting seemed to be specialized in gravity. All of his ranged attacks would suddenly change

trajectory when that purple light appeared, sometime they would even be absorbed into a strange black orb.

‘Does this ability have a limit or can he create black holes as he wishes?’

This was a problem, Zhang Dong was capable of producing beam spells that involved his Dao of Lightning and Holy. These attacks were being countered by the gravity techniques this person was using. It seemed that he would need to get closer to get in some damage.

‘His soul is too strong for my soul arts, unless I can interact with his body directly it won’t do me any good.’

If he could overpower this man’s soul with his own then his victory would be assured. For this, he needed to start exchanging direct blows to slowly scrape away on his defenses. This would certainly not be an easy battle as he could tell that the man had a strong body. It was above the other demi-humans but only after a proper exchange would he know how much of a difference there was.

“Good... But is this all there is to you? Entertain me more!”

While he was trying to figure out his opponent from a distance, the Emperor kept rushing in like an angry bull. There wasn’t any tactics involved in the way he fought, it was clear that this guy was a brute, quite similar to Huo Qiang from his sect. Feeling out his opponent wasn’t something he was interested in, it seemed that he didn’t think that he needed to be strategic, his powerful body and gravity techniques were enough.

GROWL

“Shit, reduce your size Bahamut.”

After a couple of clashes, the first side to suffer was his. During a fly by the demi-human Emperor managed to nick Bahamut’s side with one of those cleavers. This was the first time he had seen someone being able to damage those golden scales this easily.

His dragon was just far too big to make fine adjustments in the air. Luckily he could shrink himself down to gain a boost in speed while also retaining most of his strength. Together with the vast healing capabilities that Bahamut possessed, he was back in action within a few moments.

Zhang Dong was now more similar to a dragon rider. With him being on top they swooped back towards their opponent. With the help of the smaller frame, they began their counterattack. His sword collider with the huge cleaver for the first moment, and his wrist took instantaneous damage as he almost lost the grip on his weapon. Only thanks to his healing capabilities was he able to quickly recover for another exchange.

The Emperor that he was fighting with looked like a monster. After a few clashes his mouth opened up, and the smile he was showing was truly gruesome. He was really enjoying himself, though Zhang Dong’s arm felt like it would fall off, his opponent could feel the effects as well. While his body was in good shape, his soul was being damaged each time they made contact.

‘What a sturdy body, I can’t go against this guy in a contest of pure power...’

Normal cultivators that were on his level would usually lose out due to Zhang Dong's massive amount of stamina. He could just heal all of his wounds and continue the fight until his opponent became weakened. In this situation where the Emperor's body refining technique was above his, he needed a different approach.

'I should have the speed advantage, but I can't use it during mounted combat, I need to get him down from that chariot.'

This was clearly not working out, his opponent was much heavier. With each strike, Zhang Dong felt the weight of the world dropping on him. Each time the Demi-human Emperor would increase the weight of his cleaves. It was already a miracle that the sword that he created hadn't disintegrated on the spot. Only by surrounding it with a thick layer of sword energy was he able to hold on.

"This might hurt but I need your help, Bahamut."

Thus when the time for another collision was upon them, he decided to change his target. His opponent was a battle idiot and had clearly lost himself in the contest. He was enjoying himself too much to see that the dragon that Zhang Dong was riding changed its flight path to collide with the two large horses that were pulling it.

A massive explosion rocked the sky as the two grandmasters collided with each other. Everyone that was fighting on the sides stopped in their tracks as they were affected by the shockwave. When turning to see what was going on, they could see the demi-human Emperor entangled with the much smaller human master.

"Haha, you wish to fight me like this? You overestimated your capabilities, now fall before me!"

The man dressed in bronze-like armor performed a double slash with both of his cleavers. He was aiming for the moment when Zhang Dong lunged forward when jumping down from his mount. Yet before he could perform a full swing something interrupted it. Another collision of metal against metal rocked the whole place.

Zhang Dong connected with the dual blades at the exact moment they were crossing each other in a cross pattern. It caught the Emperor in a bad position that mitigated some of the force that was created and pushed him down to the ground. A purple comet surrounded by golden energy collided with the rocky surface on the ground to create another massive explosion.

'Did I just break both of my wrists?'

While the Emperor was producing a massive creator below, his hands were in a world of hurt. His body refining skill was maxed out, his whole body was made out of resistant metal but his bones were still getting shattered with almost every hit he had to take. Only thanks to his healing skills was he able to hold on.

'At least I got him down to the ground, hope this will even things out.'

For a moment he looked to his familiar that was getting double-teamed by huge black ponies. They were surprisingly vicious in their attacks which caused Bahamut to receive damage and back away. He had hoped that he would be able to easily devour the two by himself but they proved to be close to his level.

“You... No one has been able to push me this hard in centuries, this is exhilarating, show me more! This is truly the hunt that I’ve been waiting for, I will be sure to place your head with my other treasured trophies, you have earned the right to be in my collection!”

“Sorry, but I still need this head, my wife would kill me if I became a stuffed animal.”

Zhang Dong descended down to the ground where the Emperor was slowly moving toward him. With them facing each other while standing there, the size difference had become apparent. His opponent was still capable of deflecting his ranged attacks and would probably get back onto his chariot if he let up, it was time to go toe to toe with this monster. If the leader was defeated then the rest would disperse.

Without a proper leader, the tribes would be unable to work with each other. Even if they remained in the Azure Dragon Empire, they could be slowly hunted down while his forces block the bridge to their original zone.

‘This is easier said than done, first I need to defeat this guy, he is a fighting maniac so he probably won’t try any underhanded tactics...’

“Okay, let’s try this again...”

As his enemy was slowly moving toward him as if he was assured of his victory, Zhang Dong activated one of his techniques. It was an old one that surrounded his whole body with a golden aura and an array of lightning bolts. His body started getting bigger, muscles began expanding and his all-around aura began to become fiercer.

This rapid change caused the demi-human leader to stop for a moment. His previous wide grin became even wider, it was as if he was enjoying that his opponent was becoming stronger before his eyes. Soon the two charged at each other, yet this time around the larger of the two was getting pushed back.

The two giant cleavers were swung around by the brutish Emperor. They destroyed the ground that the two walked on, yet Zhang Dong did not falter. Each hit was evaded with grace and after each dodge, a counter was delivered swiftly. Soon the man’s giant body started caving into all of these attacks, when they finally separated the winner of the exchange was obvious.

“You...”

After getting pummeled by Zhang Dong that activated his power-up technique, the Emperor was slightly stunned. His grin didn’t disappear, instead he looked pumped up.

“Finally, after so many years I find myself a worthy prey for the hunt! The hunger, it fills me even now, I will bite down on your jugular and feel the warmth of your blood!

Instead of a concerned opponent, he was rewarded by another psychotic speech. It was clear that this Emperor wanted to be challenged, all of the battle maniacs were like this. Probably he would be satisfied even if he lost as long as it was to a proper challenger.

“You have earned the right to my name and I will have yours!”

“No, I really don’t care about your...”

“Engrave the name of Phallusius Maximus as you die by my blade!”

“... Of course you would have a name like that...”

Zhang Dong gave out a sigh after receiving the name of his opponent. Even though he wanted to laugh this was not the place for it. His opponent was already powering up as he got ready for a counterattack. It was finally time for the real battle to start.