

U. Warlord 1101

Chapter 1101: The Key Retaliation

Everyone clapped.

"All of you are heroes for participating in this defense against the superior worlds of antiquity! Without your assistance, we wouldn't be victorious now." Zhang Lie continued, "Next, we'll distribute the spoils of war—two superior worlds, and the energy from two other superior worlds."

The draconian sage called out, "To be frank, you all took down the four superior worlds. We shouldn't get any credit for this."

Li Zongming nodded. "After all, all we did was defend."

Sun Mengmeng acknowledged their concerns. "We've discussed matters to some extent. Our captain will deal with it."

Sun Xiaowu shrugged. "A superior world's energy doesn't help us, after all."

Zhang Lie suggested, "Let's split up the four worlds' superior energy into forty portions, one for each person, then. My team represents nine people."

The draconian sage and Li Zongming will each get two portions of energy, and I'll use the rest to feed my genetic lifeforms. Is that acceptable to everyone?"

Sun Mengmeng spoke for the members of Team Zenith. "Yes, Captain!"

The draconian sage and Li Zongming also nodded.

After Zhang Lie distributed the superior world's energy, he continued, "Next, we have to consider another problem—the meddling of the king of keys."

Since the king of keys interfered with our war against the four superior worlds, he'll have to pay a commensurate price. We can't let go of any superior king of antiquity, and we can't ignore the fact that the king of keys' subordinate kidnapped Gold Comet."

Sun Mengmeng nodded. "We'll do as you say, Captain!"

The others agreed.

Li Zongming added, "As I said, I'll support you."

The draconian sage shrugged. "I'd like to say I'll support you too, but I doubt I'll be able to do anything."

After all, Zhang Lie and the others had long since grown stronger than the draconian sage, and the draconian sage was hardly able to take part in the battle against superior kings, let alone this time, when their opponent was the most ancient king.

"Of course, I'll do everything I can," the draconian sage pledged.

Li Zongming said, "The problem is, we don't have any idea where the king of keys is located."

Hong Xi asked, "Can't we pinpoint the king of keys' location using the same strategy as last time?"

Li Zongming replied, "I know where the king of keys' jurisdiction is."

"Let's set off, then!"

Zhang Lie immediately set off with the members of Team Zenith. However, when they got to that location, they found themselves flummoxed.

Li Zongming had led them to the king of keys' supposed jurisdiction, but there wasn't even a single world there—only the void of space.

Sun Xiaowu suggested with a frown, "Could the king of keys have heard of our plan and run off with his various worlds in tow?"

Yang Ze also frowned then. "Surely the most ancient superior king wouldn't fear us?"

Li Feng replied, "Is that really so unusual? After all, we've already destroyed four superior worlds of antiquity. I think it's normal for the king of keys to be fearful."

Zhou Ying asked, "How would the king of keys have learned about that?"

Sun Xiaowu replied, "Didn't the king of keys send someone over?"

Yang Ze asked, "Are you sure the king of keys' subordinate told him about it?"

Li Feng asked, "How else?"

Sun Xiaowu added, "According to the Zongming king, the king of keys' subordinate saw the king of black fog's avatar being vanquished before he ran off."

Yang Ze refused to budge. "But how could the king of keys' subordinate be certain? Remember how proud and arrogant these superior worlds are."

Li Feng mulled things over. "Proud and arrogant in their invincibility, so—"

Sun Mengmeng interrupted them. "Hold it! We're all going off-topic. Shouldn't the most important question right now be whether these worlds can be moved at will at all?"

Zhang Lie hummed thoughtfully. "So where could these worlds be now?"

The members of Team Zenith were all silent.

Zhang Lie frowned. "The most ancient king is truly strong to be able to stump us from the very beginning."

Sun Mengmeng asked, "What do we do now, Captain? We can't even find our opponent!"

Zhang Lie nodded seriously. "Now I'm even more certain that we have to destroy the king of keys."

An opponent they couldn't find was very dangerous. This meant that the king of keys could attack them at any time, but not the other way around.

Zhang Lie said, "Perhaps no one in the third realm knows where the king of keys is—save one person, an omniscient existence in the third realm."

"Who?" Sun Mengmeng asked.

"The king of chaos!"

The space before them split into twenty-four segments.

"As expected, Zhang Lie, you found me." The layers of space split apart, revealing a man in a white lab coat.

Zhang Hanxiang recognized him instantly. "One of the king of chaos's clones!"

Zhang Lie frowned. "So you were following us."

Nightdemon smiled gently. "I've always been very interested in all of you—even more so now that you're waging war against the superior worlds of antiquity. You've freed up quite a lot of my clones from their surveillance duties, so now they're following you around."

Zhang Lie rolled his eyes. "What purposes do they serve beyond snooping around?"

Nightdemon shook his head. "They're not snooping, just gathering information about the realm. I can hardly operate without any knowledge, can I?"

Zhang Lie had no interest in chatting with Nightdemon.

"I need to know the king of keys' present location."

Nightdemon looked up at the sky. "The king of keys is rather difficult to find. He's a very interesting existence, you see, having swallowed up countless worlds of various sizes. All the worlds in his jurisdiction are now floating around in his body. He wanders around the third realm with them in tow."

Zhang Lie frowned. "So he's very much like the death spirit king, isn't he? Why didn't all of you punish him for the same reason?"

Nightdemon shrugged. "There are plenty of reasons. First, the king of keys' personality is far less malevolent than that of the death spirit king. Second, the king of keys' physical body is very difficult to deal with. Third, the king of keys was one of the original founders of the superior kings' meetings."

Zhang Lie was unconvinced. "So it boils down to him being stronger."

Nightdemon laughed. "Perhaps to other kings, but not to me."

Chapter 1102: Night Banquet's Invitation

Zhang Lie asked, "Then, king of chaos, I'd like to ask why you personally didn't get rid of the king of keys."

Nightdemon's voice was tinged with regret. "Because the king of keys is an interesting existence, and I was very curious how far he could go, but unfortunately, it seems as though he's straying from the path."

Zhang Lie frowned. He still didn't understand the king of chaos' perspective and thoughts.

Nightdemon continued, "Of course, the death spirit king is also very interesting, but not half as much as the king of keys. Furthermore, the death spirit king's path has an end. You saw how he turned out too, didn't you?"

The death spirit king had sucked up so much world's energy that his body was on the verge of giving out, and he had ended up having to transform into a new death spirit king.

Nightdemon shrugged. "The death spirit king's path would only have made him a powerful madman, so I didn't object to the other kings' plans of dealing with him."

Zhang Lie nodded. "To even entertain the notion of devouring the three thousand worlds is mad indeed."

Nightdemon agreed. "He was a madman from the beginning, and he became even more crazed by the end. From the start, he chose an inappropriate path."

Zhang Lie asked, "You didn't appear just to reminisce about the past, did you?"

Nightdemon asked, "Aren't you trying to find me?"

Zhang Lie shrugged. "As the strongest king of the third realm, the king of chaos, I'm sure I wouldn't be able to find you if you wanted to hide from me. If you've chosen to speak with me, there must be a reason for it."

Nightdemon laughed. "Oh, it looks like I've lost the advantage, then. I should have remained hidden while you tried to search for me."

Zhang Lie emphasized, "Regardless of what you want from me, I need to know the king of keys' location."

Nightdemon reiterated, "As I mentioned, the king of keys will be very difficult to get to. He swallowed up all the worlds he has jurisdiction over, and he wanders the three thousand worlds without a definite location."

"But you know where he is."

Nightdemon rolled his eyes. "And why would you think that?"

"Because you're the king of chaos! Whether or not you're the strongest of the superior kings remains to be seen, but you're surely the one who snoops on people the most. Otherwise, you wouldn't have so many clones."

"People-watching is my hobby, yes. That said, given your tone, it's as if you're doubting my title as the strongest king in the third realm."

Zhang Lie spread his arms. "Don't mind the details. Tell us where the king of keys is!"

Nightdemon nodded. "I do know where he is, but why should I tell you?"

"Why else did you show yourself?"

Nightdemon sighed. "Alright. The king of keys is straying from his path, and his newfound humanity is weighing him down. This isn't a path he should walk down, and I don't want him to go astray."

Zhang Lie asked, "So you want me to get rid of the king of keys?"

Yang Ze frowned. "To find someone to get rid of the king of keys just because he's not doing what you think is best..."

Yang Ze's thoughts made Zhang Lie ask, "Does that mean that, if I don't develop according to your whims, you'll find someone to get rid of me too?"

Was that why the king of chaos was considered the strongest king, because everyone else who would go against him had been destroyed?

Nightdemon shook his head. "No, I won't. I don't expect I'll be remaining in this realm for much longer."

Zhang Lie frowned. "What do you mean?"

Nightdemon replied, "Back to our previous topic of conversation. I do know where the king of keys is located, but why should I tell you?"

Zhang Lie clarified, "You can tell me where he is, but you need a reason for doing so?"

Yang Ze said, "Didn't you just propose a reason for yourself?"

Sun Xiaowu nudged Yang Ze. "He wants some benefits."

Sun Mengmeng asked, "We just stripped four superior worlds of their energy. Did you want a share of it?"

Nightdemon tossed a glowing orb of light, filled with concentrated superior world's energy, at the members of Team Zenith. They were shocked to discover that it contained ten superior worlds' worth of energy.

"Here, a small gift for you all."

Nightdemon's attitude was clear: he had no interest in whatever paltry amount of superior world's energy Zhang Lie had collected.

To others, that superior world's energy might be a rare treasure, but to the king of chaos, it was more or less meaningless.

Zhang Lie frowned. "I don't know what I possess that might interest you, king of chaos."

The members of Team Zenith were likewise flummoxed.

Nightdemon handed Zhang Lie a black card.

Zhang Lie took the card, on which some text with a unique script was written. He didn't know what it meant, but the moment he picked up the card, a stream of chaotic information rushed into his head.

Zhang Lie couldn't help but frown. If he were an ordinary lifeform who wasn't yet at the level of a superior king, his brain would have collapsed under the bombardment of information, turning him into a madman. The sensation of this data filling his brain was somehow familiar, as though he had encountered it before.

Zhang Lie recalled that the sensation felt very much like when he had encountered the king of chaos for the first time, during the superior kings' meeting. The band that seemed to play madness-inducing music around the king of chaos had a similar signature to this calling card.

That music was so disturbing that even a stone in the vicinity would grow feelers—and anyone who wasn't as strong as a superior king and held this card would likewise turn into a night growler.

Zhang Lie was very confused as to just what Nightdemon wanted. If it was to launch a sneak attack on Zhang Lie, this mental attack would be far from sufficient.

Before Zhang Lie could voice his concerns, the chaotic message in his mind resolved into five words: "Invitation to a Night Banquet".

Nightdemon bowed. "Every once in a while, I organize a banquet among the more interesting existences within the third realm. I hope you'll participate. The last few times, I invited the king of keys and his family, as well as a few interesting colleagues within his body. This time..."

Zhang Lie held up the card. "You want to invite me?"

Nightdemon shook his head slightly. "No, I want to invite all of you."

The members of Team Zenith cried out, "All of us?"

Nightdemon nodded. "That's right, all of you. I've already prepared an invitation for each of you."

Chapter 1103: The Winner May Attend

Nightdemon handed everyone an invitation to the night banquet, even Hong Xi and Zhang Hanxiang.

Zhang Lie grinned. "This is a very interesting invitation."

The invitation itself was imbued with some of the king of chaos' unique nature. Those who tried to pick it up without commensurate strength would transform into a night growler.

Losing the invitation and having it fall into someone else's hands could be a disaster, and those who somehow picked it up unwittingly would find themselves trapped.

The members of Team Zenith weren't as strong as Zhang Lie, but they managed to survive reading the invitation with merely a furrow of their brows, though they were rather surprised by the sudden attack.

Hong Xi and Zhang Hanxiang clutched their heads in pain as they stumbled, but they were strong enough not to succumb to the madness and grow tentacles.

The members of Team Zenith were each beyond the level of a superior king, and Hong Xi and Zhang Hanxiang also possessed strength of a similar level, but the king of chaos was an existence far beyond that of an ordinary superior king. Even if superior kings were able to resist the mental assault, it would take some time for them to do so—let alone when they were unprepared.

Zhang Hanxiang grumbled, "Why didn't you warn us, Brother?"

Zhang Lie laughed. "As I said, it's a very interesting invitation."

Zhang Hanxiang scowled. This "interesting" was just a trap!

Zhang Lie commented, "This invitation isn't bad. It's imbued with some of the king of chaos' very nature, and can be used to train mental resilience."

Hong Xi asked, "Does the king of chaos truly intend to invite all of us?"

Nightdemon corrected, "More accurately, all of you who have defeated the king of keys."

Zhang Lie frowned. "Are you intending on rearing gu, king of chaos?" [1]

Yang Ze clarified, "If we win, we'll be able to participate in the Night Banquet. Otherwise, if the king of keys wins, his side will participate. Is this banquet meant to be a prize ceremony of some sort?"

Nightdemon smiled. "Well, you'll find out if you attend, won't you?"

Li Feng glanced at his invitation, a scrambled, chaotic message. "Is this a banquet for victors, or for the strong?"

Nightdemon replied, "If you win, then you'll have proven yourself strong. If the king of keys is still alive by the time the banquet occurs, it'll prove that his path is viable and that he has the right to attend."

So this was a banquet for the strong, then?

Nightdemon continued, "You can choose not to attend, of course. I leave that choice up to you. If you don't attend, I won't divulge the king of keys' current location."

Yang Ze suddenly thought of a question. "And if we kill the king of keys and refuse to attend?"

If they were to make use of the king of chaos' information to kill the king of keys, and then not attend the banquet... was there anything forcing them to do so?

Nightdemon replied, "In that case, I would be quite upset."

"We'll attend," Zhang Lie promised, causing everyone from Team Zenith to look askance at him.

Sun Mengmeng whispered, "Captain, we don't know what the king of chaos is planning. If it's an ambush..."

Zhang Lie replied, "If it were an ambush, I'd be quite disappointed."

Zhang Lie had seen the king of chaos' main body only twice to date, and he had worked closely with Nightdemon during the war against the death spirits. He couldn't claim to be very familiar with the king of chaos, but they had reached a mutual understanding. Nightdemon and the king of chaos wouldn't do something so boorish.

Furthermore, Zhang Lie didn't think he possessed anything the king of chaos would be interested in.

Nightdemon grinned. "Don't worry. You won't be disappointed if you do come to the world of primordial chaos."

Zhang Lie asked, "Can you tell me where the king of keys is located now?"

"Shouldn't you be asking me where the world of primordial chaos is, instead?"

Zhang Lie retorted, "Aren't you only interested in the victor?"

Nightdemon replied, "I'm hopeful that you'll become the eventual victor, myself, and my main body is fond of you too."

Zhang Lie replied, "You make it sound as though you're two separate entities."

"We are, and we aren't. If I die, my main body won't die. Don't you think we are independent, to some extent?"

"Biological independence?"

Nightdemon changed the topic, unwilling to divulge more of his secrets. "The reason the king of keys induced this war between the superior kings of antiquity and the three new superior kings is in order to accumulate more superior world's energy.

"If things had gone according to his plan, he'd wait for them to deal with all of you, then go after the superior kings of antiquity to claim all that they took—but alas, things did not go according to plan."

Zhang Lie chuckled coldly. "What a pity."

"To the king of keys, however, not much has changed. As long as he's able to deal with all of you, along with the three new superior kings, he'll still be able to claim everything."

Zhang Lie narrowed his eyes. "He should be wary of choking on his greed."

Nightdemon shook his head. "He isn't greedy, just pretending to be greedy."

Zhang Lie was skeptical. "What, are you forcing him to be greedy?"

The members of Team Zenith were likewise surprised. Who else but the strongest superior king could force the most ancient superior king to do anything?

Nightdemon spread his arms. "This is hardly my fault. On the contrary, I'm encouraging him to discard his supposed humanity."

The members of Team Zenith all looked toward Nightdemon strangely.

"What a... curious... hobby."

"Forcing someone to discard his humanity..."

Yang Ze's mouth was pursed as he asked, "Do you intend for the king of keys to be bestial?"

Sun Xiaowu's eyes were much the same. "So this is what the strongest superior king does..."

"No wonder the king of keys was driven mad."

Yang Ze sighed. "Right now, I'm starting to pity the king of keys."

Li Feng narrowed his eyes. "I feel like all of you are messing with me, but I don't have any evidence."

Nightdemon retrieved the Shining Trapezohedron and warned, "I don't know what your misunderstanding entails, but I am the strongest superior king, and I do want to have a pristine reputation."

Yang Ze shamelessly asked, "I don't know what you're thinking. What have we misunderstood?"

Sun Xiaowu continued seriously, "We were discussing how you forced the king of keys to abandon his humanity."

Li Feng frowned. "What could we have misunderstood? Your response is even more suspicious."

Yang Ze nodded. "I feel like it's quite inhumane to force others to abandon their humanity."

Sun Xiaowu agreed. "I've only read about such things in novels. To think that this would happen to me in real life, in the dimensional world, to two superior kings!"

Chapter 1104: Off Track

Upon witnessing Team Zenith's reactions, Nightdemon grew somewhat awkward.

The members of Team Zenith, presenting a united front, refused to be embarrassed by what they had said, which made Nightdemon feel as though he ought to be instead.

Zhang Lie rolled his eyes without saying anything. It was hardly as though he could help an outsider against his team, and shameless though the members of Team Zenith were, they were his teammates...

Nightdemon, as a clone of the king of chaos, had the strength of a superior king. From the very beginning, all he interacted with had been combatants as strong as superior kings, and those combatants, knowing of the king of chaos' prowess, were inordinately respectful.

Even those that failed to respect the king of chaos had the pride and dignity of the strong, and they didn't deign to such shameless behavior.

Strictly speaking, the members of Team Zenith weren't particularly shameless; they just came from a different background, and had more experience with a wider variety of people.

They didn't believe in pretenses of formality, either. To them, only Zhang Lie was worthy of respect. The king of chaos sounded very strong, but he hadn't interacted with the members of Team Zenith, and they had no reason to respect him as yet—particularly when it seemed that Zhang Lie could send him flying with a single punch.

Nightdemon raised his head to the sky and laughed loud and long. "Haha, you fellows really are interesting! I'm looking forward to your participation in the banquet."

Was Nightdemon trying to dispel his embarrassment with a loud burst of laughter? It was essentially like doing something even more awkward to cover up the original awkwardness, then making the other party feel awkward instead.

Nightdemon asked again, "What exactly did I misunderstand?"

Sun Xiaowu replied, "Just like in a novel in which a father forces his son to kill his mother to strip him of his humanity..."

Nightdemon shrugged. "As I've said, you're all misunderstanding."

Even Zhang Lie, who had been a bystander all this time, couldn't help but ask, "Exactly what are we misunderstanding?"

Nightdemon replied, "You've got it all wrong from the start. The king of keys isn't an alien or a genetic lifeform. He's not a human."

The king of keys wasn't a human?

Nightdemon continued, "And if that's the case, then how could the king of keys have any humanity to begin with?"

Zhang Lie recalled how the guide who had escorted him to the first superior kings' meeting introduced the king of keys. He had hazarded a few guesses as to the king of keys' identity. Thinking back to what Nightdemon just said, he intuited the king of keys' true form. "The king of keys isn't a person, but rather the will of the world made manifest."

Nightdemon nodded. "The king of keys is an unusual existence, distinct from the king of black fog, who was once a person that became a superior king and then melded with his will of the world. In contrast, the king of keys started out as a will of the world, a freak existence, but also a necessary one."

"A necessary existence?"

Nightdemon continued, "The king of keys is the trump card of the will of this realm, the amalgamation of the original wills of the three thousand worlds."

The first half of this revelation wasn't particularly surprising to Zhang Lie, who already knew that the king of keys was somehow a special existence, but the second half shocked him. The king of keys was a trump card left by the will of the realm?

Nightdemon continued, "The king of keys is indeed an incredibly special existence, and this is partly why I've left him be for so long despite his nascent similarity to the death spirit king. The death spirit king wants to devour the three thousand worlds, whereas the king of keys wants to reforge it."

Zhang Lie frowned. "Even so, I remain unmoved. The king of keys interfered in the war between us and the superior kings of antiquity, and he has to pay a commensurate price. In addition, he even attempted to destroy the Zongming world and the home base of humanity, the draconian world. I'm not going to allow him to let him do as he pleases in the future."

Sun Mengmeng agreed. "Even if the king of keys were the physical manifestation of the third realm, we'd still attack him."

Yang Ze added, "Our ancestors have fought against heaven and earth, deities and demons, for tens of thousands of years. It's part of our culture by now."

Nightdemon nodded. "It looks like you're all very confident."

"We're simply doing what's reasonable."

Nightdemon continued, "The king of keys might be the will of this realm's trump card, but the will of the realm has fragmented since its conception.

Considering that this realm has now been divided into three thousand worlds, the king of keys is essentially nothing but a fragment of his original self. His death won't affect the third realm, as splintered as it is."

Zhang Lie frowned. "In other words, the king of keys' will is already divorced from that of the three thousand worlds?"

Nightdemon spread his arms. "Otherwise, do you think we'd be able to talk here in such a relaxed fashion?"

If the king of keys were able to act as the will of the third realm, it would be his domain. He would easily be able to spy on their conversation, among other things.

Nightdemon continued, "The king of keys is a fragment of the will of the realm. He has no humanity, no greed, no personality."

This flummoxed Zhang Lie, who had once been deliberately targeted by the will of the world.

Nightdemon shrugged. "Perhaps a complete will of the world might be able to develop some semblance of humanity eventually, but what do you think a fragment can manage?"

Zhang Lie replied, "In that case, what's the point of scheming against us? Just for fun?"

"It's an act of emulation."

Zhang Lie understood what Nightdemon was getting at. "He's trying to emulate a lifeform? Why?"

Nightdemon shrugged. "A fragment of the will of the realm though he might be, he kept his core mandate: to rebuild this realm and unite it once more."

Yang Ze murmured, "Emulating a lifeform to rebuild the realm? I'm even more confused now."

Nightdemon spread his arms again. "That's why I said that he's already going down the wrong path."

Chapter 1105: The King of Keys

"The king of keys, as a fragment of the will of the third realm, was on the level of a superior king from birth," the king of chaos explained. "He's been working hard to try to build a new realm. This was the goal set by the will of the realm—though how he's supposed to do it is unclear."

Zhang Lie asked, "Is swallowing these worlds something he came up with independently, then?"

Nightdemon shook his head. "Very long ago, after the will of the realm shattered, one fragment was commanded to combine all the shattered worlds and forge the will of the realm anew."

This was why the king of keys was known as the most ancient superior king, because he had been birthed by that incident. The three thousand worlds arose only afterwards. It was as though the king of keys had been present ever since the Big Bang, and all the worlds that were birthed came after him—including the superior kings to follow.

The king of keys was the most ancient superior king not because all the kings before him had perished, but because he truly was a figure that transcended history. From the very beginning, the king of keys had had the strength of a superior king, and it wouldn't be inaccurate to call him the first superior king.

"Consuming these worlds does make the king of keys stronger, but no matter how many he consumes, he can't elevate his status as a lifeform. It might even dilute his own consciousness and distort his objectives."

After consuming a large quantity of worlds, the king of keys realized that consuming more worlds could cause him to lose his sense of self.

"Ever since then, the king of keys has had some semblance of consciousness. After that, he no longer single-mindedly sought to obey the commands that he had been left with. He began to think

just how he would be able to preserve his own consciousness while becoming the new will of the realm."

Zhang Lie considered the king of keys' condition. "Is that when he began to continuously destroy the older worlds and birth newer ones within his body?"

Nightdemon nodded. "That's right. Afterwards, the king of keys thought of a method to grow stronger even without devouring any worlds."

Zhang Lie asked, "Did the king of keys lean into his nascent humanity and develop a stronger will?"

Nightdemon nodded. "Through this method, the king of keys was able to grow significantly stronger. He realized that he was slowly approaching the threshold of power that this realm had once possessed—or perhaps more accurately, it was slowly birthing a new realm of its own within its body. In our terminology, it grew strong enough to touch the door."

Although the king of keys was successful in reconfiguring his own body, that alone wouldn't be sufficient for it to become the new realm. Ever since then, the king of keys had stagnated.

"As it watched more and more superior kings appear and how quickly they grew, the king of keys began to grow envious of biological lifeforms."

Zhang Lie rolled his eyes. "For such an ancient existence to grow envious of biological life... it truly is funny."

The king of keys was an ancient existence; biological life was fleeting.

Nightdemon shrugged. "As a result, he's been trying to get closer to becoming a biological lifeform and emulating their thoughts. After that, the king of keys had a qualitative breakthrough."

Zhang Lie wasn't surprised. "After all, the will of the realm should possess a shred of will or humanity of its own."

Nightdemon nodded. "Thanks to this approach, the king of keys was able to push open the door."

The members of Team Zenith listened attentively as Nightdemon discussed the king of keys' origin and transformation.

"After emulating human behavior, the king of keys really did grow more despicable, didn't he?" Zhang Lie commented.

"However, the king of keys went too far down this path. It's no longer mere emulation—or rather, he's becoming even more like a biological lifeform than an actual biological lifeform."

"What's the problem with that?" Yang Ze asked.

After all, the king of keys had employed that emulation to great effect in gaining more power.

Nightdemon sighed. "You're probably thinking what the king of keys thought—that this would be a fruitful path. However, fundamentally speaking, the king of keys isn't a biological lifeform, but rather a fragment of the will of the realm. He can have his own thoughts, and even some fraction of humanity, but if he tries to become a lifeform in totality..."

The members of Team Zenith didn't completely understand why that was a bad thing.

Zhang Lie said, "If you're hoping that we'll help course-correct the king of keys, I'm afraid that's not our goal. My intention is to kill the king of keys for what he's done."

Nightdemon shrugged. "I'm not so foolish as to think you'd spare him."

Zhang Lie frowned. "Then why tell us all this? It's a bit much if it's just to make us understand the king of keys better, isn't it?"

Nightdemon didn't mind Zhang Lie's questions.

"I'm rather fond of you. You wanted to get the king of keys' current location from me, so I felt the need to explain everything," Nightdemon replied.

Zhang Lie sighed. "In that case, please continue."

"I hope all of you will understand that, the reason the king of keys participated in this scheme against you isn't for energy. As the most ancient king, it's hardly lacking in this resource. All he wants to accomplish is to take the next step along his evolution."

This was all part of the king of keys' attempt to forge a more advanced humanity.

Zhang Lie waved a hand. "I think that's sufficient background. Can you tell us where the king of keys is now?"

Nightdemon dipped his head. "Very well. The king of keys is currently in the territory of the world of blazing sun, and he's swallowing up some worlds there."

Zhang Lie's eyes widened. "You should have told us earlier! Hold on, didn't you say that the king of keys would dilute his consciousness by consuming more worlds?"

Nightdemon replied, "Even so, he's doing it in preparation for the upcoming fight. He's learned that the four superior worlds of antiquity have been no match for you, so he's trying to strengthen himself as much as he can before he has to fight all of you."

Chapter 1106: You'll Die Today

Nightdemon paused for a moment and contemplated the situation. "However, I don't think the king of keys can consume many more worlds. He's essentially at his limit. If I'm not mistaken, he should be heading toward the Zongming king's jurisdiction right now."

Zhang Lie's brows furrowed. "Have you been lying to us?"

Nightdemon feigned innocence. "I've never lied to you."

Zhang Lie narrowed his eyes. "The reason you dragged this out was to give the king of keys more time to absorb these other worlds, wasn't it?"

Nightdemon shrugged. "Perhaps, but I haven't lied to you. I do favor you, and it's precisely because I favor you that I'd like to see you defeat the king of keys at his peak strength, whom I once favored in kind."

Zhang Lie frowned. "In the end, you treat the inhabitants of the three thousand worlds like your plaything—we're no different than the king of keys to you, are we?"

Nightdemon pretended to be taken aback. "If you misunderstand me in this manner, I'll be quite upset!"

Zhang Lie very much wanted to slap the king of chaos, but logic and rationality stopped him—at least for now.

Nightdemon smirked. "Are you going to keep wasting time here?"

Zhang Lie hesitated.

Nightdemon continued, "The king of keys should be swiftly approaching the Zongming world right this moment."

Zhang Lie asked, "Where is he now?"

This time, Nightdemon was direct. "Starting from the Zongming world, head straight to the south. You'll find the king of keys in your trajectory."

Zhang Lie left immediately with the members of Team Zenith, Nightdemon waving at their back. "Don't forget to attend my banquet!"

Zhang Lie found the king of keys following Nightdemon's intel.

Countless orbs of light floated out from within the king of keys' body, surrounded by a seemingly endless supply of world's energy. The worlds twinkled like stars, enmeshed within a condensed galaxy.

The worlds continued to grow and decay, propagating and declining. The galaxy was part of everything, and everything was part of it. It belonged to the liminal, the limitless—it might have been the source of life itself, so deeply connected as it was to the arcane.

It was a window to thousands of worlds, one that was independent of the three thousand worlds.

Zhang Hanxiang and Hong Xi, the weakest members of the group, felt an intense headache as they looked into the miniature, condensed galaxy.

The king of keys had grown significantly stronger than when he had made his first appearance during the superior kings' meeting. Perhaps because of the worlds he had hastily absorbed within the solar king's jurisdiction, the creation and annihilation of the worlds within the galaxy was somewhat chaotic.

The king of keys wasn't surprised to see Zhang Lie and the others arrive.

He called out, "I was just wondering how to nab all of you, so it's convenient that you've all gathered here instead."

Zhang Lie frowned. "King of keys, are you intending to destroy all the newly evolved superior worlds?"

The king of keys didn't answer the question. "You shouldn't have been able to track me—ah, it must have been the king of chaos."

Yang Ze stated, "Since you interfered with our war against the four superior kings of antiquity, you're our enemy too. Be prepared to pay the price for what you've done!"

The king of keys began to laugh, and the worlds within his compressed galaxy trembled.

"Not only do I want to interfere in your war, Zhang Lie, I also intend on destroying all three newly evolved superior worlds—to seize all the superior world's energy in your possession."

Zhang Lie asked, "You were the one who abducted Gold Comet, weren't you?"

The king of keys replied, "You cultivated an interesting pet. Unfortunately, it stubbornly refused to obey me."

Zhang Lie extended a hand. "Hand over Gold Comet."

The king of keys chuckled. "I got rid of it owing to its insubordination."

"What?!"

Zhang Lie thundered. Genetic energy exploded from his body, shaking the void as though an ocean had been unleashed.

Anyone who took care of a dog for long enough would develop feelings for it—and Gold Comet wasn't a dog.

Gold Comet had accompanied Zhang Lie almost from the start of his time in the third realm. Upon hearing that the king of keys had gotten rid of it, Zhang Lie was naturally enraged.

When the members of Team Zenith saw Zhang Lie cutting loose, they did the same.

Sun Mengmeng's bow materialized in her hands. She began to burn with purple flames, flames that rose high into the air and distorted the air around her.

Sun Xiaowu stepped forward in a burst of golden light, as though he had put on a suit of holy armor.

Yang Ze's figure turned blurry as white fog surrounded him.

Wind and storm whirled around Fang Yi, the wind like a dragon's bellow, the storm like a tiger's howl.

Li Feng flared white. A white dragon manifested to his back.

Zhou Ying's long hair fluttered in the wind, the color of crystalline jade. It gave off motes of vitality. She was so beautiful no one could take their eyes away, and golden leaves whirled around her. Each leaf was like a miniature sun, orbiting around the woman's body.

To her back was a pair of golden wings formed from energy. Above her head was a glowing sun, giving off a radiant, holy light. Her jade-green eyes were flecked with gold, and she seemed to have become one with the land. The vitality radiating from her was visible to the naked eye. Even the energy of the blazing suns was hers to command.

Hong Xi activated all her combat-oriented soulshards in one fell swoop. A fan of feathers materialized in her left hand, and a moonlit sword in her right. Behind her, multicolored light flared. The domain of [Eclipse] spread out beneath her feet. She walked forward, moonlight radiating from her every move. A black sun appeared behind her, sparking where it touched the moonlight at her feet.

A chilly aura emanated from Zhang Hanxiang, and snow began to fall from the void.

The members of Team Zenith were all equipped and prepared for war.

Against nine combatants on the level of superior kings, the king of keys didn't panic. Instead, he commented with some praise, "I was quite surprised by the results of the confrontation between your lot and the four superior kings of antiquity. I expected they would have dominated over you."

Zhang Lie frowned. "What are you trying to say?"

"After all, they had millennia of time and resources on their side. To think that there were still such strong combatants in the third realm... I simply don't know, Zhang Lie, whether you have any more trump cards up your sleeve. If not, you're destined to perish here."

Four black figures appeared from within the king of keys' body.

Chapter 1107: The King of Chaos' Subordinate

One of the figures that emerged from the king of keys' body had thick lips; pale yellow skin with large pores; coarse, curly hair; and thin, unusual ears that gave it the impression of a mountain goat. The lower half of its body was a mess of feelers and a tail.

This was Wilbow, whom Zhang Lie had been acquainted with as a result of the war against the death spirits.

Wilbow smiled stoically. "Zhang Lie, I had hoped never to see you again, and yet..."

Even at the end of the death spirits' war, Wilbow had expected that his next encounter with Zhang Lie wouldn't be as allies, but rather as enemies.

Zhang Lie was too strong, so strong that he threatened the rule of every single superior king. He was certain that there would be some reason, some ideological dispute or incongruency, that would cause his father and Zhang Lie to be at odds with one another.

Hong Xi frowned. "It looks like there's something strange to his side?"

Zhang Lie looked beside Wilbow to see a rather special lifeform, one larger than a stable, and whose lower half was a mess of twisted ropes. It had a few dozen arms, and it resembled a barrel with countless mouths protruding from it.

Wilbow introduced, "This is my brother Whateley. He's a bit different from me—and he's rather embarrassed right now. Those who aren't strong enough won't be able to see him."

His body was gelatinous and filled with protruding eyes. Mouths grew out of the arms that extended from its body. They looked like elephant trunks, and were the size of chimney pipes. They were swaying in the air, opening and closing, gray all over and ringed with blue or purple rings. At the very top was half a face, which looked identical to Wilbow's.

When Whateley strolled through the void, its mouths closed halfway.

Yang Ze frowned. "What's this, the emperor's new clothes? Your brother is very... interesting."

The members of Team Zenith saw Whateley as a translucent figure, one who seemed as though he was about to vanish.

Whateley's arms wrapped around Wilbow's, clearly demonstrating his affection for his brother.

Zhang Lie marveled, "You have a brother? I thought you were part of the king of keys' experiment to deepen his humanity."

As far as Zhang Lie knew, that was how Wilbow had been created—out of the king of keys' desire to experience kinship.

Wilbow didn't go into the details. "That's why I'm saying that my brother's somewhat different from me."

Zhang Lie asked, "Hanxiang, can you see Whateley?"

Zhang Hanxiang shook her head. "Only a shadow, at best."

Zhang Lie nodded. "It looks as though you and Hong Xi won't be a good match-up against him, then."

Who knew how different Wilbow and Whateley were? If Whateley were able to hide himself more completely, then Zhang Hanxiang and Hong Xi would have to face an enemy who could go invisible at any moment in time. It would be a steep disadvantage.

Wilbow said, "Zhang Lie, I don't want to fight with you. There's no need for us to be at odds with each other. Surrender, please. If I beg for mercy on your behalf, my father will spare you."

Zhang Lie snorted. "If you don't want to fight, why don't you surrender?"

Wilbow sighed in exasperation. "There's no choice, then."

"This is your father's decision," Zhang Lie emphasized.

The worlds within the king of keys' body began to rotate rapidly. A planet-headed figure appeared before them all.

Swirling red light flashed from where the eyes of the planet-head would be. "It's rather crowded here, isn't it?"

Zhang Lie was filled with anger. "You were the one who abducted Gold Comet, weren't you?"

The planet-headed figure laughed. "Are you the owner of that golden mantis? It was very interesting."

Suddenly, a huge planet slowly bulged out from within the king of keys' body. Where it passed by, all the worlds around it exploded and self-destructed.

The planet was rust-red, formed of gas, ash, and molten iron. Its exterior was covered with faults and rifts, and the vast ocean of molten iron swirled thickly around its surface.

As the planet moved, the sound of rumbling thunder could be heard from a distance, like a siren, a dirge or hymn marking the prelude of destruction.

The countless worlds around it twisted and distorted with the weight of its motion, returning to their original orderly trajectories only after it had passed them by.

Wilbow grew alarmed. "Father, you've even summoned Ghroth?"

The king of keys replied, "There are sufficient enemies before us to warrant it."

"The celestial melody resonates. Do all beings perceive it? Music played by the divine—and yet the ants remain oblivious! Lo, the earth listens. The sunken city, the abyss without light, the caverns of darkness—heed, gods, heed! Hearing the melody, the gods cast off their eternal slumber, embracing their moment of awakening!" Wilbow murmured to himself.

Zhang Lie frowned. "What are you talking about?"

Wilbow replied, "Zhang Lie, I recommend that you surrender. You had a chance with eight combatants on the level of superior kings, but now that Ghroth's been summoned, you have no chance at all."

"Oh? Sounds interesting."

"It comes from the Demonic Temple."

"What?"

"Have you heard of the Hall of Chaos?"

"Never."

Wilbow blinked in surprise. "As a combatant on the level of a superior king, an ally of Nightdemon—you aren't aware of the Hall of Chaos, the location where the king of chaos hosts his night banquets?"

Zhang Lie nodded. "This is the first time I'm hearing of it."

Yang Ze asked, "Are you claiming that Ghroth's from the world of primordial chaos, that he was once the king of chaos' subordinate?"

Wilbow nodded. "Ghroth was a very strong subordinate of the king of chaos, but not a very popular one. The king of chaos, of course, views all his subordinates the same way—but none of the king of chaos' subordinates much like Ghroth, because he's far too strong."

The king of keys didn't stop Wilbow from telling Zhang Lie about Ghroth, because the moment Ghroth was summoned, the outcome of this battle became clear.

Despite the fact that the members of Team Zenith had jointly taken down four superior kings of antiquity, the king of keys was unperturbed, solely because of Ghroth's presence.

Wilbow continued, "Ghroth isn't the strongest of the king of chaos' subordinate, but it's extremely special. It would definitely be among the top three, but it was so strong that it was ostracized by the others, so it chose to leave the king of chaos and join my father instead."

This would be an opponent they had to be careful of facing...

Chapter 1108: The Start of the Battle

Zhang Lie commanded, "Pair up and handle each threat. I'll deal with the king of keys."

"If you think I'm that easy to deal with, Zhang Lie, you're underestimating me!" the king of keys replied. "I prepared a few small gifts to deal with you, Zhang Lie. I hope you'll enjoy them."

As the king of keys spoke, the countless worlds under his control continued to rotate. Ten million genetic lifeforms rushed out from within those worlds, each above disaster-grade.

Zhang Lie's eyes widened.

The king of keys smiled and explained, "It's all thanks to your pet that I was able to amass such an incredible force."

The planet-headed figure elaborated, "Although neither I nor his majesty was able to tame your golden mantis, we analyzed it carefully and learned of a technique for rapidly cultivating a strong beast corps. For that, you have our gratitude."

The king of keys roared in laughter. "To have come up with the idea of cultivating these beasts using a superior world's energy is a genius and exorbitantly wasteful idea—one that's almost designed specifically for me. The countless worlds under my control are filled with beasts, and I can directly produce large quantities of superior world's energy."

To others, a superior world's energy was precious indeed, but for existences like the king of keys and king of chaos, it was as ordinary and commonplace as a regular world's energy, as was demonstrated when Nightdemon handed over ten superior worlds' worth of energy as a welcoming gift.

Anyone else would have gone crazy to get that much superior world's energy, even superior kings of antiquity like the solar king and the ice queen. Even so, it was but a trifling quantity for the king of keys and king of chaos.

The king of keys, whose body was superior worlds made manifest, could easily produce superior world's energy in bulk and hence cultivate ten million disaster-grade lifeforms, and ones close to breaking through to monarch-grade at that.

The farming approach Zhang Lie had devised wasn't particularly complicated or difficult, but hardly anyone would waste a superior world's energy on feeding these genetic lifeforms.

The superior kings of antiquity tended to invest any superior world's energy they came across straight back into their worlds to elevate it. In the past, the hunters of the Milky Way were far from strong enough to have come into contact with the superior worlds, and within the third realm, only Zhang Lie and his cohort currently had that ability.

As he glanced at the hordes of disaster-grade lifeforms, so densely packed they looked like ants, Zhang Lie's face turned dark.

Even Zhang Lie would have been hard-pressed to deal with a beast horde of such magnitude—and there were five other enemies nearby, too.

Hong Xi volunteered, "Let me handle the beast horde. All of you can focus on your respective fights."

Zhou Ying smiled gently. "Let me help as well. I'm good at large-scale battles."

Zhang Hanxiang announced, "I'll support Hong Xi!"

Yang Ze stated, "Let me deal with that Wilbow, then."

Li Feng added, "And I'll handle his brother."

Sun Mengmeng stepped forward. "Leave that planet-headed fellow to me. For abducting Gold Comet, I'll make him pay!"

Sun Xiaowu glanced around. "In that case, Fang Yi and I will handle Ghroth."

Fang Yi called out, "Captain, you can focus fully on the king of keys!"

"Very well!"

The hunters of Team Zenith got to work immediately after establishing their targets.

"[Syzygy]!" Hong Xi's eyes glowed. Her left eye morphed into a black sun, and her right eye into a silver moon. To her back, a pitch-black sun and a silver moon rose into the air.

The black sunlight and silver moonlight illuminated the battlefield. They were linked by a golden thread, which brought the two of them into proximity with each other. The black sun and silver moon began to merge. The black sun turned a deep red, and the silver moon a rusty red.

The black sun and silver moon merged perfectly, forming a bright-red wheel of fire, as their corresponding energies combined as well. The wheel of flame shone with light. Energy coalesced behind Hong Xi's back and formed a crimson sun.

The red light was as bright as blood, a shade distinct from Zhang Lie's when he used the corresponding copy of that technique. The light scattered with Hong Xi as its center, enveloping the disaster-grade lifeforms.

Even the disaster-grade lifeforms were affected by the technique, and their strength dropped dramatically. In contrast, Hong Xi's own strength soared.

She had volunteered to deal with the ten million genetic lifeforms with a plan in mind. Although her blood moon's aura couldn't envelop all the lifeforms, she was easily able to capture at least a third within it.

The power she leeches from all those lifeforms, from three million of them, was a tremendous buff.

As everyone watched on in shock, Hong Xi flew into the air, brimming with scarlet flames. The void cracked around her. Even the most ancient king, the king of keys, was surprised by the aura emanating from Hong Xi, which was far beyond that of an ordinary superior king.

Hong Xi herself was shocked. That shock was accompanied by pain. Hong Xi's body was unable to handle power of such magnitude. Blood leaked out of her orifices, and her internal organs were crushed. Cracks appeared all over her body.

Tremendous strength was forcing its way out from within; Hong Xi's body could explode at any moment.

The king of keys laughed coldly. "What a surprise, what a surprise. I have to admit that you've gathered some talent around you, Zhang Lie, to have shocked me so early into the fight. However, it looks as though she's about to explode."

Wilbow shook his head. "If you give up now, you can save her. She looks like she's determined to suffer through this misery, but she has no chance of survival!"

Chapter 1109: The Stubborn Hong Xi

Hong Xi stubbornly refused to give up.

This fight was far too important for Zhang Lie for her to do so.

Zhang Lie had bestowed far too much upon her.

Without Zhang Lie, she and her brother would be dead.

Without Zhang Lie, she wouldn't have the accomplishments and strength she had today. This was a rare chance to pay some of that debt back, and even if there were only a shred of a chance, Hong Xi would be willing to give her life up for it.

Zhang Lie didn't look at all worried. The change in his expression was almost indiscernible, and there was no panic in his face. He was as calm and collected as he had been.

The king of keys shook his head in pity. "What a shame, for someone so talented to pledge herself to someone as heartless as you."

Zhang Lie did worry. He wasn't heartless; he was confident.

He wasn't confident that Hong Xi would be able to master all that strength—after all, she had just merged [Eclipse] and [Black Sun], and it would take her long periods of training to reach such mastery and to prevent herself from absorbing so much energy that she was about to explode.

Rather, Zhang Lie placed his confidence in Zhou Ying.

Zhou Ying had, at some point, appeared behind Hong Xi. Her long hair was the color of crystalline jade, and it gave off motes of vitality. She was so beautiful no one could take their eyes away, and golden leaves whirled around her.

Each leaf was like a miniature sun, burning like ash. To her back was a pair of golden wings formed from energy. Above her head was a glowing sun, giving off a radiant, holy light.

"Don't worry. Fight—I'm here to support you." Zhou Ying placed both palms on Hong Xi's back, then poured huge reserves of vitality and natural energy into her body.

Hong Xi felt a surge of strength revitalize her body, making her feel unbelievably comfortable. The pain melted like snow, and the immense vitality healed the damage she had incurred. "Zhou Ying!"

Zhou Ying hummed. "Focus your attention on controlling your strength."

Hong Xi nodded firmly. She continued channeling the effects of [Syzygy] at full power, without caring about the damage that her body would suffer. The scarlet light deepened. This time, the domain encircled five million beasts.

Zhou Ying smiled even as she sighed. Hong Xi really was putting her all into this.

Zhou Ying took her own advice and focused on augmenting the throughput of power between her palms and Hong Xi's body.

With the fan in her left hand, Hong Xi summoned a twister. The blood-red flames of a blood sun burned around her, glowing with heat and blinding light, so hot the void itself distorted. The twister sucked up the blood-red flames and grew so bright it looked like a bloody sun amidst the void.

Even from the Zongming world far in the distance, its inhabitants could see a twinkling blood-red star in the sky.

Li Zongming frowned. "Has it started?"

The longsword in Hong Xi's right hand gleamed with a red edge, imbued with concentrated scarlet light.

Bloody moonlight illuminated the void. The counterpoint between the black sun and bloody moon was striking, and the king of keys, Wilbow, and the others were all gobsmacked.

"What nonsense is this?" The king of keys, despite being the most ancient king, was unable to retain his original calm. The worlds within his body grew chaotic as they crashed into each other.

No one made a move as they watched Hong Xi and Zhou Ying pair up and attack the grouped-up lifeforms.

As the most ancient superior king, the king of keys had naturally witnessed the combination of vitality and natural energy in the past. Although Zhou Ying was more unusual in that the energy of the golden mulberry tree thrummed within her, her skillset was easily understandable.

The king of keys quickly realized that she had absorbed the strength of the golden mulberry tree that grew in the world of blazing sun.

The reason the king of keys had headed to that world was because he had intended on trying to absorb that energy as well. He did come across the remains of the golden mulberry tree, but unlike what he expected, all its vitality and natural energy had been drained. After seeing Zhou Ying, he knew who had taken all that energy.

What most shocked the king of keys was the pairing of Hong Xi and Zhou Ying.

It should have been impossible to leech the power of five million disaster-grade lifeforms, even if they hadn't reached monarch-grade yet. Unbelievably, Hong Xi and Zhou Ying working together had managed it.

All that power should have destroyed Hong Xi's body, but Hong Xi was holding on thanks to Zhou Ying's continuous infusion of vitality and natural energy.

Hong Xi had become immensely powerful. Behind her, multicolored light flared. She looked like a goddess descending from the heavens. No one dared look straight at her.

Even the members of Team Zenith were shocked. Was this really the Hong Xi they knew?

Although Zhang Lie had anticipated this possibility, he was likewise shocked by the amount of power Hong Xi now wielded. To think the combination of [Eclipse] and [Black Sun] was so potent... Zhang Lie made up his mind to ask her for some pointers after all this was over. After all, he was his master. Surely it was reasonable for him to ask her for this favor?

Wind blew in an incredible gust. The lifeforms surrounding Hong Xi and Zhou Ying were all flung up into the air.

The king of keys was beginning to grow fearful of Hong Xi's strength.

Hong Xi had yet to strike; just the aura emanating from her body was sufficient to shock all the combatants in sight and to strike fear into the hearts of the genetic lifeforms. Blood-colored flames merged with her sword energy, causing each of her strikes to leave behind a long trail of fire.

Huge swathes of disaster-grade lifeforms were burnt to a crisp with the roaring blood flames.

Under the illusory moon, her movements blurred, bringing Zhou Ying along with her. Using her superior-grade illusion leopard soulshard, she shot forward. Scarlet slashes filled the battlefield and sent flames flaring all over.

The disaster-grade lifeforms proved no match for Hong Xi. Before they could even attack her, they had turned into naught but ash. With each bloody sweep, more and more of the disaster-grade lifeforms were killed.

"[The Hidden Moon]!" Hong Xi's sword arced through the air in slashes of bloody light, evaporating the lifeforms from the void.

She waved the fan in her hand, blowing them back as she struck with her silver blade.

The red sun behind her back glowed with light. Hong Xi's fan likewise shot out beams of light, as though she were a bloody sun about to turn into a supernova.

The blade in her right hand reflected that light and glinted brightly. With a wave of her fan, the flames poured forth like a tsunami. She sent a sword slash through the flames, combining the energies of sun and moon, forming a scarlet halo of light that dispersed all around her...

Chapter 1110: Facing Off

While Hong Xi and Zhou Ying dealt with the ten million disaster-grade lifeforms, Yang Ze and Wilbow began to fight.

Both sides simultaneously launched a sneak attack on each other.

Yang Ze yelled, "Ah, you bastard! You tried to launch a sneak attack on me!"

Wilbow, equally enraged, retorted, "Despicable human! You tried to ambush me!"

Yang Ze activated [Mirrored Refraction] around himself. When Wilbow hit him, his body burst apart into white fog.

A large number of white sharks emerged from the fog and attacked Wilbow.

Wilbow waved a hand, blowing away the fog and the shark hordes.

"[The Boundless Blade: Shark Frenzy]!" Waves suddenly appeared in the sky, shimmering like a mirage. Spatial fluctuations rippled as Yang Ze activated [Mirrored Refraction]. Huge sharks rode the waves—only to be vanquished by one punch from Wilbow.

Crystalline lotuses manifested in the air and blocked Wilbow's path, but another sweep of Wilbow's arm sent them all flying. The crystals and the fog were all swept aside.

Even so, Wilbow had been distracted for a single instant.

"[Fists of the Silent Sea]!" Yang Ze invoked his authority over space, which combined with his water-attuned genetic energy and formed circlets around his arms.

As he punched forward, ripples spread out all around his arm, spreading all around him. Wilbow defended and counterattacked.

If nothing else, Yang Ze's framework and techniques were perfectly suited to dodging.

Not only did he have access to refraction and reflection with his water-attuned framework, he even combined it with spatial force to form [Reflected Sight, Refracted Vision]. Most recently, he began to employ karmic force to dodge even the most certain attacks.

He was a difficult opponent even for the experienced Wilbow.

On the other side of the battlefield, Li Feng had also begun his fight with Wilbow's brother, Whateley.

"[Light Dragon's Remnants]!" Li Feng marshaled his genetic energy into the form of a large number of white dragons that divebombed the battlefield, but his technique was easily countered by Whateley.

"[Dance of the Incandescent Wyrms]!" Li Feng summoned hundreds of serpents, flaring with blinding light, which Whateley crushed with his dozens of ropelike hands.

Whateley's body turned illusory as it melded into the void. The next moment, he appeared right before Li Feng.

"[Arclight Dragon's Imprint]!" As though having predicted Whateley's appearance, Li Feng summoned his suit of dragon armor and waved his left arm toward Whateley.

A gigantic dragon's claw shot toward Whateley like a pillar of light.

By this point in time, Li Feng had gained some sense of intuition about space, as did all those who had reached the level of a superior king. Li Feng had seen through Whateley's spatial teleportation almost instantly.

Whateley widened his bucket-like mouth, sucking in the gigantic arclight dragon's claw and swallowing it whole.

Whateley himself was very accomplished with manipulating spatial force.

"[Light's Bulwark: Draconic Fist]!" Li Feng clenched his fist. His right arm, clad with light, was covered with scales. The scales began to move as an arclight dragon materialized.

It coiled around Li Feng's arm, widened its maw, and shot toward Whateley, who likewise swallowed up this attack.

Li Feng was about to continue attacking when Whateley's body began to glow with light. White light erupted from his mouth. Whateley was regurgitating the attack he had swallowed and redirecting it at Li Feng.

"[Light's Bulwark: Dragon's Teeth]!" Li Feng charged up for a stronger attack. Concentrated light-attuned genetic energy surrounded him as he shot out a piercing burst of light, intending to penetrate through Whateley.

A few dozen of Whateley's ropelike arms extended outward and trapped Li Feng.

Li Feng struggled as Whateley opened his mouth wide. Spatial vortices formed within, sucking Li Feng closer and closer toward it.

Bright silvery-white light burst forth from Li Feng's body as he freed himself from Whateley's grasp.

"[Light's Bulwark: Meteoric Fist]!" An arclight dragon appeared behind Li Feng. He punched forward, and the dragon shot toward Whateley like a bullet from a sniper rifle.

The light dragon left behind a starry trail, breathtakingly beautiful.

Whateley opened his mouth wide like a shield. Spatial vortices formed within, sucking in the high-speed bullet.

Whateley's arms extended toward Li Feng, who clenched his fists tightly and condensed light-attuned genetic energy over them, as though they were suns illuminating the void.

Li Feng compressed light-attuned genetic energy over his fists, once and again.

"[Light's Bulwark: Earthbreak]!" In the end, the fists that barely glowed with light were packed with huge quantities of light-attuned genetic energy.

Li Feng's fists smashed into the ground in a massive explosion, as though a nuclear warhead had detonated. All that energy headed in a certain direction.

The energy smashed into Whateley's arms and erupted, destroying all the arms in the vicinity and leaving a huge white scar in the void.

Right before the attack struck Whateley, however, he opened his mouth again, twisting space into vortices, and sucked up the white light. Those arms that had been torn apart by the force of Li Feng's techniques regrew anew. Whateley sprayed out white light, which illuminated the void.

"[Light's Bulwark: Heavenfall]!" Waves of energy, so intense they warped space, radiated through the air. The sky turned a bright white. Shockwaves roared through the air like thundering dragons.

Li Feng had based this technique off one of Zhang Lie's, but by now, he had converted it into something that was completely his own.

As Li Feng punched forward, the light-attuned genetic energy morphed into a roaring river that poured down on Whateley like a flood.

Thick, concentrated energy like sharp blades piercing heaven and earth fell from the sky.

Whateley opened his mouth wide. Spatial vortices shielded him from the attack, and he absorbed the technique whole once more.

Whateley was like a black hole.

"Let's see just how much more of this you can eat!" Before the flood petered out, Li Feng launched another attack. "[Light's Bulwark: Thousand Dragons Soaring]!"

As Li Feng yelled out, dragons of light materialized and circled his arms. As he punched upward into the sky, all his genetic energy condensed in his fists, launching dozens of dragons into the sky.

The dragons' cries sounded like peals of thunder as they swooped through the air, each dragon so large it could swallow a blazing sun whole...