

U. Warlord 1041

Chapter 1041: Reluctantly

The ice queen smiled coldly. "Do you really think three superior worlds' worth of energy is sufficient to purchase this treasure? It's laughable. I'm willing to spend five superior worlds' worth."

A human's face appeared amidst the mass of black fog. "I offer eight."

Li Zongming watched on from the side, marveling at the riches each superior king seemed to have. Comparatively, he was poor and impoverished. He had been a little happy about acquiring the world of black rain, but now...

The king of keys continued, "Hold on, I'm not finished yet. Let me finish."

The superior kings immediately suppressed their eagerness. The king of keys continued, "This would ordinarily be how things operate, but don't forget that we're all indebted."

Thinking back to the bet that they had all participated in before the war against the death spirits, the solar flame burning over the solar king's body flared up, the ice surrounding the ice queen spread and formed a blizzard, the human face in the mass of black fog lost its delineation, and the king of evil began to writhe as the monstrosities within its body howled and cried.

"The total debt incurred is thirty superior worlds' worth of energy."

The kings were shocked even though they had been mentally prepared. Thirty superior worlds' worth! Of the kings present, none but the king of keys and the king of chaos had thirty superior worlds' worth of energy on hand—it was enough to develop thirty superior worlds!

The king of keys continued slowly, "I believe that this crystal could well be worth thirty superior worlds. Do you agree?"

The king of keys turned toward Li Zongming, who seemed very reluctant. "I suppose it'll do!"

The other superior kings mentally cursed at Li Zongming. Although the crystal contained only about ten superior worlds' worth of energy, the quality of that energy was beyond compare.

The energy went beyond that of an ordinary superior world. A superior world's energy was rare, but it could be obtained at a cost—but this energy was priceless. The net benefit it could provide to a world was difficult—impossible—to estimate.

The king of keys nodded. "If there's no objection, then the spoils of war shall go to the Zongming king."

The solar king, ice queen, and king of black fog all glared at Li Zongming, as though they wanted to eat him alive.

None of them had expected that such a valuable treasure would emerge from the war against the death spirits. It was little wonder that the decaying king had been willing to give up his life for this.

It was something that could bring the gathered superior kings to the realm of the king of keys and king of chaos.

The superior kings present deeply regretted participating in the bet, and then being willing to annul their debt for the spoils of the war.

Although they were under heavy debt, they would have been able to repay it at a cost. The king of keys had already promised to take on half the debt, and they each only had to pay three superior worlds' worth of energy each.

However, they were too arrogant to pay that price. As established superior kings of antiquity, they had no intention of providing superior worlds' energy to a newly ascended superior king—indeed, they had been planning on extracting that energy from him instead.

None of them expected the spoils of war to be a huge treasure—energy beyond that of a superior world's.

Even more than before, they regretted the bet they had agreed to. The superior kings glared at Zhang Lie, the source of their misery. If looks could kill, they'd be dead a hundred times over. It was all this fellow's fault! He had planned everything from the beginning the moment he proposed fifty-to-one odds.

Now, however, it was too late for regrets. The superior kings stared at Zhang Lie as though they had just sucked on lemons, their faces twisted with envy.

The king of keys continued, "Following the original distribution, these superior kings were obligated to pay you three superior worlds' worth of energy each. In other words, that shall be the price of each portion of the spoils. I have two portions of the spoils, equivalent to six superior worlds' worth, but also owe the Zongming king fifteen."

Zhang Lie couldn't help but drool at what the eventual payout from the bet would be.

The king of keys continued, "In other words, I would still owe the Zongming king nine superior worlds' worth."

Li Zongming waved a hand. "There's no need, king of keys. I'm grateful enough that you're willing to distribute the spoils in this fashion."

The king of keys smirked. "Are you intending to buy a favor from me, then?"

Li Zongming hesitated. He did have that intention, but the king of keys didn't seem interested.

"Aren't you being a little arrogant? My favor can't be bought with just nine superior worlds' worth of energy." The king of keys, clearly having come prepared, handed over nine orbs each filled with a concentrated superior world's worth of energy.

Li Zongming blinked a few times after claiming the orbs. This was an astounding prize—he had thought himself impoverished just a few moments ago, but he had suddenly come into a fortune.

He needed some time to process this sudden reversal.

It was possible that he would be able to catapult to third in terms of overall riches among the superior kings thanks to the spoils of war.

As they glanced at the orbs filled with superior worlds' energy, the superior kings glared at Li Zongming with envy and jealousy.

The king of keys smirked. "However, if you want to claim this crystal for yourself, you'll still have to talk with the king of chaos. The king of chaos did not participate in the bet and owes you nothing."

Fortunately, the king of chaos would be a barrier against Li Zongming receiving this reward. Otherwise, the other kings might perish with envy.

No one expected, however, that the king of chaos would simply respond, "Give me two superior worlds' worth of energy."

The kings all whirled toward him in shock.

The king of keys had indicated that the crystal was worth thirty superior worlds of energy, and as long as the king of chaos could produce twenty-five superior worlds' worth, he would be able to claim it without objection from anyone, not even Li Zongming or Zhang Lie.

Chapter 1042: A Deserved Reward

As long as the king of chaos provided them with adequate compensation, Li Zongming and Zhang Lie would be unable to refuse the offer.

Such high-quality world's energy was so rare that it was difficult to make use of it adequately.

A superior world's energy was broadly applicable, both for cultivating monarch-grade lifeforms and for upgrading a superior world—and it could even be used as currency among the superior kings.

However, the king of chaos was willing to give up his two portions of the spoils for just two superior worlds' worth of energy, which should have been worth six. To give up those portions for two superior worlds' worth was essentially to give them up for free; he had just quoted a price for matters of formality.

The superior kings wondered if they had misinterpreted the king of chaos's mental transmission.

The king of chaos replied, "I obtained what I wanted from the war against the death spirits. Treat this as a gift from me to the newly ascended superior king, as well as a reward to Zhang Lie, an excellent combatant."

No superior king would be so kind and charitable as to give out gifts freely; the king of chaos was doing this for Zhang Lie as a reward for his performance.

The king of keys smirked. "It looks like you really do value him highly, don't you?"

Zhang Lie shivered. Being liked by an unknown creature who hid in a clam was nothing to be happy about.

The king of keys turned to Li Zongming. "Do you object to this transaction, king of Zongming?"

Li Zongming barely processed what was going on. In a daze, he passed two orbs of a superior world's energy to the king of chaos, who accepted it. The king of keys prompted, "Collect your spoils, will you?"

Li Zongming broke out of his stupor and happily kept the crystal that all the other kings were eyeing. They glared at him jealously, their eyes bloodshot, barely resisting the temptation to tear him to pieces.

For a newly ascended superior king to obtain such a treasure and seven superior worlds' worth of energy besides...

The Zongming king had simultaneously been the weakest and poorest of all the kings present. He was still the weakest, but now, by no means the poorest.

That crystal of world's energy was a treasure that none of the other kings could acquire even with all the wealth they had amassed to date.

They looked at Li Zongming with envy, with jealousy, with grudging acceptance, with greed.

Zhang Lie broke the silence. "Shall we continue speaking of the war? The main participants in the war were the conscripts from the various alien races. I believe that, for responding to the summons of the superior worlds, they deserve rewards and recognition."

The solar king snorted. "Do you think this is any place for you to speak? Be grateful that we haven't tossed you out of here. You're no superior king, nor even a regular king. What right do you have to address us?"

All the superior kings besides the king of keys and the king of chaos hated Zhang Lie. The moment they saw his face, they thought back to the fifty-to-one odds he had proposed, and the thirty superior worlds' worth of energy they owed as debt.

Most importantly, they thought of the crystal that Li Zongming had just claimed, that they would otherwise own a portion of—before Zhang Lie stole everything.

The king of chaos sent out another mental transmission. "We can discuss this suggestion further."

The king of keys inclined his head. "Since the king of chaos has spoken, we shall discuss this suggestion."

The ice queen shrugged. "I've lavishly rewarded my commander for his performance in the war. King of Zongming, are you unable to provide such rewards out of your own pocket? Is that why Zhang Lie has raised this matter here?"

The solar king mocked, "Worry not. Since you've spoken at this meeting, we'll naturally satisfy your request. Come over to the world of blazing sun, and we'll give you any reward you want!"

The ice queen added, "You were the one who won the greatest merit during the war, but is the Zongming king so stingy and petty as to give you nothing for it? How ridiculous. Come over to the white world—I won't be as miserly as the king of Zongming."

Li Zongming steepled his fingers to support his lower jaw. "Ice queen, solar king—please, spare me some face. I know my son-in-law is a desirable asset, but please don't try to snatch him from me right before my eyes."

Zhang Lie replied, "His majesty has provided me with sufficiently lavish rewards, and I don't intend to ally with any other superior king."

"What a pity," the king of chaos commented.

The solar king asked, "Then just what is it that you want?"

"I would like rewards to be issued to all fighters in the war, not just the commanders. Many gave up their lives to participate in this war, and countless aliens lie dead on the battlefield, with no one to claim even their corpses and bury them in their homeland."

The solar king was entirely unamused. "Why should we care about those ants?"

"Our victory came about in no small respect because of those 'ants' you mention. Each fighter gave their strength and life for our success— and without what they did, we wouldn't be standing here today. However, those fighters were left to die in the void, with no one to remember their names. Should we not provide compensation to their families? I believe that, now that we're distributing the spoils of war, that they deserve a part of it too."

Zhang Lie's words had no effect on the gathered kings, who had no intention to participate in what they viewed to be others' business.

Zhang Lie changed his strategy. "This is for the future development of the three thousand worlds. I'm sure none of you would want to see the various worlds refuse your call when another ambitious madman like the death spirit king arises."

Except for the king of chaos and Li Zongming, the superior kings stared at Zhang Lie like he was a fool.

Refusing their calls? Then they would simply destroy their worlds.

Zhang Lie continued, "Even if they were to respond, they wouldn't fight wholeheartedly for you."

The superior kings were still unmoved.

Zhang Lie added, "From another perspective, you can think of it like growing Chinese chives. You're not providing these resources for nothing; it's like an investment that you'll reap in the future."

The king of keys couldn't watch this any longer. "I believe that's quite enou—"

Just then, the king of chaos began to clap. "Well said," the king of chaos transmitted.

The king of keys turned to the king of chaos skeptically. "Are you serious, king of chaos?"

All the superior kings looked toward him.

The king of chaos transmitted, "Back in the world of black rain, I promised Zhang Lie that I would reward the fighters in the war."

Chapter 1043: Attempted Persuasion

The king of keys replied, "Since the king of chaos has made this suggestion, let's discuss it in earnest."

A suggestion from Zhang Lie was completely different than one from the king of chaos. The king of chaos was a superior king, and the strongest among the superior kings. He boasted a position of extreme importance in the meeting, and any suggestion of his would be treated seriously by the others.

The solar king replied, "Since this is the king of chaos' suggestion, let's discuss the fighters' rewards."

The ice queen proposed, "How about we distribute rewards to the fighters who have returned?"

Zhang Lie hastily brought up, "What about those who died in war?"

The solar king shrugged. "What value do the dead have?"

Zhang Lie replied, "This isn't an issue of value. They died on the battlefield and gave their very lives to defend against the death spirits. Shouldn't we compensate them for their losses?"

The solar king looked at him as though he were a fool. "Even if we wanted to, would they be able to claim it?"

"Surely they have families."

The ice queen interrupted, "That's quite enough. All forces will suffer losses against the death spirits; it's only inevitable. Look at the solar king—his entire force was annihilated! And he hasn't brought anything up."

The solar king gritted his teeth, the ten suns behind his back glowing with light. Even now, the ice queen was prodding at his weak spots.

A human's face appeared amidst the black fog. "Let's leave aside the living for now. Surely you don't expect us to collect the corpses of the dead?"

The solar king snorted. "There are corpses everywhere, and the battlefield itself has been obliterated. How much manpower would it take to claim the dead?"

The ice queen was indifferent. "They're just dead ants. We'll set up an obelisk somewhere in the three thousand worlds and record the names and worlds of the dead. It's cheap and effective."

The solar king snapped his fingers. "That's more like it!"

"Let's do that, then," the other superior kings agreed.

The king of keys nodded. "Since the majority of the superior kings approve, we'll establish an obelisk for the dead. The living fighters shall be rewarded by each king individually.

The dead's names and worlds will be reported and inscribed on the obelisk."

Zhang Lie sighed. He had tried his best. In the end, he wasn't a superior king, and he didn't have the authority to oppose the superior kings' decisions. Neither did Li Zongming have much authority.

The king of chaos, in the guise of Nightdemon, had promised to bring the topic up while they were in the world of black rain, but he hadn't guaranteed any measure of success.

Indeed, the king of chaos had already provided more than sufficient help. If he hadn't spoken, Zhang Lie would have had no recourse. He held no authority among the kings—it was as though he was a stone statue with a heartbeat. Without the king of chaos making the same suggestion, no matter how good of a speaker he was, the other superior kings would have ignored him.

And he certainly couldn't ask the king of chaos to accomplish everything for him; there was no reason for the king of chaos to grant him that favor.

The solar king turned around. "However, I heard that many fighters from the Zongming world returned safe and sound—eighty percent of them, in fact. Will the Zongming king be able to produce so many rewards?"

The ice queen added, "If you can't afford to do so, don't strain yourself. Give me the crystal you bear, and I'd be happy to cover the additional costs."

The solar king and ice queen smirked at each other. Part of the reason they had pushed to reward only the surviving fighters was that they didn't have too many of those to begin with, and they could save a great deal of their own resources. Further, they wanted to make life difficult for Li Zongming, whom they knew had many fighters remaining.

Li Zongming smiled. "There's no need to worry, solar king, ice queen. I'm able to afford these rewards myself. The fighters worked hard to defend the three thousand worlds, and they deserve something for themselves."

The king of keys continued, "The final matter for discussion in this meeting is the appearance of two new superior worlds."

Aha. Li Zongming and Zhang Lie both had serious expressions on their faces.

The solar king asked, "What do you plan to do with the two superior worlds that have appeared within your jurisdiction?"

Li Zongming and Zhang Lie had planned out an answer beforehand.

Li Zongming shrugged. "How else? I'll simply do what you seniors have done to date."

The solar king smirked. "As far as I know, you haven't made any move against them."

The ice queen's smile was tinged with frost. "As far as I know, you never made a move even when the two superior worlds evolved. I can't help but wonder if they have any relationship to your world."

Under ordinary circumstances, a superior world was weakest during the process of evolution, just as the Zongming world was.

An evolving world didn't receive the protection of a king of the realm, who was still getting used to his powers and couldn't fight at a higher level.

Not all evolving superior worlds were as lucky as the Zongming world, to have someone like Zhang Lie stand guard.

An ordinary superior world had, at most, fighters on the level of a king of a large world.

It was ridiculously rare that a world that had just evolved into a superior one had a combatant like Zhang Lie, who was as strong as a superior king in his own right.

Li Zongming nodded. "I'm attempting to persuade the two worlds to surrender."

"To surrender?"

Li Zongming replied seriously, "As you know, the Zongming world has just recently advanced to a superior world, and it can't compare to any of your worlds in terms of strength or resources. For me to take down two superior worlds at once is a tall order, and I don't intend to do so by force."

The superior kings in attendance were all flabbergasted.

The solar king dug at his ear. "Surely I haven't heard you incorrectly?"

Li Zongming replied, "Of course not. I'm attempting to persuade the two worlds to surrender. I intend to have them merge with the Zongming world, allowing it to increase in size and providing me with two subordinates at the level of superior kings."

The ice queen asked again, "Are you serious?"

Li Zongming nodded. "I am quite serious."

"Ahaha, haha!" Except for the king of chaos, all the superior kings began to laugh.

The solar king smiled as the ten suns behind him glowed with radiance. "Haha, to persuade superior worlds to surrender... How funny!"

Chapter 1044: Unafraid of Trouble

As bright light illuminated the room, the temperature of the meeting room soared.

"You claim to be serious? You're seriously joking, aren't you?"

The ice queen also began to laugh. A blizzard formed in the meeting room, countering the radiant sunlight that the solar king gave off.

The king of keys shook his head in exasperation. "King of Zongming, you should know better than anyone that no superior king would be willing to submit to another. You've already missed the best opportunity to claim these superior worlds!"

A face appeared within the black fog. "The best opportunity is while these worlds are evolving.

Once you miss that opportunity, your success rate will dip dramatically, and you'll even have to sacrifice your own troops to reclaim the worlds."

Li Zongming replied, "I had no choice. I'm the king of a newly evolved superior world, after all!

While they were in the process of evolving, Zhang Lie wasn't around. He was participating in the war against the death spirits, and I have no other fighters at the same level on hand."

The solar king continued, "So you were foolish enough not to strike, and now intend to persuade them to surrender to you?"

Li Zongming explained, "If I were to leave the Zongming world, who knows what might happen? My only choice was to wait for Zhang Lie to return before attempting to persuade them to surrender."

The king of keys smirked. "What do you think your success rate will be?"

Li Zongming shrugged. "It won't matter even if I fail. At worst, I'll destroy the two worlds."

The solar king asked, "As a new superior king yourself, are you certain you'll be able to claim both those superior worlds?"

The other superior kings were very envious of the two superior worlds that had appeared.

They cursed that the superior worlds hadn't appeared within their own jurisdictions, but rather that of the Zongming world, a newly evolved superior world. If they had appeared in their own jurisdiction, they wouldn't have missed the best opportunity to strike like that idiot, Li Zongming.

Who knew what was going on within what was once xuluo territory? In general, a new superior world only appeared once every few centuries or so, but the three superior worlds that had just appeared—including the Zongming world—had done so within just a few years.

Furthermore, it had given birth to an entity as frightening as Zhang Lie, who could kill superior kings without being one himself.

No one had heard of such a frightening existence before this event. How was the xuluo jurisdiction so fertile?

The ice queen said, "As you said, as a new superior world, you don't have the resources and strength to do anything. Two superior worlds is too much for you to handle, and you don't want to incur losses, either. Why don't you split one with us?"

Li Zongming shrugged. "Very well. Give me the equivalent of a superior world's worth of energy."

The solar king frowned. "Aren't you being a bit ridiculous?"

Destroying a superior world would reward a superior world's worth of energy. The fact that Li Zongming was asking for a superior world's worth of energy as the price indicated that he had no intention of giving it up.

The ice queen complained, "Don't you see that we're helping you? Why are you intending to charge us?"

A human face appeared amidst the black fog. "Weren't you the one who claimed to be a superior world that had just newly evolved, without strength or resources, who didn't want to incur too many losses?"

The solar king shook his head. "Don't be too greedy."

The ice queen warned, "Two newly evolved superior worlds is too much for you. Be wary of indigestion."

A human face appeared amidst the black fog. "Since two such worlds appeared in your jurisdiction, it isn't too much to ask for you to give one up."

The solar king added, "None of us want to see a new superior world emerge. It'll affect our ability to govern the three thousand worlds—each one will suck away a portion of our authority. You certainly don't want to see large numbers of superior worlds around, do you?"

Li Zongming raised his head to gaze at the ceiling. Didn't he? It was hard to say.

The superior worlds of antiquity were a huge problem, and adding more to the mix didn't seem like it would make much of a difference. Furthermore, what if the problems could counteract each other?

When Li Zongming ascended, there were quite a few superior worlds around who tried to extract his superior world's energy from him.

To Li Zongming, he really didn't care how many superior worlds were around.

The most important factor was that the two newly evolved superior worlds were both related to Zhang Lie, and they would be able to form an alliance with the Zongming world to counter the superior worlds of antiquity.

From a long-term perspective, Li Zongming would much rather preserve the two new superior worlds—and he had promised Zhang Lie to do that, as well.

The ice queen complained, "We're doing this for the good of the three thousand worlds! We're sufficient—there's no need for more superior worlds around. If dozens of superior worlds were to simultaneously exist, we'd end up mired in conflict like the large worlds of the realm."

Zhang Lie shrugged. "The death spirit king was once a superior king..."

The solar king glared at Zhang Lie, his eyes luminous and golden like the sun."

The ice queen spread her arms. "As you said, the death spirit king is an exception. His appearance is an accident, one that no one could have imagined—and in the end, we dealt with the death spirit king."

Li Zongming said, "After a cataclysmic war that dragged in the entirety of the third realm."

The solar king cried out, "Regardless, I'm sure none of us present want to see the appearance of countless superior worlds!"

The ice queen's voice also rose. "Since you can't guarantee that you can deal with both these newly evolved superior worlds, there doesn't seem to be a problem with us taking one of them!"

A face appeared within the black fog. "You've already obtained more than sufficient reward from the meeting—seven superior worlds' worth of energy, and a crystal of energy beyond that of a superior world! There's no need to vie for even more rewards."

The solar king nodded. "Digest your gains first. You'll surpass us soon enough—it won't do to be too greedy."

Li Zongming frowned. "Your tone makes it sound as though what I obtained was from your charity, that I should share my spoils with you."

The solar king spread his arms. "We've never said that, but you can interpret it in that way."

Li Zongming cried out, "All that I obtained during this meeting, Zhang Lie fought for with his life. What does it have to do with any of you?"

Furthermore, the two newly evolved superior worlds had a link with Zhang Lie as well. Even if they didn't, Li Zongming certainly wasn't going to give in regarding this...

Chapter 1045: The Kings' Uproar

Li Zongming turned to the king of keys. "King of keys, if I'm not mistaken, the superior kings brokered an agreement that they shall control all new superior worlds in their jurisdiction, un beholden to all other kings."

The king of keys slowly replied, "That is indeed the case. If you permit other superior worlds to aid you—"

Li Zongming broke him off. "It won't be necessary, thank you. I do not need aid at the present moment."

"You won't even consider it?" the solar king asked, the suns behind him shining with blinding radiance. The scorching sunlight struck Li Zongming's body.

"If even a single superior world survives, it could prove quite troublesome." The ice queen's cold, crystal-like eyes lined with frost.

"You obtained more than sufficient rewards during the meeting. If you have sufficient time to grow, you'll surely take a great leap forward—but you may incur heavy losses before that." Black fog drifted from the king of black fog's body toward Li Zongming.

The gray fluid that made up the king of evil's body roiled. More and more mutated growths and abominations were visible within the main body's flesh, squelching as they tried to escape—before they were swallowed back into its interior and digested away.

Against the four superior kings' threatening auras, Li Zongming turned to the king of keys. "Is there anything else to discuss?"

The king of keys shook his head. "That was the last topic of discussion."

Li Zongming stood up. "In that case, I'll be leaving first."

When he arrived in the meeting room, Li Zongming's aura had been plain and unadorned. When he left, however, he demonstrated what he had just prepared.

The image of a giant beast appeared behind Li Zongming's back. It had scales in six colors, with a pair of golden wings behind its back. It had a long, narrow mouth, with eight horns on its head like a golden crown. A ring of light glowed behind him as brightly as the sun.

The sudden aura that Li Zongming displayed swept away the black fog, golden sunlight, and chilly air in the meeting room.

Li Zongming harrumphed as he stepped through the air and departed. Zhang Lie followed suit, giving Li Zongming a mental thumbs up.

The solar king, the ice queen, the king of black fog, and the king of evil could only watch on as Li Zongming left, unable to do anything against him.

Their eyes filled with rage and envy. Li Zongming had claimed the best spoils from this war—and now he was leaving without showing them any respect.

The solar king's golden eyes turned blood-red, and the ice queen's frosty orbs into congealed blood. The king of black fog manifested two red eyes, representing his jealousy and anger.

The ice queen's chilly aura turned to one of bone-chilling cold. "Arrogant. Arrogant to the extreme. He's completely ignoring us."

The solar king cried out with rage and envy, "If he's already like this now, will there still be a place in this room for us once he grows stronger?"

The king of black fog continued with displeasure, "And not only that, he interrupted the king of keys! It's clear that he doesn't respect the king of keys. How are we supposed to bear with such a fellow?"

Seven superior worlds' worth of energy, two new superior worlds, the world of black rain, the crystal of energy beyond that of a superior world—Li Zongming had claimed all these spoils, and what had they gotten? Nothing at all.

The ice queen snorted. "He clearly thinks our mercy makes us pushovers, that he's on the same level as the rest of us."

The solar king chuckled coldly. "A dog's a dog, no matter what. I shall go to war against Li Zongming."

The solar king's eyes burned. He repeated, "I'll take over the Zongming world by force."

The king of keys asked curiously, "For what reason?"

Naturally, it was because of greed, because of what Li Zongming had obtained during the meeting. The seven superior worlds' worth of energy was sufficient reason.

They had looked down on Li Zongming the moment he became a superior king, but with Zhang Lie around, no one was willing to pay the price of taking him down.

Even if they did, all they would obtain in exchange was a brief moment of pleasure and one or two superior worlds' worth of energy. It was an unfavorable trade, and not one that was worthwhile.

Furthermore, if their own strength were to weaken, the other superior worlds might gang up on them instead.

Now, however, the situation was different. The spoils that Li Zongming had claimed during this meeting would be more than sufficient to compensate for any losses incurred, but this certainly wasn't a viable reason for declaring war, even if all the superior kings present understood.

Li Zongming was himself a superior king, and he was an active participant in these meetings.

To declare war just because he didn't like Li Zongming, because he wanted to claim his possessions—that wasn't something the solar king could say explicitly. This wasn't a valid reason to attack another superior king.

All the superior kings present were essentially implicitly allied, and for the solar king to be attacking an ally right after the war against the death spirits had concluded, and in particular the ally that had contributed the greatest to the war efforts, was unconscionable.

Even though everyone knew what the solar king was up to, they couldn't say it out loud—there had to be a good reason to invade Li Zongming's territory, to find an excuse to start a war.

The solar king cried out, "Up until now, the Zongming king hasn't struck at the two newly evolved superior worlds. He's had a few opportunities to do so, but he hasn't taken advantage of them. Although he claims to be persuading them to surrender, I have reason to believe that he has other motivations in mind."

Chapter 1046: Straying from Your Path

The ice queen immediately added, "I don't believe that he's intending to absorb the two newly evolved superior worlds—but rather to ally with them!"

The solar king nodded, crying out, "I believe that Li Zongming is intending to form an alliance with the two newly evolved superior worlds to contest our alliance!"

The solar king barely believed his own words,

let alone the other kings. The lolified king of keys almost burst out in laughter at the solar king's rationale. Three newly evolved superior worlds, going against all the rest of them?

Their reserves from having been superior worlds of antiquity were no joke, and even a dozen new superior worlds would hardly threaten them. The king of keys alone could take on three hundred.

The ice queen thundered, "How malicious! This fellow's trying to tear apart the three thousand worlds, destroying the long-lasting peace and foundation that we've built up over millennia."

The ice queen's words truly sounded pained, as though she had forgotten that she and the others were the ones that had been continuously invading newly evolved superior worlds and destroying them. Even the war against the death spirits was something they had caused by gross negligence.

If they had killed the death spirit king initially, this war would never have happened, and countless millions of fighters would never have perished in the void.

Li Zongming might or might not be evil—but the superior kings gathered here certainly all were.

Upon hearing the ice queen's words, the king of keys lowered his head to hide a smile.

The solar king continued, "The Zongming king's actions are in stark disagreement with our philosophy, and he's destroying the peace of the three thousand worlds. As the governors of this realm, we can't ignore his actions. That's why I propose that we wage war against his world—we have to destroy all these newly evolved superior worlds."

The king of chaos suggested, "Perhaps the king of Zongming merely hasn't had time to deal with these new worlds."

The solar king waved a hand. "King of chaos, please don't try to defend the Zongming king. Fellows like him have to be eradicated at any cost."

What shone amidst the solar king's eyes wasn't the light of justice, but of endless greed.

The ice queen slapped a hand on the table. "I agree with your motion. Count me in."

The king of black fog said, "I can't stand him either. I don't want to see the Zongming king in our next meeting. Count me in as well."

The gray fluid bubbled. The king of evil motioned agreement with the plan.

The solar king's eyes flared with greed, with malice and vice. "King of chaos, I know you're quite interested in that fellow called Zhang Lie, but we have a problem with him as well!

That damnable fellow hid his strength and tricked us all before the start of the war against the death spirits. We suffered a great deal of losses as a result, and it's time to do something about it."

The king of chaos transmitted, "I won't take part, but by all means, go have fun. I shall take a neutral stance, helping neither side. If you fail, don't come begging me for help."

The solar king smirked. Fail? That was impossible! The solar king, the ice queen, the king of black fog, and the king of evil—with these four superior kings working together, how could they ever be defeated?

The solar king certainly couldn't fathom such an outcome. If he were to suffer an attack from a group of superior kings, he'd be kneeling on the floor and begging for mercy.

The solar king turned to the king of keys. "What say you, king of keys?"

The king of keys seemed to be contemplating the idea of joining the alliance.

The solar king wheedled, "King of keys, you've lost nine superior worlds' worth of energy, too!"

The ice queen nodded firmly. "Perhaps it might mean little to you, king of keys, but aren't you enraged that you were tricked by Zhang Lie?"

The king of keys thought for a moment. "I won't participate directly, but I can send a helper."

With the king of keys' support, the solar king, the ice queen, the king of black fog, and the king of evil were all very excited.

The ten suns behind the solar king shone with light, the blizzard around the ice queen flared, and the black fog that constituted the king of black fog roiled.

The fluid that made up the king of evil's body roiled. More and more mutated growths and abominations were visible within the main body's flesh, crying out shrilly. Much of these creatures were absorbed back into the king of evil's main body.

With the king of keys' support, the kings were much more likely to succeed. At the very least, there would be yet another combatant on the level of a superior king working with them.

Next, they would have to make their own arrangements.

The solar king pledged, "I'll take responsibility for one of the newly evolved superior worlds."

The ice queen followed suit. "I'll take the other."

A human face appeared in the black fog, opening its mouth and stating, "I'll send out a clone to deal with the Zongming world."

The king of evil likewise sent out a mental transmission claiming he would dispatch a clone to deal with the world of black rain.

The four superior kings seemed to be planning to divide up their spoils, rather than going against the Zongming world.

The solar king reminded them, "Don't forget that Zhang Lie will still be a problem."

The four superior kings all glanced at each other seriously.

He was someone who had participated in killing the death spirit king. Although the fight had largely been orchestrated by the king of chaos' clone, the fact that he could take part in such a battle implied that he was at least their equal in strength.

The king of keys swung his short, loli-like legs with a smile. "How about I have someone take care of him?"

Upon hearing that the king of keys was volunteering for such a task, the four kings were delighted.

The solar king cried out in surprise, "If the king of keys is willing to strike, we'll surely succeed!"

The ice queen nodded. "This is certainly the best scenario."

After they had a short discussion about the details of the plan, the four superior kings each prepared for the invasion individually.

The king of keys and king of chaos stayed behind. The king of keys asked, "Is something the matter?"

The king of chaos countered, "Is it fun?"

This time, rather than a mental transmission, the king of chaos used his own voice. The voice sounded like the deepest whispers from the abyss, like a combination of chaos and darkness. The tone alone would be able to drive any ordinary person mad—even a superior king.

"I think it's interesting," the king of keys replied.

The king of chaos sounded disappointed. "You're straying from your path."

Chapter 1047: The King of Chaos' Visit

The king of keys asked, "Are you unhappy?"

The king of chaos shook his head. "You should know what I'm talking about."

The king of keys asked, "Aren't you tempted?"

The king of chaos replied, "Do you think I should be?"

The king of keys shook his head. "If you did, you wouldn't be that strongest king we all admire."

"You've gone down the wrong path."

The king of keys frowned. "What's wrong with it? Doesn't it make me more like an ordinary lifeform, greedy as can be?"

"And yet you aren't a lifeform."

The king of keys countered, "What is a lifeform, then?"

The king of chaos replied, "You were planning this from the very beginning, when you accepted the bet."

The king of keys shook his head. "The Zongming world did very well, and I'm simply going with the flow."

The king of chaos replied, "You gave a great deal of superior world's energy to the Zongming king in order to stoke the flames of this feud. All the parties participating in it will suffer some degree of loss—and when you betray them all at the very end, you'll be the overall winner of this conflict."

The king of keys smiled. "I have to thank you for your help. You allowed Zhang Lie to claim such a precious treasure—you must have been anticipating something like this too, surely."

The king of chaos replied, "I'm not as twisted as you are."

The king of keys laughed. "You're the one who distorted the three thousand worlds in the first place. Who do you think it was that shattered these worlds? And you claim not to be twisted—ha!"

The king of chaos was unruffled. "I'm just being myself. That's how I was in the past, and how I'll be in the future."

As I stated in the meeting, this is a present for Zhang Lie. I certainly take responsibility for the state of the three thousand worlds—but so what?"

It was hardly a crime to shatter the worlds—or rather, no one would dare to call the king of chaos out on it.

"You never cared for the treasure these other idiots are bickering with each other for like clowns. You're playing the long game."

The king of chaos cleanly distinguished the king of keys from the other superior kings.

The king of keys smirked. "You understand me very well, king of chaos. What do I care for, then?"

The king of chaos hypothesized, "Pretending to be greedy in an attempt to seize everything, just like what you think a living being should be like. Is it interesting?"

The image of the lolified king of keys slowly crumbled away, leaving behind an innocent, artless smile. "I want to become a real living being, and this is the first step toward it."

"But you aren't a living being."

The king of keys asked, "How can you be so certain?"

"Because I'm standing within the door."

"But you're not me!"

"I'm ahead of you."

"But you're not me!"

The king of chaos shook his head in exasperation. "You shouldn't be developing such strong feelings toward emulating life."

Indeed, emulating life to a certain extent will help you push past the doorframe, but to truly walk within, you'll have to grow out of, rather than fall deeper into, this ill-conceived notion."

If Zhang Lie were here, he would understand the king of chaos' words immediately. Emulation could only get the king of keys so far—in the end, he would have to manifest the root of his being in order to grow further.

The king of keys replied seriously, "You might be right, but I may not be wrong."

The king of chaos seemed to understand the king of keys' thoughts.

"You're still emulating living beings—their envy, their suspicions."

The king of keys countered, "Why don't you think that these are my true thoughts?"

The king of chaos sighed. "Because you're pretending to be a living being, you think that I'm trying to make it hard for others to catch up to me, but you're mistaken. It's boring being alone at the top, and I'd love to see someone else make it here. Unfortunately, I'm already beyond what this realm can support, beyond what you're chasing after. My life is simply too difficult..."

The king of keys replied seriously, "I'll continue taking steps forward. Sooner or later, I'll catch up to you."

The king of chaos replied, "It's rare that such interesting life has spawned. Don't get too cocky and lose to them."

The king of keys laughed. "What can they do?"

They were nothing but a group of lower-class lifeforms. Could they compare to his might? The king of keys laughed. Even if he were to handicap himself, he couldn't conceive of anyone but the king of chaos defeating him.

The king of chaos shook his head. "You seem to be neglecting one particular person."

"Who?"

"Zhang Lie!"

"You really like that lad, don't you?"

"You'll see why..."

"I'm looking forward to it."

The projection of the lolified king of keys shattered into starlight, and he vanished through a dimensional portal.

The king of chaos sighed. His own projection split down the middle like parchment being torn, leaving nothing behind in this special world.

Back in the dimensional wormhole leading back to the Zongming world, Zhang Lie gave Li Zongming a thumbs up. "Excellent work. Your departure was very strong."

Li Zongming sighed. "It was exhilarating in the heat of the moment, but I'm worried those superior kings won't give up."

Zhang Lie shrugged. "We can deal with whatever tricks they try to pull against us. There's no need to worry."

Li Zongming tossed the crystal of the world's energy to Zhang Lie.

Zhang Lie widened his eyes. The crystal was something that even the superior kings of antiquity eyed greedily, and Zhang Lie hastily caught it. "What are you doing?"

"This is for you."

"What?!"

Li Zongming replied, "You were the one who killed the death spirit king. By right, it should belong to you."

Zhang Lie didn't accept the gift immediately. "This is a priceless treasure to you, and it might well allow you and the Zongming world to grow much stronger."

Li Zongming smiled. "I already obtained a lot during that meeting."

Zhang Lie, for once, was at a loss for words. Ultimately, he accepted the treasure.

Potion #5, for disaster limit fragments, would need large quantities of a superior world's energy. Zhang Lie thought that it would take him quite some time to gather enough, but here it was.

This radiant gemstone possessed ten portions of world's energy beyond that of a superior world. If it were used as an ingredient, how strong would the resulting Potions #5 be?

As the two of them emerged from the dimensional wormhole, Li Zongming's face suddenly changed.

He could sense a particularly strong aura coming from within the Zongming world, one on the level of a superior king. Even more astoundingly, it came from his palace.

Zhang Lie's expression likewise changed—though unlike Li Zongming's befuddlement, his was more of surprise. He knew just whose aura this was.

Li Zongming's face turned serious. "Let's go have a look."

Within Li Zongming's palace was a gorgeous beauty wearing a long black dress, with golden-blond hair, red eyes, and a fan covering the rest of her face. She was enjoying Li Zongming's tea.

The girl raised her head. "You guys arrived later than I expected. I had a few cups of tea by now."

Li Zongming was very surprised upon seeing the young woman, whereas Zhang Lie seemed to have expected her.

Li Zongming asked, "King of chaos, haven't we just seen each other? May I ask why you've come?"

Chapter 1048: Preparing for Another War

The young woman in a black dress was none other than a clone of the king of chaos.

"You couldn't have forgotten something, could you?" Li Zongming asked.

Zhang Lie replied, "I don't think the king of chaos could have left anything behind in the Zongming world..."

Li Zongming's face was alert, as though he were facing a deadly enemy. He had gained quite a few treasures during the meeting just now.

The young woman smiled. "Relax, I'm not here to snatch your treasures. I promised them to you, and I intend to keep my promises—and it's not as though I have a shortage of superior world's energy myself."

Li Zongming asked again, "Your Majesty, could you clarify why you've come?"

The young woman shrugged. "What's wrong about my being here? There aren't any combatants with the strength of a superior king around, only a beast at that level.

As long as I don't make a big fuss and sneak in, it's easy for me to go undetected."

Zhang Lie's face sank. Indeed, Gold Comet wouldn't be enough protection against any enemies. If the young woman in black had intended to do anything bad—to attack Li Qianlin, for instance—Gold Comet wouldn't have noticed.

The young woman clearly noticed what Zhang Lie was thinking. "Don't worry. The beast isn't weak—I'm just much stronger. I wasn't the one who called myself the strongest king, it was the rest of them who did."

Indeed, it couldn't be helped.

"None of the other superior kings could easily sneak in, and neither would they be able to accomplish anything much in the meantime. Even I have to be cautious not to get too close to that beast. To be honest, even despite my experience, I've never seen a beast with the strength of a superior king. That beast's intuition is particularly strong, and I was almost spotted myself. Are you selling it?"

Despite being a clone of the king of chaos, it felt like each clone was an independent entity, with its own personality and behavior.

"I'm afraid not."

"What a pity," the young woman in black sighed.

Li Zongming's brows furrowed deeper. "King of chaos, please don't avoid my questions. Why have you come? It's surely not to consume my tea, is it?"

The young woman pointed at her head. "I don't mean to obfuscate my intent. It's just that there's an ongoing meeting I'm part of whose outcome could affect this discussion."

Zhang Lie was flabbergasted. "A meeting among the clones?"

The young woman in black turned to him. "Why would you think we clones need to have meetings?"

Zhang Lie spread his arms. "If not among yourselves, then whom is it with?"

The young woman rolled her eyes. "I'm speaking of the superior kings' meeting."

Li Zongming frowned. "Are you joking?"

Zhang Lie replied, "We just came back from the meeting."

The young woman shrugged. "The meeting kept going without you."

Li Zongming and Zhang Lie weren't surprised; they seemed to have guessed that it would happen.

"So we've been ostracized?"

The young woman clarified, "In fact, the meeting has much to do with the two of you."

Li Zongming chuckled coldly. "It looks like you don't come bearing good intentions, then."

The young woman raised her hands. "Please, I'm not part of 'you'. I intend to remain neutral, or I wouldn't have shown up here."

Li Zongming frowned. "Do you have something to tell us, king of chaos?"

The young woman nodded. "I came here to inform you of the proceedings of the meeting so you aren't caught unawares. The solar king, the ice queen, the king of black fog, and the king of evil intend on invading your world."

"An invasion!"

"That's right. This invasion will target not just the Zongming world, but also the other two newly evolved superior worlds under your jurisdiction."

Li Zongming and Zhang Lie were expressionless.

The young woman frowned. "You don't believe me?"

Li Zongming shook his head. "Of course I believe you, Your Majesty. Zhang Lie and I have been prepared for this since the beginning, and we're not surprised that they'll make a move. I'm simply curious as to your presence here—why help us?"

The young woman shrugged. "I don't like what they're doing."

"Thank you for the warning, king of chaos."

Zhang Lie asked curiously, "Who was so unlucky as to rouse your ire, Your Majesty?"

"The meddler."

"Who...?"

"You've seen him before."

The young woman smiled mysteriously.

Zhang Lie sighed. "Your Majesty, perhaps I'm slow, but I can't guess who you're talking about."

"The mastermind. You'll see soon enough."

Zhang Lie pursed his lips. Would it kill the king of chaos to be less mysterious?

"Zhang Lie, I'm very interested in you. Don't die—come over to the world of primordial chaos at any time. I'll welcome you."

The young woman smiled and turned around. If not for the fact that Zhang Lie had seen this clone's true form, he really might have thought of her as a young woman.

Zhang Lie rejected the offer. "Thank you, Your Majesty, but I'm doing well enough."

"I knew you'd say that. Well, I'll be off now. See you." The young woman waved a hand and left. Neither Zhang Lie nor Li Zongming stopped—or rather, dared to stop—the king of chaos' clone. Even the king of chaos' clones were stronger than ordinary superior kings.

Li Zongming turned to Zhang Lie. "What do you think of the situation?"

Zhang Lie replied, "We obtained quite a lot of treasures recently, and it's only natural that the other superior kings would be envious of our spoils. Since they're about to invade us, we have to prepare ourselves."

"How?" Li Zongming asked.

Zhang Lie thought about the situation. "We need to summon the two other new superior kings and have a discussion among us all."

Li Zongming agreed. "Very well. I'll leave this to you, then—you have deep connections to both worlds.

I intend to send you to both worlds as the envoy of the Zongming world to invite their kings over here to discuss how to resolve the situation."

Zhang Lie asked, "And what about you?"

Li Zongming sighed. "I'll be preparing to infuse the seven superior worlds' worth of energy into the Zongming world."

Zhang Lie frowned. "Are you just throwing me all the work, then?"

Li Zongming asked, "Is that a problem? You know these worlds far better than I do, and you certainly don't want to see them destroyed."

Zhang Lie sighed. "They really aren't giving us any time to relax, are they?"

Zhang Lie felt like he hadn't had a chance to rest in ages.

Li Zongming patted him. "The strong always have plenty of work on their plate."

Zhang Lie added, "Since you're preparing for war, you might as well help me with one thing."

"What thing?" Li Zongming asked.

Chapter 1049: Energy Reserves

Zhang Lie explained, "I brought back the death spirits' battleships from the war, and they're in the superior draconian world right now."

Li Zongming's eyes widened. "Something good, then?"

Zhang Lie nodded. "Extremely powerful artifacts, a dozen or so generations ahead of what the three thousand worlds should have been able to come up with. Even ten thousand years might not be enough."

Zhang Lie couldn't help but be impressed with the death spirit king again for the technological marvel that his battleships were.

The death spirit king was ruinously ambitious, it was true—but he was also an unparalleled genius, who had devised incredibly powerful weaponry even in this technologically locked realm.

The death spirit king had prematurely tried to devour the three thousand worlds. If he had focused on developing his weaponry, he would easily be able to surpass the other superior worlds.

"Each of those battleships had the fighting ability of a superior king, and the strongest even went beyond that."

Li Zongming's eyes widened. "Why didn't you bring such treasures here?"

The combat ability of a superior king... if Li Zongming had access to such technology, the Zongming world wouldn't have to fear any invasion.

Zhang Lie shrugged. "It is a treasure, but an incomplete one. None of the battleships survived intact.

Li Zongming understood immediately. "That was the only way you could get them back under the eyes of the other forces, wasn't it?"

Zhang Lie sighed. "The draconian world ascended first into a large world, then a superior one, in a few years. It doesn't have the resources or reserves to do anything with the battleships—no skilled researchers of any sort."

Li Zongming gave him a thumbs up. "You managed to accomplish all that in a few years? It took us dozens of generations!"

Zhang Lie laughed. "That's why I'd like to borrow some of your skilled researchers."

Li Zongming frowned. "Will the research be ready for the upcoming invasion?"

Zhang Lie sighed, shaking his head. "It'll be very difficult."

Li Zongming suggested, "I can loan you the people, but you'll have to conduct the research in the Zongming world."

"I'm afraid that's not possible." Zhang Lie shook his head.

Li Zongming cried out, "I've even given you my daughter! I don't want the spoils of war—I just want to be able to witness the research myself."

Zhang Lie sighed. "It wouldn't have been a problem for me to just give you a few ruined battleships, but something happened that makes me believe that performing the research in the draconian world will be best."

Li Zongming frowned. "And just what might that be, to make the draconian world a superior option?"

The draconian world was a newly evolved superior world, one that had jumped from a medium-sized world to a superior one in just a few years. The resources it had were roughly equivalent to those of a large world.

On the other hand, the Zongming world had been a peak large world before its ascension. It couldn't compare to the superior worlds of antiquity, but it certainly was a respectable superior world in its own right.

Li Zongming asked, "How can the draconian world be a better place for research than the Zongming world?"

Li Zongming certainly couldn't think of a reason why. The draconian world was inferior in terms of resources and reserves—how could the Zongming world not compare favorably in all respects?

The Zongming world was worse than the superior worlds of antiquity, it was true—but to the newly evolved draconian world? When had the Zongming world fallen so far behind?

Zhang Lie spread his arms. "The Zongming world is better in almost every respect, but the draconian world has some resources the Zongming world does not."

Li Zongming asked, "What resources?"

"Energy!" Zhang Lie handed Li Zongming a chunk of black metal.

Li Zongming initially thought the metal wholly unremarkable, but he quickly found something unusual about it.

The black metal possessed an inordinate amount of energy that resulted from mixing what seemed like a random, eclectic mix of elements together. If it were to explode, it would release a huge quantity of energy.

Zhang Lie replied, "The most crucial aspect of the death spirits' battleships is their energy source. We're unable to replicate what the death spirits used, so we found an appropriate substitute."

Li Zongming frowned. "Are you joking with me?"

"It looks like you don't believe me..."

Li Zongming sighed. "Who would be willing to believe that a newly evolved superior world could produce such a ridiculous resource? If others were to find out about this, those greedy superior worlds of antiquity will surely strike, as will the medium-sized and large worlds all around the superior draconian world."

In some sense, the black metal was worth more than a superior world's energy.

Zhang Lie shrugged. "I was very shocked to hear about this news. The appearance of the black metal is an accident, one that's not reproducible."

Li Zongming frowned. "You intend on developing this black metal as a source of fuel for the death spirits' battleships?"

"Indeed."

Li Zongming finally understood. "That's why you believe it would be more appropriate to perform the research on the draconian world."

Zhang Lie asked, "Do you disagree?"

Li Zongming shook his head. "No, it's a rational idea, but you have to be aware of how important the researchers you're asking for are to me. It won't be possible for me to provide them to the draconian world directly."

Zhang Lie frowned. "Not even if we share the benefits?"

Li Zongming rolled his eyes. "I'm not working with you alone."

Zhang Lie understood what he was getting at. "You don't trust the superior king of the draconian world, the draconian sage?"

Li Zongming nodded. "I trust you, but not to the extent that I would blindly make such an important decision."

Zhang Lie replied, "Would you be willing to have a meeting with the draconian sage, then?"

Li Zongming waved his hand. "I won't be able to trust them fully after just a single meeting. You know how long it usually takes worlds to build up trust, don't you? It's very difficult for kings of the realm to trust each other, because they have to put their worlds first. If I provide these specialists and the other party refuses to share the research with me, or shares flawed or incomplete research instead, what will I do?"

Trust was built up on mutual cooperation. Li Zongming wouldn't trust a superior king he had never met, even with Zhang Lie's guarantee. If his trust were misplaced, he wasn't the only one who would suffer—the millions of lifeforms in the Zongming world all would. He would be willing to work directly with Zhang Lie, but he had to be much more careful about working with other superior kings.

Chapter 1050: A Planned Surprise

Li Zongming continued, "You mentioned that the draconian world started out as a medium-sized world a few years ago, didn't you?"

Zhang Lie asked, "Do you have a proposal?"

Li Zongming replied, "Let's perform a transaction."

"Tell me more."

The draconian world was tethered to the human race, and Zhang Lie was rather invested in it.

Li Zongming explained, "Since the draconian world doesn't have any reserves or manpower, I'll provide it to the draconian world."

Zhang Lie asked, "And what will the draconian world provide?"

Li Zongming replied, "The Zongming world's manpower will help the draconian world cultivate their own manpower. The draconian world will provide a fraction of the death spirits' battleships and the black metal to power them."

Zhang Lie nodded. "I can't make this decision myself. I'll have to discuss it with the draconian sage."

Li Zongming shrugged. "At any rate, you'll have to bring the death spirits' battleships over, or I won't know what sort of manpower you need."

Zhang Lie returned to the draconian world. The moment he appeared, the draconian sage sensed him and teleported to his side. "How did the meeting go?"

"I have two pieces of information, one good and one bad. Which would you like to hear first?"

The draconian sage sighed. "This is an old saying. Can't you change it up?"

Zhang Lie picked for the draconian sage. "The good news is that we received a lot of spoils during the superior kings' meeting."

The draconian sage smiled. "What spoils? Just what happened during the meeting? I'm very curious."

"Listen to the bad news first."

"Very well."

Zhang Lie continued, "The bad news is that the superior kings of antiquity are going to be invading us shortly."

The draconian sage looked as though he had suddenly petrified. After a momentary shock, he cursed. His curiosity about the proceedings of the meeting vanished entirely. He asked, "What's going on?"

Zhang Lie certainly wasn't going to inform him that it was precisely their lavish spoils that had provoked retaliation from the other kings.

After all, the draconian world, Zongming world, and scaleman world had to swiftly form an alliance against the other superior kings

If the draconian sage and scaleman king were to find out about the cause of the war, the alliance would fracture even before it was formed. This wouldn't be beneficial for the upcoming war.

"The superior worlds of antiquity were eyeing the two newly evolved superior worlds. The Zongming world, as a new superior world itself, was unable to protect the draconian world and the scaleman world during the meeting. For that, the Zongming king expresses his deepest apologies."

Although the Zongming world's rewards were what sparked the conflict, the underlying reason was that the superior kings of antiquity looked down on these young upstarts.

The draconian sage asked, "What is the Zongming king planning?"

Zhang Lie replied, "His intention, and mine, is to have a discussion with all three superior kings."

"Where?" the draconian sage asked.

He was well aware of how malicious the superior worlds of antiquity were, thanks to Zhang Lie's recounting of events. The moment he heard that they were approaching, he readied himself to fight back.

Even if he were to surrender, the superior worlds of antiquity would likely still destroy his world to seize the superior world's energy it contained. That had been their perennial goal, after all.

"The meeting will be held in the Zongming world."

The draconian sage nodded. "Very well. I will participate."

"Furthermore," Zhang Lie continued, "the Zongming king is interested in a trade."

"A trade?"

"Regarding the black metal and the death spirits' battleships."

"You told the Zongming king about this?" the draconian sage asked.

Zhang Lie nodded. "I did. The Zongming king will send his men over to help with the research—and help the draconian world cultivate such manpower of its own. In exchange, he would like the draconian world to provide a certain quantity of black metal, as well as a portion of the death spirits' battleships for his own research."

The draconian sage suggested, "I'll leave you to make the decision on your own. You were the one who brought the death spirits' battleships back, after all, and you discovered the black metal as well."

Zhang Lie replied, "But the black metal is ultimately a resource that belongs to the draconian world. How much of the black metal are you willing to provide?"

The draconian sage shook his head. "I don't know enough to say. I'll discuss and negotiate with the Zongming king when the time comes."

The draconian sage wasn't particularly worried about the upcoming invasion.

For one, Zhang Lie and the members of Team Zenith were around. They would be able to take down even the strongest of foes, even if those foes were the superior worlds of antiquity.

After the chat with the draconian sage, Zhang Lie headed straight for Team Zenith.

The first person he saw was Yang Ze. He shouted, "Yang Ze, call everyone from Team Zenith over!"

"What's the matter, Captain?"

"It's finally your time to shine."

Yang Ze quickly gathered everyone—along with Hong Xi and Zhang Hanxiang, who showed up as uninvited guests. Zhang Lie grumbled at their presence. "What are all of you doing here?"

Zhang Hanxiang replied excitedly, "Brother, there must be something up if you're gathering the members of Team Zenith. Of course I'd come and have a look!"

Zhang Hanxiang's strength had grown tremendously after consuming Potion #4, and she was hoping to have a chance to test out just how strong she was for herself.

Zhang Lie shook his head. "It's nothing major. The superior worlds of antiquity are launching an invasion against us."

The members of Team Zenith, Hong Xi, and Zhang Hanxiang exclaimed in surprise. "You call that 'nothing major'?" If that wasn't major, what was?

"The reason I had all of you stay behind during the war against the death spirits is because I was waiting for this opportunity to give the superior worlds of antiquity a big surprise.

The members of Team Zenith were very excited to have an opportunity to demonstrate their strength, one that they had been waiting for for far too long.

Sun Mengmeng replied, "We'll do as you command, Captain!"

"There's nothing much for the moment. We'll wait until the draconian sage and the other superior king head to the Zongming world, discuss our plans for the invasion, and then decide on what you'll do accordingly.

"I came to inform you to get ready for the upcoming invasion."

The members of Team Zenith nodded seriously. This was their first time facing off against a superior world, and they had to be careful.

"All of you will follow the draconian sage to the Zongming world. I need to head to the scaleman world."

After bidding farewell to the members of Team Zenith, Zhang Lie left the draconian world and returned to the Zongming world once more...