

## U. Warlord 1021

Chapter 1021: Too Rational

Sun Xiaowu cried out, "Sis, come out! Look who I found outside the door!"

Sun Mengmeng asked, "When do you think Zhang Lie will return?"

Sun Xiaowu replied, "Sis, there's no need to keep asking that! He's already back!"

It had only been a few days since Zhang Lie last saw Sun Mengmeng, but it felt as though she had grown much paler.

The moment Zhang Lie appeared within sight, however, the effect of time suddenly seemed to rewind around Sun Mengmeng, and she became a radiant beauty once more.

At her level of strength, Sun Mengmeng's wan and sallow appearance was more a reflection of her mood than anything else. Sun Mengmeng stood up and involuntarily leapt toward Zhang Lie. When she came to her senses, she immediately began to blush.

Zhang Lie scratched his head. "Long time no see."

Sun Xiaowu cried out, "Captain, you're finally back! If you hadn't returned, either my sister or I would have gone crazy—and I'd likely have been the one to do so!"

Zhang Lie didn't know how to respond to that assertion. "It must have been hard for you."

Sun Mengmeng had a lot of questions for Zhang Lie, but she couldn't express any of them. Her heart, which had been pittering-pattering in unease, immediately calmed down. "What happened in the war against the death spirit king?"

Zhang Lie extended his arms. "The fact that I'm here should tell you all I need to know, yes?"

Sun Mengmeng nodded with a smile.

Zhang Lie continued, "I heard you were making things hard for Sun Xiaowu."

Sun Xiaowu laughed nervously. "Haha, I'll be leaving first, then!"

Zhang Lie thought for a moment. "I also intend to be leaving again."

"Where to?" Sun Mengmeng asked with reluctance.

"To the Milky Way for now. I promised Hong Tianqi that I'd report to him after the war was over."

Sun Mengmeng nodded without protest.

Sun Xiaowu asked, "It's been so long. Won't you stay for a bit longer?"

Zhang Lie rolled his eyes. "So long? It's only been half a month!"

Before heading back to the Milky Way, Zhang Lie left for the genetic lifeform farm to see how Zhu was doing with her task.

However, the draconian sage intercepted him halfway. "Have you finished your discussion with Sun Mengmeng?"

Zhang Lie shrugged. "There wasn't much to discuss."

The draconian sage rolled his eyes. "Sun Mengmeng has been very worried for you."

"I know, I heard. So what?"

The draconian sage sighed. "How pitiful Sun Mengmeng is..."

Zhang Lie sighed as well. "Regardless of what all of you are thinking, there's no way Sun Mengmeng and I can be a couple. I already have a lover; I'll be loyal to her in this life and the next."

Zhang Lie was no fool. Sun Mengmeng was one of his subordinates and teammates, and if the two of them were to get romantically involved, it would change the mood of the entire team. Entering into such a relationship without careful thought and open communication could easily cause the group dynamics to collapse.

The draconian sage shrugged. "Li Feng said that too—and now, he's being embraced."

Zhang Lie countered, "Are you sure it's 'embraced' rather than 'smothered'?"

The draconian sage harrumphed. "Alright, alright. Let's discuss something else. What happened to the death spirits?"

"I've returned. What do you think happened?"

The draconian sage asked curiously, "Won't you describe the details of the war?"

Zhang Lie countered, "Is it relevant?"

The draconian sage replied, "I'm simply curious. After all, it's a war of epic proportions."

"There's nothing much to be curious about. If you'd like to learn more about the details, ask Zhang Hanxiang and Hong Xi."

The draconian sage continued, "I also came to ask about the situation with the other superior worlds."

The war against the death spirits had finished sooner than expected, and the draconian sage needed to make preparations in case of any assault on his world.

He took a deep breath. "If the superior worlds are going to attack me sooner or later, I have to be ready."

"Don't worry too much about it. After all, I and the members of Team Zenith will still be around, so no ordinary superior world would be a threat."

The draconian sage continued, "And what are the other superior worlds' attitudes about the draconian world?"

"I'll find out during the meeting among the superior worlds to be convened within a few days. Don't worry too much about this just yet—but I believe we'll eventually have to fight the superior worlds of antiquity."

The draconian sage's face turned serious. "How likely are we to win?"

Zhang Lie replied, "Have some confidence in me. When have you ever seen me lose? Let's not speak of this right now. The meeting is in three days, and I still have to return to the Milky Way first to discuss the war against the death spirits."

Zhu had made very significant progress during this period of time, and there were plenty of disaster- and post-peak-grade lifeforms in the farm to be found. Zhang Lie praised, "Very well done."

Zhu grinned. "Zhang Lie, you're back!"

"Have all the genetic lifeforms from the war been returned to the farm?"

Zhu nodded. "The draconian sage transported them back with his spatial authority."

Zhang Lie had specially brought a group of genetic lifeforms into the war against the death spirits, but only a third of them had made it back alive. He was prepared for this outcome; after all, even the humans had a hard time securing their own lives, let alone those of their steeds.

In fact, thanks to Hong Xi's impeccable command of the battlefield, more lifeforms had returned than he had expected.

Those that had survived received tremendous boons and experience. As long as there was enough world's energy, they would eventually evolve into disaster- and even monarch-grade lifeforms.

As though presenting a treasure, Zhu then said, "Zhang Lie, while you were participating in the war against the death spirits, another disaster-grade lifeform evolved into monarch-grade."

"Oh?"

Zhu explained, "Thanks to the evolution of the draconian world, the genetic lifeforms were able to benefit from the outpouring of the world's energy. At first, only regular-grade lifeforms evolved into mutated-grade, mutated-grade into superior-grade, and superior-grade into peak-grade. A number of peak-grade lifeforms evolved into disaster-grade, and those peak-grade lifeforms that didn't have all now become post-peak-grade."

"No wonder! I was wondering how there were so many superior- and peak-grade lifeforms—even disaster-grade lifeforms!—remaining in the farm after I took the majority out for the war. A potent boon indeed."

Zhu continued, "Among the disaster-grade lifeforms, one even evolved directly into monarch-grade."

"Show me."

Zhu brought Zhang Lie to the evolved monarch-grade lifeform, whereupon he patted her on the head with rare praise. "Very well done. To have cultivated another monarch-grade lifeform in such a short time is beyond my expectations."

He had been planning on rewarding Zhang Hanxiang and Hong Xi with monarch-grade flesh. The previous monarch-grade lifeforms had been killed by Zhang Lie alone, and he wouldn't be able to share it; this was opportune timing indeed.

After leaving the farm, Zhang Lie next headed to the Yeluo research facility.

The Yeluo chieftain asked curiously, "Why have you come over, your majesty?"

Zhang Lie replied, "I brought some interesting spoils of war back from the battlefield, but I don't know whom I should assign the research to."

#### Chapter 1022: Reporting Back

The Yeluo chieftain asked curiously, "What exactly do you want to learn about?"

"The technology employed by the death spirits."

"I heard from Sun Mengmeng and the others that the death spirits are an extremely strong race in this realm. If you've brought the spoils of war back personally, your majesty, they must be of immense value."

Zhang Lie nodded. "Indeed. If we can replicate their research, we'll be able to gain combat strength on the level of multiple superior kings."

"Just what are these spoils?" the Yeluo chieftain asked, his curiosity piqued. "May I have a look?"

Zhang Lie nodded. "Very well. What I brought back is relatively large, so we'll have to step out of the laboratory."

The Yeluo chieftain nodded. "Of course!"

Zhang Lie and the Yeluo chieftain stepped outside and walked to a relatively large patch of empty land. Zhang Lie then summoned the death spirit battleships that he had collected from the battlefield.

He pointed at the largest battleship. "This is the death spirits' flagship, and the most valuable of the spoils I collected. It can transform into a mecha in battle, with explosive strength beyond that of a superior king."

The Yeluo chieftain laughed wryly. "I apologize, your majesty, but I'm unable to help you. I only have some modest level of knowledge about herbalism and potioning, and I've never seen the likes of these battleships before."

"I understand, Chieftain, but I'm curious if you're aware of anyone who might know anything about such battleships."

The Yeluo chieftain thought for a moment. "I'll summon anyone who might be able to help, but please don't expect much, your majesty. As far as I'm aware, none of them have a deep understanding of this field."

Zhang Lie replied, "It's not urgent. Although it's very likely that we'll have to face superior worlds in battle in the future, it's not an issue we need to deal with immediately—and we wouldn't be able to transform research knowledge into more of these ships instantly, at any rate."

The Yeluo chieftain bowed and retreated. "In that case, let me talk to those experts I know right away."

Zhang Lie nodded. He would still have to return to the Milky Way and make his report to Hong Tianqi.

He stepped through space and appeared right before the humans' teleportation apparatus, which brought him back to the Zenith Dojo on Earth.

The Zenith Dojo hadn't changed much since last he saw it. After all, only a few days had passed in Earth's time. Nothing much could have happened to the Zenith Dojo in the meantime, especially given that it was under China's protection.

Zhang Lie called Hong Tianqi up with his transceiver, but Hong Tianqi failed to pick up the call. Zhang Lie waited—three minutes later, Hong Tianqi called him back. "Are you calling about the war against the death spirits?"

Zhang Lie nodded. "You guessed?"

Hong Tianqi asked, "How's the situation?"

Zhang Lie explained briefly what had happened.

Hong Tianqi sighed. "Superior worlds and the death spirit king—to think there was so much in the third realm that I never encountered, even though I believed I did well for myself."

Zhang Lie shrugged. "It's only normal. Humans and aliens from the Milky Way alike have treated these three thousand worlds like nothing more than a sideshow."

There were a massive number of aliens in the Milky Way, far more than were in the three thousand worlds themselves, but only a subset of all hunters was ever able to make it into the third realm.

Most of the weaker hunters were weeded out in the first and second realms; if there were ten trillion hunters who had made it into the first realm, then maybe a trillion would eventually get to the second—but no more than a million would make it into the third.

These were just rough numbers—there were lots of hunters entering the first realm, but only a rare few made it into the third.

After all, overcoming the threshold between the first and second realm was no mean feat. It would take a few years to do so in general, and that between the second and third might even take decades.

A trillion hunters of the Milky Way sounded like quite a lot, but they were nothing in comparison to the worlds of the third realm. A single large world might have a few hundred million inhabitants, and there were at least five hundred large worlds among the three thousand—not to mention the far larger superior worlds, or the countless medium-sized and small worlds.

Zhang Lie continued, "At that point, the aliens of the Milky Way and humans could hardly hope to cause any significant impact among the three thousand worlds."

After all, the existence of disaster-grade lifeforms was yet unknown, and no one had heard of limit-breaking potions. The hunters of the Milky Way had been far weaker, and the humans weaker still. The humans of the past would have wondered if the humans of the present were from another species entirely, such was the difference in power between them.

Of course, the most important difference was the presence of Zhang Lie, who had ushered the hunters of the Milky Way toward the threshold of a superior world.

Just what benefits had Zhang Lie brought them?

First, the human hunters and warlords now resided in the superior draconian world, and the human hunters had some say in the governance of the world.

Zhang Lie's actions had undoubtedly elevated the hunters of the Milky Way.

Hong Tianqi sighed in gratification. "I can't believe it. You juniors are doing far better than us seniors—the echelons of strength that we were never able to reach, all of you have. You've made a name for yourself in the third realm and its history."

Zhang Lie rolled his eyes. "It was simply a war that shook the realm, nothing more. It isn't as though I haven't participated in one such already—I started one once."

Hong Tianqi recalled that the other man he was speaking to was Zhang Lie, the grand unifier of the second realm, who had changed the fate of mankind there. Calling him the hero of humanity was an understatement.

His actions in the second realm had shaken it to its foundations, and while the mythical war of the third realm might have been eye-opening for most, it was nothing major for Zhang Lie.

Hong Tianqi asked, "At any rate, is the war between the death spirits and the rest of the superior worlds over now?"

"Of course. I ended it personally."

Hong Tianqi praised, "Incredible. The fighters led by the other superior worlds were all largely decimated, but yours survived mostly unscathed.

Zhang Lie, you truly are remarkable. After all, you were the king of the second realm..."

"No, it wasn't me. I was just fighting at the front—the one who saved all the troops was Hong Xi!"

Chapter 1023: Investigating the Battleships

Hong Tianqi gaped. "Really? That's remarkable. I wouldn't have expected that girl to possess such tremendous talent. Damn it—why do all the geniuses gather by your side? It's as though you're blessed by the world!"

Zhang Lie shrugged. "There's nothing to that claim—it's just a case of birds of a feather flocking together."

"What's going on in the third realm now?"

Zhang Lie asked, "What are you referring to, precisely?"

"I'm just curious. As far as I know, there's been a change to the draconian world."

"I must say you have a very strong information network."

Hong Tianqi nodded. "Of course I do. I have to be aware of how mankind is doing everywhere in the dimensional realm."

"The draconian world has evolved into a superior world."

"Really? As expected of you."

"It looks like you aren't too surprised..."

Hong Tianqi shrugged. "I've grown accustomed to all sorts of strange events happening around you.

I heard you mention that the superior worlds of antiquity are all bastards. What do they have to say about the sudden appearance of another superior world?"

"I can't imagine they favor it, but we're on good terms with the nearest superior-world neighbor, the Zongming world. Their king of the realm has promised to protect the two new superior worlds that have evolved."

"There's another one?"

"Yes, one that's some distance from the draconian world."

"It looks like the Zongming king might have his own plans..."

"Don't worry. I'm active in the third realm, and I'll make sure humanity thrives."

"With you around, I've never needed to worry. I'm glad the situation regarding the death spirits has been resolved. I'll contact you again if something else happens." Hong Tianqi bade Zhang Lie farewell, then ended the call.

Zhang Lie browsed the hunters' forums and found that the hot new topic of discussion was the superior worlds' meeting."

"Huge groups of aliens are setting off. Just where are they headed?"

"To a meeting convened by the superior worlds, if I'm not mistaken."

"What are these superior worlds? I've heard of large worlds, but never superior ones!"

"A type of world larger than even large worlds?"

"Why not call it a holy world? A superior world sounds so dull and boring! Are there peak worlds beyond these superior worlds, or undefeatable worlds?"

Zhang Lie was stupefied by this last comment.

The forums were still discussing outdated information; the war against the death spirits had already finished, and the forums were still discussing the initial meeting convened by the superior worlds.

Thanks to Zhang Lie, the war against the death spirits had ended far quicker than expected. It had only taken three or four days in Earth time.

Quite a few posts were discussing the evolution of the draconian world into a superior world. However, there were few people who knew enough to comment on what was happening to the draconian world, and many were trying to figure out just what had happened.

"It looks as though the draconian world has merged with its neighbors."

"The draconian world looks to be replete with resources these days. I went hiking in the mountains and found a rare herb!"

Some of the posters had guessed correctly, and Zhang Lie took them to be mostly human hunters. The majority of the hunters from the Milky Way within the draconian world were humans.

"Really? Can you post the coordinates to the world? I'd like to check it out for myself."

The other aliens of the Milky Way were all very impressed by the changes that had occurred."

Zhang Lie quickly grew bored of scrolling through the posts. He stepped back into the teleportation apparatus and into the draconian world.

He had only spent half an hour or so on Earth, but a day had passed in the third realm. Zhang Lie headed to the battleships, where he found several researchers carefully inspecting and examining them.

When the Yeluo chieftain saw Zhang Lie approach, he immediately beckoned him over. "You've come, your majesty!"

Zhang Lie asked, "Can you introduce me to these people?"

The Yeluo chieftain nodded and shouted, "Everyone, gather over here!"

Fang Yi floated down from the hull of a tattered battleship. "As expected of you, Captain, to have brought back the death spirits' black pyramids!"

Zhang Lie frowned. "What's Fang Yi doing here?"

The Yeluo chieftain spread his arms. "Fang Yi was the first among all of us to interact with the death spirits and the black pyramids. I specially asked the members of Team Zenith whether any of them were familiar with the death spirits' battleships."

Zhang Lie sighed. He supposed there was no better choice, neither in the draconian world nor among the hunters of the Milky Way. Trying to find a researcher in the third realm was a near-impossible task. Everyone could enter the first realm, but entering the third realm required a certain level of strength.

"I never saw a black pyramid of this size within the world of black sand I was in..." Fang Yi looked at the black pyramid with admiration.

Zhang Lie groused, "If you had encountered this black pyramid from the beginning, you wouldn't be here right now." After all, the black spirits' flagships possessed a strength beyond that of a superior king.

"You're back, Zhang Lie!" Chu Feng emerged from another of the battleships.

Zhang Lie turned to the Yeluo chieftain. "You recruited Chu Feng, too?"

Chu Feng had a significant understanding of architecture, but architecture and military engineering were two separate fields entirely.

The Yeluo chieftain sighed again. "As I said, your majesty, please don't harbor high hopes. There are no such expert researchers in the draconian world, and I don't have a sense for these battleships myself."

"So you widened your search criteria?"

The Yeluo chieftain nodded. "Exactly."

Zhang Lie decided not to rely on any of these 'researchers'.

Once the superior worlds' meeting was over, Zhang Lie would borrow a few men from the Zongming king. After all, the Zongming world had once been a peak large world, and surely possessed some experts on this front.

"We've worked hard to evolve the draconian world, but it only became a large world a year and a half ago. Our foundations are patchy and full of holes."

Zhang Lie asked, "Have any of you discovered anything? At least one of you must have, right?"

Fang Yi replied, "In fact, we did."

"About what?" Zhang Lie asked curiously.

"About how the cores of these pyramids function and provide energy."

Zhang Lie was extremely shocked. "You understand the nature of the power source?" How could that be?

Chapter 1024: Trash into Treasure

Zhang Lie was startled to no end.

The power source was the most important part of the battleship, as well as the most abstruse to understand. Zhang Lie couldn't believe that the ragtag group in front of him had understood its mechanisms.

Zhang Lie and a few others walked into a ruined battleship to find the draconian sage inside.

The draconian sage smiled. "I heard that you brought back a death spirit battleship. I was curious, so I came to have a look."

Zhang Lie nodded as everyone walked toward the core.

Fang Yi explained, "Actually, it's not particularly complicated. As long as you're strong enough, you can sense what's going on. The motive force that powers these battleships are souls and life."

The Yeluo chieftain hypothesized, "I suspect that, when bodies are transformed into black spirits, their lifeforce is extracted and infused into these black pyramids."

Fang Yi continued, "The death spirits also use some souls filled with negative emotions as fuel, injecting it into the core—these black pyramids are powered by souls and negative emotions."

The draconian sage shook his head. "The death spirits are truly vile creatures to use such materials as fuel. We're lucky that Zhang Lie destroyed them all—or who knows how many more species might have suffered under their conquest?"

Zhang Lie could sense that the vicinity of the core was filled with souls charged with negative emotions, confirming the group's suspicions.

"Does that mean that we won't be able to replicate their methods?"

Fang Yi shrugged. "It's not impossible, but do you really want to adopt such an inhumane approach?"

Chu Feng suggested, "I think we'll need to start by finding a replacement fuel."

Fang Yi added, "The death spirits' battleships are strong principally because of their core. Although it's cruel, the combination of lifeforce and souls charged with negative emotions is a potent mixture that can give rise to explosive strength. I have to say that the death spirits who came up with this

source of energy are both insane and insanely gifted. I can't imagine we'll be able to find an alternative."

Zhang Lie thought for a moment. "We don't necessarily have to extract lifeforce from aliens—genetic lifeforms and plants have it too. As for spiritual energy, we can get those from genetic lifeforms. Negative emotions can be harvested from aliens or other races."

Chu Feng sighed. "The problem is that we don't have any research materials or researchers. Where would we start?"

Zhang Lie nodded. "It is a serious problem, isn't it? I'll go headhunt in the Zongming world. In the meantime, see what else you can find."

Zhang Lie next went off in search of Hong Xi and Zhang Hanxiang, both of whom were resting after the heated battle. They had eaten their fill and slept the entire day and night.

Zhang Lie rushed into his sister's house and woke her up.

Zhang Hanxiang rubbed her eyes blearily. "Ah? Is it morning already? Good morning, Brother."

Zhang Lie frowned at her. "What do you mean, morning? It's evening!"

"Ah, then I'll keep on sleeping." Zhang Hanxiang slumped back into bed and began to snore almost immediately.

Zhang Lie called out grumpily, "Get up! If you keep sleeping, you'll turn into a pig!"

Zhang Hanxiang slowly crawled out of bed and spread her arms wide. "Hug me, Brother!"

Zhang Lie rolled his eyes. "Your feet are fine now—you can walk."

Zhang Hanxiang reached forward and hugged Zhang Lie, nuzzling his cheek. "But I'd rather have a hug from you, Brother."

"Don't act cute now--you're already a hunter. Wake up and get dressed." Zhang Lie pulled his sister up and carried her into the washroom.

As she cleaned herself up, Zhang Lie brought out some meat from a genetic lifeform and transformed it into a sumptuous meal with some hard work. By the time he was ready, Zhang Hanxiang had emerged from the washroom. She picked up a slice of meat that Zhang Lie had just prepared.

Zhang Lie tutted at her. "Where are your manners?"

Zhang Hanxiang stuffed the meat into her mouth and gave her brother a thumbs up. "Your cooking is as good as ever, Brother!"

Zhang Lie grumbled, "Change your clothes and call Hong Xi over."

Zhang Hanxiang was a little confused as to why, but she did so obediently.

Hong Xi quickly joined the Zhang siblings for their meal. After the meal, Zhang Lie placed two vials of Potion #4 on the table. "This is one of the promised rewards, Potion #4."

Zhang Hanxiang picked up a vial and looked at it. "So this is Potion #4..."

Zhang Lie instructed, "Don't consume it here. The consumption process will create a big disturbance—it'll be felt even within the city outside."

Zhang Hanxiang said, "Brother, I want to absorb peak limit fragments as quickly as possible so that I can grow strong."

Zhang Lie nodded, then shattered space and brought both of them straight to the territory of black sand.

The territory had grown completely different from before. What was once shards of black glass beneath them had become a lustrous, metallic material. Zhang Lie picked up a piece to find that some world's energy had been infused within it.

This was an unusual change that had taken place during the evolution of the draconian world.

The lustrous black metallic material contained an astounding amount of energy, causing Zhang Lie to frown. All types of energy were infused into the shards of material—fire, life, the ocean, time, wind and storm, metal...

When Fang Yi took over the barren world inhabited by the black spirits, a black desert within which there was no life was left behind. Zhang Lie had consumed Potion #5 there, and a tremendous explosion of energy caused all the black sand to vitrify. Subsequently, the members of Team Zenith had all consumed Potion #4 there.

"Could it be that the energy that was emanated by the members of Team Zenith while they were undergoing their transformation ended up being absorbed by all this glass? When the draconian world evolved, all that energy reacted..."

That energy had fused with the black glass to form an unusual material.

Zhang Hanxiang was very confused as to her brother's actions—he had picked up a shard of metal, frozen stiff, and was now mumbling to himself. She asked curiously, "Brother, what's the matter? Is there something unusual about the terrain?"

Zhang Hanxiang couldn't sense the energy within the black, metallic material because her senses were still yet undeveloped.

#### Chapter 1025: A Chance Encounter

From Zhang Hanxiang's perspective, the ground was filled with rocks the likes of which could be seen everywhere. The metallic luster to the material that the shards of glass had transmuted into was subtle and couldn't be discerned easily.

Zhang Lie attempted to infuse his genetic energy into the material, causing the black, metallic material to erupt with light. Fire, life, the ocean, time, wind and storm, metal—all those disparate sources of energy were simultaneously activated. The fist-sized black metal gave off a glow reminiscent of the sun.

The explosion of energy startled Zhang Hanxiang and Hong Xi, sending them flying. Zhang Hanxiang asked, "What is this?!"

The energy was even intense enough to scorch Zhang Lie's palm and burn off his skin. Given his status of life, Zhang Lie was able to regrow that skin within a single breath, but it showed just what the black metal was capable of.

Although it had exploded on Zhang Lie's palm, and although Zhang Lie hadn't defended against it at all, Zhang Lie was an existence that could kill a superior king. The intensity of the energy that had come from this material was enough to wound a superior king. Given that this was only a fist-sized chunk of material, the energy it possessed was immense.

Zhang Hanxiang and Hong Xi brushed themselves off as they stood back up. "Brother, what was that?!"

Zhang Hanxiang and Hong Xi were standing relatively far away, and Zhang Lie had suppressed much of the outburst. Even so, Zhang Hanxiang and Hong Xi had been sent flying—and Zhang Lie realized that, even with his current strength, he was unable to suppress the explosion completely.

Zhang Lie tossed aside the chunk of black metal. "Haha, I've found a huge treasure!"

Such a huge transformation couldn't have been effected by the remnant energy from the Potions #4 that the members of Team Zenith consumed.

Although their frameworks' attunements had somehow seeped into the metal, what had caused the transformation must have been something else entirely—likely the burst of world's energy upon the evolution of the draconian world from a large world to a superior one.

Because of the Potions #4 that the members of Team Zenith had consumed in this region, the metal had been infused with all sorts of strange abilities, including black fire that burned hotter than regular flame, mastery over time, over wind and storm... and even karmic force.

All sorts of strange and unusual energies had left their traces on the black metal, but given enough time, this energy would quickly dissipate. However, the draconian world had evolved into a superior one before the remnant energy from the Potions #4 vanished.

As a result, during the process of evolution, the remnant energies triggered some sort of unusual resonance with the black metal and fused to it to produce a strong and frightening source of energy.

This sort of energy was simultaneously chaotic and stable, a contradictory combination.

It was chaotic because it was composed of all sorts of strange and unusual energy, without any dominant form or behavior. In some sense, the combination was itself a novel material in its own right.

The moment genetic energy was infused into the metal, it would explode, but it would be inert otherwise. This was why Zhang Lie considered it stable.

The appearance of the black metal resulted from a series of rare coincidences. If the same situation were repeated, the black metal might never have formed—or the energy could even have dissipated and caused a cascading reaction that destroyed the entire region, forcibly halting the world's evolution.

In the worst-case scenario, the chain reaction might even cause the world to implode, destroying the draconian world and the worlds in its vicinity.

It was lucky that the energy had somehow remained inert enough to survive the evolution of the world, and the resulting black metal was an unbelievable treasure.

Zhang Lie was extremely excited. It was as though he had just discovered the equivalent of natural gas and coal in the dimensional realm.

All industrial revolutions on Earth had arisen because of energy; the discovery of this black metal would lead to a similar revolution in the third realm—or at least, in the draconian world.

They had just found an energy source for the death spirits' battleships, and it was eminently possible that the draconian world would be able to reproduce them.

Zhang Lie would possess the strongest force among all the worlds of the third realm, the fleets of battleships that the death spirits possessed. To be able to mass-produce these ships, which each boasted the strength of a superior king, would elevate the humans to a ridiculous extent in terms of power.

No longer would Zhang Lie and the others have to bow down to the superior worlds of antiquity, and even the strongest superior king, the king of chaos, wouldn't be so fearsome if Zhang Lie had the ability to mass-produce these battleships.

Blue genetic energy gathered around Zhang Lie as space vibrated. The ripples spread out over his arm. As he flicked his wrist, a frightening aura began to emanate from his body.

The skies suddenly darkened as a fish the size of a whale materialized in the air.

Zhang Hanxiang jumped up in shock. "Brother, what are you doing?"

Upon seeing Zhang Lie's sudden attack, Hong Xi also grew alert.

"Could there be an enemy nearby?"

Hong Xi cried out. "For an enemy to have approached... why hasn't the draconian sage given us any warning?"

Zhang Hanxiang began to sweat. "There's only one possibility: the draconian sage has been killed."

Hong Xi was struck dumb. "The draconian sage is dead?"

A howling gale swept over the glassy region. As more and more genetic energy gathered around Zhang Lie's arms, it looked as though he were at the heart of a whirlpool.

Hong Xi shook her head repeatedly. "No, there's no way! The draconian sage is the king of a superior world himself. I heard other aliens state that superior kings are godlike existences! Don't you remember how we encountered Nightdemon on the battlefield? He's a superior king too—no, just a clone of one. When the spatial storm struck us all, he easily nullified the threat."

Chapter 1026: Summoning the Draconian Sage

Zhang Hanxiang nodded. "I was considering that too. We certainly can't conclude that the draconian sage has necessarily died. He can't be weaker than another superior king's clone, can he?"

What the two women didn't know was that the draconian sage really was weaker than Nightdemon. The clones of the strongest king were well comparable to the superior kings of antiquity.

Zhang Hanxiang continued, "That's why the death of the draconian sage is the least likely option. Another possibility is that the draconian sage has been somehow incapacitated."

Hong Xi took a deep breath. "Don't scare me like that, Hanxiang! I almost believed you!"

Zhang Hanxiang's face turned serious. "There's one final possibility, the most likely of all."

Hong Xi couldn't help but swallow a gulp of saliva.

Zhang Hanxiang continued, "That there isn't an enemy at all, and that my brother simply wants to let loose."

Water-attuned genetic energy surrounded Zhang Lie. Space itself seemed to tremble.

"[Fists of the Silent Sea: Soar]!"

A huge wave soared into the air. As Zhang Lie punched forward, the fish slammed its huge tail on the ground and sent a torrent of water surging toward the sky.

Ripples of energy spread out from Zhang Lie, warping the space around him. As though a raging dragon were taking to the skies, a huge pillar of water erupted. The waves spread out all around him, resonating until they reached a crescendo.

The entire world seemed to shake. A huge crash could be heard from half the world over, startling everyone.

By the time the pale blue genetic energy had subsided, the draconian sage had appeared with a teleport.

"What happened? Is a superior world attacking?"

Zhang Lie spread his arms. "No, nothing's wrong. I just wanted to summon you over but was too lazy to seek you out."

The draconian sage:...

Hong Xi:...

Zhang Hanxiang spread her arms. "The most likely possibility is that my brother was shouting for attention!"

Hong Xi scowled as she pounced on Zhang Hanxiang. "You tricked me!"

Zhang Hanxiang struggled as she called back, "You should have known that my brother wouldn't just attack any enemies if they appeared!

He'd prioritize protecting us, or warn us to be careful."

Hong Xi nodded. "You're right."

Zhang Hanxiang extended two fingers. "For my brother to have suddenly attacked like that out of the blue—either the opponent is weak and he's confident he'll be able to protect us while getting rid of the opponent quickly, or there's no opponent at all!"

"You scared me stiff."

Zhang Lie's attack had been so powerful that the surrounding space was still trembling.

The draconian sage, who thought that Zhang Lie was fending off invaders, was shocked that he didn't detect anything. He was certain that it was a sign that a superior world had attacked, and he was preparing himself to fight to the death—only to find that it was just a false alarm.

"What's going on now? I have so much on my plate at the moment," the draconian sage grumbled.

"Is it about the death spirits' battleships?"

"Partially, yes."

Zhang Hanxiang whispered to Hong Xi, "Does the draconian sage remind you of the Land God in Journey to the West?"

Hong Xi frowned. "Not initially, but now that you've made that connection, it does seem more and more fitting. He arrives immediately when summoned, too..."

Zhang Hanxiang gave Hong Xi a thumbs up.

The draconian sage had heard a little about Journey to the West, one of the four great Chinese classics, and he liked the novel himself. However, he was quite unhappy at being compared to one of the most minor of characters within it.

"If there's nothing else, I'm going to leave."

Zhang Lie folded his arms. "Is that really a good idea?"

The draconian sage stood still. He felt as though Zhang Lie was trying to tell him something, that he had called him over for a reason.

Zhang Lie smirked. "If you leave now, the draconian world might explode."

Zhang Lie's words shocked the draconian sage to no end. Of course he didn't want to see such an outcome. He frowned. "Did something happen?"

"Didn't you say you were going to study the death spirits' battleships?"

The draconian sage sighed. "Fine. You've got my attention. What is it?"

Zhang Lie raised his head and looked at the sky. "You can leave if you'd like."

"I was mistaken. I'll listen to what you have to say."

Zhang Lie replied, "I've found the fuel we needed."

The draconian sage's eyes opened wide. That easily, and that quickly? Finding the requisite fuel, with all the conditions that it had to satisfy, was a massive undertaking. Where had Zhang Lie found it?

Zhang Lie pointed at the draconian sage's feet. "You're stepping on it."

The draconian sage was so shocked that he took two steps back. He still wasn't in full control of his aura.

Zhang Lie reminded him, "Be careful. The black metal under your feet is the fuel, and it's highly explosive. If it explodes, the entire draconian world will be destroyed, and there might even be a chain reaction linked to the world's energy."

"What?!" The draconian sage immediately grew alarmed.

Zhang Lie frowned. "Didn't you know about this? I would have expected you to mention such an interesting change."

The draconian sage plucked a piece of metal from the ground. "What dense energy..."

Zhang Lie groused, "As the king of the realm, you had to have known about this, surely?"

"Haven't I just ascended?" The draconian sage smiled sheepishly. "How could I have anticipated such a massive change to a once-useless plot of land?"

The draconian sage wasn't lying; the draconian world had just evolved, and there was too much he had to keep track of.

The superior draconian world had been formed from the combination of dozens of worlds, and its surface area had grown by twenty or thirty times its size. The draconian sage simply wasn't able to inspect each new piece of land carefully.

His priority was dealing with conflicts among the races that were now suddenly neighbors to each other. The change in their circumstances would surely introduce disagreements and clashes.

In comparison, the Zongming world had it easy. Its constituent worlds, the worlds of east and west, had a mutual understanding with each other despite the differences between them...

Chapter 1027: Explosives and Treasures

The evolution of the draconian world had resulted from the combination of dozens of different worlds, small and medium-sized and large.

In terms of size, the evolved draconian world was larger than the Zongming world, but there were far more problems as a result as well—all of which the draconian sage would have to deal with.

His main priority was handling the conflicts and interpersonal relationships between varied groups of aliens; he didn't have the time to go through the various changes that had taken place to the world itself.

Although the draconian sage had assigned some of his trusted aides to resolve as many of these issues as he could, he had to handle some matters personally.

Where his subordinates were incapable of handling the issues, the draconian sage would have to step up himself. He had had no free time lately; the reason Zhang Lie was able to see the draconian sage so often wasn't because the draconian sage was free, but because Zhang Lie caused such a huge disturbance that the draconian sage had to drop everything he was doing to make sure that nothing would affect the draconian world.

The draconian sage felt as though his head was about to burst from the bombshell that Zhang Lie had just dropped.

Zhang Lie pointed at the black metal in the draconian sage's hands. "Be careful. It might explode!"

The draconian sage shuddered.

"I recommend you find someone to block off this area. If someone manages to ignite the metal underneath your feet, the entire draconian world will become nothing more than dust. The neighboring worlds might be affected as well—I estimate over a hundred will be impacted."

Having sensed the energy contained in just a chunk of the black metal, and then realizing how much metal was before him, the draconian sage's face turned pale immediately.

What Zhang Lie had hypothesized could really happen. They were essentially standing on a pile of dynamite.

The draconian sage extended a hand and sealed off the surrounding space.

Zhang Lie replied, "Just find someone to seal it off. There's no need to seal the space as well—it's as though you're trying to make it a biohazard."

Even so, the draconian sage didn't feel as though it was safe enough. Invoking his authority as king, he sealed off the space time and again.

Zhang Lie began to sweat. "This is too much, don't you think?"

The draconian sage retorted, "If anyone with malicious intentions were to get in and detonate the entire place, what would I do?!" This is my world, not yours—of course you can afford to take it lightly.

Zhang Lie continued, "I'll have the battleship researchers come over to investigate the fuel. It should prove handy."

The draconian sage shook his head in refusal. "Let's forget it. If we accidentally ignite this territory, everyone will die."

Zhang Lie shrugged. "This black metal isn't as reactive as you make it out to be. Don't worry—it's relatively inert! I just ignited a chunk, and nothing happened. As long as no one tries to detonate the entire region, we should be safe!"

"Should be? I don't trust in should bes."

Zhang Lie urged, "The black metal really is quite inert. Reactivity seems to be produced only by infusion of genetic energy."

After all, the members of Team Zenith, who had charged up the region, had done so by means of their genetic energy. It made sense that the trigger for reactivity would be exactly the same.

Zhang Lie explained, "As long as no one attempts to infuse large quantities of genetic energy into the black metal beneath them, there won't be a huge explosion."

The draconian sage was visibly hesitant.

Zhang Lie shrugged. "We'll have to start excavating this black metal sooner or later, or it'd be a bomb waiting to explode. If we can utilize it well, however, it could become a strong weapon for us instead. Research and development is always filled with risks—that's natural, isn't it?"

The draconian sage pressed, "Nothing will go wrong, will it?"

Zhang Lie replied calmly, "Don't worry. This is the base of activity for human hunters too, and I wouldn't sacrifice their lives."

The draconian sage hesitantly nodded.

Zhang Lie continued, "Furthermore, you have to assign a trusted guard to this area, or something really might happen."

The draconian sage nodded. "I truly have to thank you. If not for your discovery of this area, I wouldn't have realized that there was a nascent threat here." If someone with malicious intentions had uncovered the deposit beforehand...

Zhang Lie continued, "I recommend letting the aliens sort themselves out for now. They aren't stable enough to be fighting against each other yet, and even if there are altercations, human hunters and the members of Team Zenith will be around to stop them."

The draconian sage nodded.

With the members of Team Zenith and human hunters around, along with the warlords stationed in the region, the aliens wouldn't be able to make a big fuss.

Zhang Lie advised, "Start by understanding the world you now command. As the king of the world, if you don't understand your own world, how can you expect others to take you seriously? This deposit of black metal, for instance—you need to know what latent dangers there are around you."

The draconian sage was struck dumb.

Zhang Lie continued, "The first thing you have to do is to carefully observe the superior draconian world and see just what changes have occurred since its evolution, to avoid the presence of any threats like this one."

The draconian sage nodded.

Zhang Lie continued, "I'll bring Zhang Hanxiang and Hong Xi to find a spacious, isolated place where they can consume Potion #4. Work hard!"

Zhang Hanxiang sighed. "It looks like we can't consume the potion here, then. We'll have to find somewhere else."

Fortunately, the superior draconian world wasn't lacking in territory, especially after its evolution.

Zhang Lie, Zhang Hanxiang, and Hong Xi had taken only a few steps when Zhang Lie suddenly stopped short. The draconian sage wondered what was happening until Zhang Lie pointed at the sky.

"Unlock the space around here, please. I can't get out!"

The draconian sage belatedly nodded and disabled the spatial restraints.

The moment he did so, the members of Team Zenith appeared.

Sun Mengmeng asked, "What happened? I felt the space in this region lock up."

Fang Yi asked, "Is there an enemy invasion?"

Zhang Lie asked, "Why are all of you here?"

Sun Mengmeng replied, "We saw your [Fists of the Silent Sea: Soar], Captain, so we rushed over immediately."

Zhang Lie waved a hand at them. "It's not a big deal. I was just summoning the draconian sage."

Sun Mengmeng patted her chest. "Captain, you scared us!"

Fang Yi asked, "Then why was the space locked up?"

Zhang Lie pointed at the black metal at their feet. "Therein lies the answer."

Sun Mengmeng glanced at the metal curiously. "What's so special about this metal?"

Zhang Lie replied, "You all have very good timing. The draconian sage and I were just thinking that we needed reliable guards to safeguard this area."

Chapter 1028: Testing His Sister

Sun Mengmeng glanced at the metal curiously. "What's so special about this metal?"

Zhang Lie replied, "Its very existence."

The members of Team Zenith each dug out a chunk of metal for themselves.

Zhang Lie grinned. "This will be the fuel for our imitation of the death spirits' battleships."

Fang Yi raised an eyebrow. "You mean to say that this black metal can replace lifeforce and souls charged with negative emotions?"

Yang Ze scanned the metal carefully and remarked with surprise, "It's filled with energy! If this deposit of metal beneath our feet were to explode, the entire draconian world would turn to dust."

The members of Team Zenith paled.

Zhang Lie's grin grew wider. "I told you all, didn't I?"

Fang Yi marveled, "We were still wondering how to combine lifeforce and the negative emotions from souls—but you've already found a replacement!"

Yang Ze praised, "As expected of our captain."

Sun Xiaowu nodded. "While we were all wondering what to do next, our captain solved everything on his own..."

Sun Mengmeng asked curiously, "Just where did this black metal come from?"

"Actually, it's a mix of various energies."

"What energies?" Fang Yi asked.

"It resulted from the evolution of the draconian world to a superior world, and it's somewhat related to all of you." Zhang Lie shared his hypothesis.

When he finished recounting what he believed to have happened, the members of Team Zenith were all astounded. "The three thousand worlds really are wondrous..."

"I'll need all of you to take turns guarding this area. Once the draconian sage has finished analyzing the evolved world completely, choose someone responsible and loyal to take over."

The draconian sage nodded.

Sun Mengmeng asked, "Why don't you do such an important task yourself, Captain?"

Zhang Lie explained, "Zhang Hanxiang and Hong Xi have to consume Potion #4, so..."

The members of Team Zenith, who had undergone that process themselves, were well aware of the danger and why Zhang Lie had to be there to supervise them.

"Once Zhang Hanxiang and Hong Xi are done, I'll prepare a feast for all of you."

The newly ascended monarch-grade lifeform was huge, and its body was easily large enough for ten people's consumption.

Everyone's eyes lit up.

Zhang Lie left with Zhang Hanxiang and Hong Xi. As he had anticipated, there was plenty of space available in the draconian world.

Zhang Lie found the closest patch of barren land and guided the two women toward it. "We'll do it here, I suppose."

Zhang Hanxiang took a deep breath

as Zhang Lie handed them each a vial of Zhou Ying's upgraded restorative. "If something goes wrong, consume this vial immediately. It comes in a set with Potion #4."

Zhang Hanxiang glanced at the restorative curiously. "A set combo? Why didn't Potion #3 have one?"

Zhang Lie spread his arms. "It's Potion #4, an upgraded version! Of course it'd be different from Potion #3."

Hong Xi asked, "Why didn't you hand this to us beforehand, Master?"

Zhang Hanxiang sipped a little of Zhou Ying's restorative potion. She trusted Zhang Lie, but she was curious as to just what this other potion was.

Zhang Lie called out, "Don't drink that now! You're only supposed to consume it if something happens to your body during the consumption of Potion #4."

Zhang Hanxiang could feel the burgeoning vitality coming from the other potion. "Isn't this Zhou Ying's restorative?"

Zhang Lie corrected, "To be more precise, it's Zhou Ying's restorative #2."

Zhang Hanxiang gaped. "Aren't they all the same?"

Zhang Lie rolled his eyes. "Don't let the Yeluo chieftain catch you saying that, or he'll beat you up."

"Are they different, then?"

Zhang Lie countered, "Do you think Potions #3 and #4 are the same?"

"In that case, does that mean that Zhou Ying's restorative #2 is better than the original?"

Hong Xi jumped in. "Why is it necessary to prepare a vial of this restorative?"

"Potion #4 is more dangerous than Potion #3. It's several times more potent, and one of the ingredients used in the potion has ties to natural law. The potion is quite difficult to bear with a mortal body, and if you fail, there will be disastrous consequences."

Zhang Hanxiang was astounded. "Even with disaster gene fragments?"

Both of them had maxed their disaster gene fragments and were considered the equivalent of disaster-grade lifeforms. Would it be difficult for them to bear the effects of the potion even then?

Zhang Lie replied in the affirmative. "Yes, absolutely, even with superior limit fragments and disaster gene fragments. In fact, if you didn't have either of those, your body would likely explode on the spot if you tried to consume Potion #4. Obtaining superior limit fragments and disaster gene fragments might as well be a prerequisite."

Zhang Hanxiang gulped as she looked at the vial of potion in her hands.

Zhang Lie shrugged. "If you're afraid, you can choose not to consume it. Return the potion to me now."

Zhang Hanxiang hurriedly turned around to shield the potion from Zhang Lie with her body. "This is our reward for our excellent performance in the war! You can't take it back."

Perhaps before she participated in the war against the death spirits, Zhang Hanxiang might have hesitated, but after her participation, Zhang Hanxiang realized how weak she was, and how far she still had to go.

Hong Xi agreed with Zhang Hanxiang. "Master, you can't take back a reward you've already given out."

Zhang Hanxiang nodded. "Indeed. We've chosen this path, and there's no reason to turn back now."

Zhang Lie nodded in satisfaction.

Zhang Hanxiang suddenly asked, "What's the success rate?"

Zhang Lie smiled. "Why? Are you scared?"

Zhang Hanxiang snorted. "Who would be afraid? I'm just asking."

"A hundred percent." Zhang Lie's next words shocked both women. He continued, "No one who has taken the potion has had any problems to date. Are both of you satisfied?"

Both Zhang Hanxiang and Hong Xi breathed a sigh of relief.

Zhang Lie continued, "Would I hand my dear sister a problematic potion? You're my only family, as well as my most precious kin."

Hong Xi relaxed. "Don't frighten us like that, Master!"

Zhang Hanxiang grumbled, "Brother, if you know how important I am, then don't joke about me! Otherwise, you'll lose me one of these days."

Zhang Lie laughed. "I simply wanted to understand how determined both of you were, and whether you meant what you said when we returned from war."

Zhang Hanxiang sniffed, then consumed Potion #4 in a single gulp.

## Chapter 1029: Hanxiang's Metamorphosis

"Shall we drink it together, or separately?" While Hong Xi asked her question, Zhang Hanxiang sniffed and downed the potion in one gulp.

Zhang Lie tugged on Hong Xi's hand and brought them both away from Zhang Hanxiang, who felt her blood boil as she swallowed the potion.

As the potent effects of the potion surged through her body, she felt as though she were exuding heat from every pore on her skin. Sweat dripped down her body, and the crystalline core that had formed upon her transformation into a disaster-grade lifeform glowed with light. Her face took on the color of a boiled prawn.

Her genetic energy frothed and roiled. Clouds of frost billowed around her, forming a layer of ice on the ground.

A blizzard formed where she stood. Zhang Lie and Hong Xi braved themselves and stood watching her from a distance.

Hong Xi turned to Zhang Lie. "Hanxiang's alright, isn't she?"

Zhang Lie shrugged. "As I've said, Potion #4 is very potent, and such manifestations are common. Don't worry. I won't joke around with my sister's life. She's my only living family member, my dear sister."

Despite his casual tone, Zhang Lie's eyes were focused on Zhang Hanxiang to prevent an incident from occurring.

Crystalline flecks of powder swirled through the air as the potent energy gathered around Zhang Hanxiang's heart. The fire-attuned genetic energy in her body flared.

Zhang Hanxiang felt as though she were submerged deep within a roaring flame, but her dominant ice-attuned genetic energy took over. Within moments, the blazing heat had turned into a bone-chilling cold, as though she were in the heart of a glacier. Zhang Hanxiang felt as though she were simultaneously burning and freezing.

She cried out in pain, "Brother, it hurts!"

As Potion #4 continued to react with Zhang Hanxiang's genetic energy, a frosty mist began to spread from her body.

She curled up into a ball in pain, hugging herself tightly. "It hurts!"

Zhang Lie shouted, "Quick, consume Zhou Ying's restorative now!"

As Zhang Hanxiang's cells underwent apoptosis, she heard Zhang Lie's cries. Perhaps consciously or subconsciously, she downed the potion, causing a huge wave of vitality to flood her body from the inside and regenerate her cells.

The inclusion of Zhou Ying's regenerative potion alleviated the worst of Zhang Hanxiang's symptoms. Even so, Zhou Ying's potion could only heal the injuries inflicted on Zhang Hanxiang's body, not resolve the fundamental issue itself.

Zhang Hanxiang's body continued to be engulfed in ice and fire. Frost propagated over the ground, covering all that lay beneath her in a dazzling layer of white snow.

As the potion's effect grew, the temperature of the air decreased dramatically. Snow began to fall—and Zhang Hanxiang couldn't help but spit out a mouthful of fresh blood.

Instantly nervous, Zhang Lie's fingers tightened into fists. He wanted to rush forward, but Zhang Hanxiang slowly opened her eyes, gritted her teeth at the pain, and called out, "There's no need to worry, Brother. I can handle it. Ah—"

Hong Xi patted Zhang Lie by his side. "Calm down, Master. You've seen how determined we are."

The fresh blood fell to the ground. With Zhang Hanxiang at its center, a brilliant flower of ice formed, crystalline and transparent, a pure, unblemished creation, as beautiful as Zhang Hanxiang herself. It looked like a cross between a lotus and a lily.

Amidst the chilly air of winter, Zhang Hanxiang slowly lost her sense of her extremities. The cold seeped deep into her body, and her beautiful face distorted in pain.

Zhang Lie, feeling wretched that he had to watch his sister suffer, wanted to rush up to her and prevent her from absorbing any more of the potion. He worked hard to repress this sensation. If he were to do so, it would waste all of Zhang Hanxiang's hard work and pain to date.

Rationally, he knew that everyone before her had successfully consumed the potion, that no member of Team Zenith had had a problem with it.

Zhang Hanxiang was in no way inferior to any of the members of Team Zenith, and there was thus no reason she should fail—but despite that logic, he couldn't seem to reconcile rational thinking with reality.

What if there were a problem? What if Potion #4 were to fail on his sister, even when it succeeded for everyone else? What if his sister's constitution was unique enough to cause an unexpected interaction with the potion?

What if, what if?

Zhang Lie couldn't help but keep thinking about these thoughts. He had just taken a step forward when Hong Xi pulled him back and shook her head.

She knew how worried Zhang Lie was, but this was a crucial period for Zhang Hanxiang's growth. Forcibly terminating the absorption would hurt her irrevocably.

The energy in Zhang Hanxiang's body grew denser and denser, representing success in the procedure, as the temperature grew ever colder. The energy released from Zhang Hanxiang's body turned into a blizzard that spawned around her.

As her body evolved and her reservoir of genetic energy grew, Zhang Hanxiang's face distorted further in pain.

Zhang Lie watched on in agony, as though he was hurting more watching his sister suffer than when he was in pain himself.

Hong Xi continued, "We've made up our minds, so let's give her a little more confidence. I certainly wouldn't want any interruption in the process."

Gold and silvery-white threads wrapped around Zhang Hanxiang.

The moment Zhang Lie saw those threads, he exhaled in relief. Their appearance meant that Zhang Hanxiang was entering the second stage of the absorption, and she was in no danger. Zhang Lie wiped at his forehead to find it beading with sweat.

The energy that was emanating from Zhang Hanxiang was condensing into threads that wrapped around her body like a cocoon, sealing the winter frost within.

Within the golden and silver cocoon was Zhang Hanxiang's prone body, like that of a baby.

The cocoon pulsed like a beating heart as the energy within it grew denser and denser, until the cocoon itself was unable to hold in the frosty air any longer. It began to crack, releasing a burst of frosty air that swelled into a tide and spread out all around the cocoon.

Zhang Lie stood before Hong Xi, protecting her from the sudden effect. As the cocoon cracked completely, a silvery-gold phoenix emerged, then transformed into a beautiful woman.

Silvery-white hair floated in the wind, as though she were the personification of a crystal lotus in the frozen world before them. Amidst a howling blizzard, the woman landed on the ice, pure and elegant in her austerity.

She seemed like the queen of this domain, her white-gold eyes sparkling, reflecting a whole world of frost and ice within...

Chapter 1030: Paramount Importance

Zhang Lie smiled in relief. "It looks like it was a success."

Hong Xi nodded. "It should have been."

Zhang Hanxiang continued to emanate an aura of frost. "Kneel to me, my retainers!"

Zhang Lie darted to her side and rapped her hard on the head.

"Kneel? I think not—I'm your brother! If you want to make me kneel, you'd better grow far stronger than this."

Zhang Hanxiang clutched her head in mock pain, then beamed at him. "Brother, I succeeded."

Zhang Lie nodded. "I saw it."

Zhang Hanxiang asked, "How strong am I now?"

"Roughly at the level of a new superior king—like the draconian sage. However, you're not at the level of a superior king of antiquity yet. That difference lies in combat experience and combat strength. If you want to step beyond your current level of strength, you'll need to fight."

Although Zhang Hanxiang now had about as many gene fragments as the members of Team Zenith, she lost out significantly in terms of combat experience and training.

The members of Team Zenith had gained all their strength by hard work, fighting and killing for all their spoils. They had significantly more combat experience than Zhang Hanxiang, and she would quickly fall in battle against them.

Zhang Hanxiang nodded. "I'll work hard."

Zhang Lie asked expectantly, "Did you gain any special intuition from absorbing Potion #4?"

Zhang Hanxiang hummed. "I think I may have, but I don't know for sure. It's fuzzy."

Zhang Lei sighed. "You had better stay here and see if you can capture any traces of that intuition."

"Yes, Brother," Zhang Hanxiang agreed.

Zhang Lie then turned to Hong Xi. "It's your turn now."

Hong Xi didn't hesitate before swallowing Potion #4. Just like Zhang Hanxiang, as the potent effects of the potion surged through her body, she felt as though she were exuding heat from every pore on her skin.

Sweat dripped down her body, and the crystalline core that had formed upon her transformation into a disaster-grade lifeform glowed with light. Energy burst from her body, cracking the ice-covered ground. Black sunlight exploded from Hong Xi's body.

Her face took on the color of a boiled prawn.

At the same time, silvery-white moonlight spread out from Hong Xi.

Upon witnessing Hong Xi's pained expression, Zhang Hanxiang asked worriedly, "Brother, what's happening to Hong Xi?"

Zhang Lie replied, "If I'm not mistaken, this is caused by Hong Xi's framework."

Zhang Hanxiang remarked in worry, "She'll be fine, won't she?"

"Don't worry. No one has failed to advance after consuming Potion #4 yet. If you managed to succeed, then Hong Xi surely will."

"That's true... Hold it! Brother, you're making it sound like I'm worse than Hong Xi!"

More or less... Zhang Lie suddenly frowned at her. "Aren't you supposed to be figuring out the intuition you seem to sense after consuming Potion #4?"

Silvery moonlight and black sunlight revolved around Hong Xi, as though her body was their battlefield.

The two forces struggled without end—until Hong Xi's consciousness suddenly joined the mix, splitting the two forces apart.

However, the situation didn't take a turn for the better. After being suppressed, both the silvery moonlight and black sunlight suddenly flared, causing Hong Xi to spit out a mouthful of fresh blood.

"The situation isn't great." Zhang Lie's face turned serious.

The blood that left Hong Xi's body evaporated instantly, revealing just how hot her body had become.

Hong Xi's graceful features distorted in pain. Energy rampaged through her body, destroying it from the inside out.

"Quickly, drink Zhou Ying's restorative!" Zhang Lie shouted.

With her remaining shred of consciousness, Hong Xi followed Zhang Lie's command, causing a huge wave of vitality to flood her body from the inside and regenerate her cells.

Zhou Ying's restorative was extremely potent, and Hong Xi's face and expression immediately relaxed.

Perhaps it might be better to say that the Yeluo chieftain's skill at potionmaking was unparalleled, for there to be no side effects for consuming Potion #4 and Zhou Ying's restorative

in quick succession. Zhang Lie had to admit that the Yeluo chieftain had reached unbelievable heights in his understanding of potionmaking and herbalism.

Zhang Lie frowned. "What are you looking at? Go focus on gaining some intuition!"

Zhang Hanxiang stuck out her tongue. "I can't do that while Hong Xi's in such pain."

Hong Xi's absorption process had yet to enter its second stage, but the energies were already getting too intense for her to handle. Pitch-black sunlight exploded from her body, forming a sun around it. Silver moonlight pierced through the sun and spread over the land.

Zhang Lie's face turned even more serious than before. "This is problematic. I never expected that Hong Xi's body would have so many issues..."

Hong Xi cultivated the combined framework of [Eclipse] and [Black Sun]. Both these techniques were rare, and their combination even rarer. Zhang Lie himself had studied the same technique.

Hong Xi hadn't managed to combine the two techniques completely, but this wasn't her fault. [Eclipse] and [Black Sun] weren't perfectly compatible because they represented diametrically opposed forces, like ice and fire, or heaven and earth.

A horizon separated heaven and earth, just as a divider separated [Eclipse] and [Black Sun].

Although the two techniques could combine to some extent precisely because they were diametrically opposed, their combination would always be imperfect.

Zhang Lie made use of his potent water-attuned genetic energy to forcibly combine [Eclipse] and [Black Sun] into [Syzygy], without relying too heavily on either technique on its own. To Zhang Lie, the two techniques were simply skills that he could use at will, nothing more.

Hong Xi felt differently. [Eclipse] and [Black Sun] were techniques created by her ancestors, and her clan had paid a heavy price to protect them. In the end, of their once-illustrious clan, only Hong Xi and Hong Xiao had survived. As a result, the two techniques were of paramount importance to the Hong siblings.