

U. Warlord 1131

Chapter 1131: Opening the Door

The king of keys' soul was difficult to describe. Rather than a tree, it looked more like a person, whose outline was a glossy silver, who had grown from a seed.

The soul of the king of keys, who was poised to take over the third realm, was human-shaped...

The humanoid's chest had a bright red seed embedded within it, which was giving off a powerful and ancient aura.

Zhang Lie frowned. "If I'm not mistaken, that must be the core."

As Zhang Lie struck, a rainbow arc accompanied his slash, as though an aurora were visible in the sky. It shone in all the colors of the rainbow, momentarily hypnotizing anyone who looked at it.

With Guicang in hand, Zhang Lie flew through the void. His sword shone as brightly as the auroras overhead, bringing him momentarily out of the physical into the intangible.

The disaster-grade mistmeld clam soulshard, when incorporated into Zhang Lie's soul-targeting attack, had the ability to target and corrupt its opponents' souls. Everyone was dazed by the rainbow gleam.

Stuck within a whirlpool of energy, entwined by the black and blood dragons, then dazed by the rainbow-colored sword energy, the king of keys had no chance to avoid the attack. Zhang Lie's strike struck the seed and split it in two, causing it to burst.

The silver figure that was the core of the king of keys' soul screamed in agony, and the twin dragons swallowed the king of keys whole. A huge glow erupted from the point of impact as countless worlds exploded with such force that Zhang Lie's twin dragons were annihilated by the attack. Swelling waves of energy sprayed into the void, peppered with fragments of the various worlds.

The members of Team Zenith hurriedly dodged the aerial bombardment as Zhang Lie stood silently, floating in the void and staring at the center of the explosion. The world fragments that emerged from the explosion all seemed to swerve away from Zhang Lie.

They danced through the air like meteors, flying in all directions. Wilbow stood stiff, paralyzed with shock.

"Father lost?" Wilbow had been shocked to witness Ghroth's defeat.

Wilbow had never anticipated that his father could lose, nor Ghroth. However, thinking about how Fang Yi's spear had invoked the power of fate itself, Wilbow had no choice but to accept this truth. Fang Yi had sufficient strength to do so, after all.

Now that he was witnessing the death of the king of keys, Wilbow was even more shocked than before. Zhang Lie had neither procured a spear that could cut through fate, nor had he worked together with five others to kill Ghroth.

Zhang Lie's own strength proved superior to the king of keys'; he had never been on the losing end of the fight, and had incurred no injury from the king of keys. This was what Wilbow found most shocking about the king of keys' defeat—and, most importantly, the king of keys was his father.

The stars in the void seemed to wink out. The featureless void was now interspersed with fragments of the various worlds, with trees and grasses and flowers and rivers in various shapes and sizes.

Yang Ze bounded toward Zhang Lie with excitement. "Captain, we've won!"

Zhang Lie suddenly shouted, "Stop! Don't come any closer!"

Yang Ze hurriedly stilled. The members of Team Zenith looked on in shock. When they noticed that Zhang Lie's gaze was still fixed on the epicenter of the explosion, they too turned toward it.

There was a ball of light at the heart of the explosion. The fragments of the various worlds around it seemed to coalesce, as though forming something—a cocoon, an egg, an open door.

Upon sensing what was within, Zhang Lie grew visibly alarmed.

"[Ninecarp Transformation]!" The void turned red as red scales covered up Zhang Lie's body like a plate of armor.

What looked like scarlet flames surrounded Zhang Lie, but it was actually steaming, blood-red water-attuned genetic energy. A black sun rose behind his back, and a blood moon shone at his feet.

A long tail grew out of his back. His black hair took on a red tint, as though they were lit up by an inner fire. Interlocking rings of black and red that warped natural law surrounded his body, and a domineering aura exuded from him.

Boulders all around him vaporized into nothingness, and the void distorted in the heat. The world fragments blazed with flame. Red water-attuned genetic energy surrounded Zhang Lie, manifesting in the shape of a dragon.

Zhang Lie had invoked his strongest techniques to face what lay at the heart of the explosion, something so threatening Zhang Lie had no choice but to go all out.

The scattered world fragments were all drawn toward the center of the explosion, which now looked like a quickly growing nebula. The heart of the nebula glowed even more brightly than the sun.

Wilbow heaved a sigh of relief. "Father's alright!"

The members of Team Zenith began to panic. "What's going on?"

The world fragments formed a massive portal that seemed to lead to a mysterious universe on the other side.

The members of Team Zenith glanced at each other, visible confusion on their faces. Yang Ze asked, "What happened? Hasn't the king of keys perished?"

Zhang Lie forced a smile. His silver dragon's pupils trembled imperceptibly as he stated, "I seem to have opened Pandora's box."

No one knew what was displayed within Zhang Lie's sight, within a pair of eyes that could pierce the soul.

The door to the portal slowly opened, revealing silvery-white light. Truth and destruction lay within.

Zhang Lie called out, "King of chaos, is this the answer you were seeking?"

"Zhang Lie, you overestimate me." A layer of space peeled away, like the superficial layer of an onion. Twenty-four sections of space split apart, and Nightdemon, wearing a lab coat, walked out.

Yang Ze's eyes grew wide. "Was all this part of the king of chaos' plan?"

Zhang Lie's eyes bore holes into Nightdemon. "You've been taking advantage of me all along!"

Li Feng's face fell. "Is the king of chaos so skilled at manipulation?"

Wilbow sighed. "So all this is the will of the king of chaos..."

Yang Ze seemed to slump. "No wonder."

Upon hearing that the king of keys commanded the king of chaos' third-strongest subordinate, they should have guessed that the king of chaos had a hand in this entire event.

Sun Mengmeng muttered, "No wonder the king of chaos told us so much about the king of keys, and about inviting us to his night banquet! He was planning to take advantage of us from the start."

Sun Xiaowu snorted. "I thought the strongest king of the third realm would be better than this—but they're all just manipulative bastards!"

Li Feng nodded. "Truly peas of a pod."

Nightdemon shrugged. "Feel free to disparage me, but don't think that highly of my abilities."

Zhang Lie stared coldly at Nightdemon. "What's there to say at this rate? You've been planning all this with the king of keys—to take advantage of my strength to help him step through the door."

Nightdemon shook his head. "Indeed, I expected that you might have been able to provide a different sort of stimulus to the king of keys, which could catalyze a transformation..."

Chapter 1132: The Door's Transformation

Nightdemon sighed. "Isn't it normal for us to take advantage of each other? But by no means should you think of yourself as a pawn. That was my intent, yes, but the transformation was ultimately effected by the king of keys himself. There was a very real possibility that the king of keys could have perished."

Yang Ze frowned. "You're trying to claim that the king of keys' metamorphosis has nothing to do with you?"

Nightdemon shrugged. "Think what you will. There's no direct relationship, but if you want to consider an indirect one, by all means. The king of keys' metamorphosis was a result of his own will. No matter what stimuli I contrived, without exercising his own will, he wouldn't have made it this far."

Zhang Lie's face turned dark. "In the end, regardless of what else happened, you took advantage of me."

Nightdemon sighed. "That's what I was planning at first, but this development was beyond my own predictions."

Zhang Lie's frown deepened. "You've been spying on us all this time!"

"Let's have that discussion later. Watch out." Nightdemon revealed the Shining Trapezohedron, peeling away another layer of space. "Your next opponent is the king of keys' ascended form, the king of keys who has stepped through the door of strength."

After the twenty-fourth layer opened up, Nightdemon slid into the crack in space, which closed up again layer by layer.

The other side of the door harbored not another universe, but rather the fundamental mechanisms of life. Mathematical logic integrated with biology, which lay beyond the constraints of the third realm, the secrets that underlay rationality...

It was like staring into an abyss. The path in front was unclear and incomprehensible. Just witnessing it made Hong Xi and Zhang Hanxiang, the weakest among them, develop a rapidly worsening headache.

The other members of Team Zenith were barely able to hold on themselves. Behind the door lay a throne, one hewn out of raw stone. There seemed to be nothing special about it, but on careful inspection, an observer would notice that it had been constructed out of countless world fragments, each embedding a natural law.

The figure behind the door wasn't seated on this throne. Rather, as though floating or gliding, the figure's features were blurred and unfocused.

The shape was roughly humanoid, but it seemed half again as large as typical human proportions, and there was a thick layer of some gray textile covering its features.

"You have my gratitude," the figure called out, but its voice was distorted. They were no mere sound waves, but instead were able to impel natural law. The members of Team Zenith were forced to clutch their ears in pain.

The blurry figure continued, "Without you, I wouldn't have been able to give up everything I possessed and welcome a new life."

Zhang Lie's face turned stiff. Billowing clouds of red genetic energy wrapped around him, like a dragon soaring into the heavens.

"By killing me, you made me face the fear of death—and surpass the limits of humanity."

The figure behind the door seemed to ignore Zhang Lie's growing strength, its tone calm and robotic, as though Zhang Lie wasn't worth any concern whatsoever. "I failed to surpass the limits of humanity for one key reason: not because I don't understand or haven't steeped myself deeply enough in humanity, but instead because I had never experienced humanity's fear of death."

The members of Team Zenith continued to retreat, incapable of handling the figure's voice, which seemed poised to destroy their rationality.

"All life must face death, but I had forgotten this crucial point. As a result, my humanity was incomplete—merely an imitation, incapable of becoming real. The king of chaos was mistaken. He doesn't understand humanity, and he understands me even less. The next step wasn't to discard my humanity, but rather to capture it even more closely."

The figure who had stepped through the door finally understood the king of chaos' intent. "No, the king of chaos wasn't mistaken—but what he intended on doing was to give birth to an entirely new world, not what I've become."

The figure beyond the door pointed at its own chest. "I have to thank you. If not for your destruction of my soul, the source of my being, I wouldn't have been able to stage such a rebirth."

Zhang Lie's destruction of the king of keys' soul had simultaneously destroyed any possibility of the king of keys transforming into a new world and guaranteed him his rebirth.

From afar, Wilbow called out, "Are you still my father?"

He couldn't sense any bit of the king of keys that had been left behind.

The figure replied, "If you think of me as your father, I'll be your father; if you don't, I won't. No longer am I the king of the past. You may address me as Silver."

"The king of chaos hoped that you would appear, and I was the one who made you become who you are. In that case, I'm the one who should destroy you, too."

Zhang Lie summoned swords reaching up into the sky, tearing apart the void. Blood-red genetic energy gushed from him like waves, and his aura grew like that of a dragon's. A frightening strength caused the void itself to tremble as Zhang Lie attacked.

Silver didn't strike. It sat down on the throne as Zhang Lie's attack advanced—but without being able to strike its intended target.

Zhang Lie and Silver weren't far apart, especially for combatants beyond the level of superior kings. It was a distance that Zhang Lie could cross with a single breath, just as though he were taking a single step.

Even so, crossing this distance suddenly felt like an impossibility.

Zhang Lie was incapable of reaching Silver no matter how much energy he expended in attempting to do so. He could sense that the separation between them had been locked down by spatial force, a spatial lock that Zhang Lie couldn't break no matter what he did.

"This is what the door represents." Silver floated above the throne, its tone calm, as though it had done something inconsequential. "Even if I stand before you, as long as the door is closed, you'll never be able to step inside."

Zhang Lie dispelled his genetic energy. He knew very well that he would never be able to strike Silver in this fashion.

"[Blades, Extinguish]!" Guicang gleamed brightly in Zhang Lie's hands as he infused more and more spiritual energy into it, causing it to flare as it reached a critical threshold.

From the surface of his spiritual sea came waves surging forward, sounding like peals of thunder, like stampeding hooves.

Zhang Lie's spiritual sea expanded greatly, past the confines of his own body. As the mistmeld clam soulshard's energy was infused within the blade, it began glowing with multicolored light, simultaneously illusory and real.

The ocean seemed to lie at the boundary of dream and reality, untouchable and impenetrable, captivating everyone who saw it...

Chapter 1133: The Third Choice

The sword in Zhang Lie's hands burned with scarlet water-attuned genetic energy. Billowing clouds of red-tinted steam surrounded him as though he were a burning pyre.

The high-temperature steam was so hot that it visibly glowed an alarming shade of red.

The temperature ratcheted up dramatically, and the members of Team Zenith were forced to retreat even farther away. Sweat drenched their backs. Zhang Hanxiang sent her genetic energy out around her to keep the temperature around the group stable.

Zhang Lie's domain of scarlet steam looked less like a domain than a red sea, one which overtook the void. The temperature around Zhang Lie grew so hot that his surroundings began to warp. Mirages formed all around him.

One of Zhang Lie's blades glowed with radiant light; the other shone scarlet with water-attuned genetic energy.

He combined them both for a devastating effect. The spiritual, metaphysical sea combined with the scarlet steam that hung around Zhang Lie, half the attack in the boundary between the real and the illusory, linking together the physical and metaphysical, the real and the abstract.

The two halves of the attack clashed with each other. The spiritual sea began to burn, as though it had been ignited by the scarlet steam, forming spiritual flame. The scarlet steam, bolstered by the spiritual sea, grew even hotter. Contact with the steam seemed to sap at one's very soul.

Zhang Lie had allowed these two disparate sources of energy to combine, and their merger was so intense that the distinction between the real and illusory began to blur. The surface of the sea frothed with angry waves, like dragons emerging with the tide. The waves roared through the sea like galloping steeds, like thundering dragons.

From afar, the waves looked like a coven of flaming phoenixes spreading their wings and taking flight; from close up, they looked like flaming dragons.

These manifestations all drew from Zhang Lie's immense spiritual and genetic energy reserves, along with the sword techniques and willpower that he had honed over countless battlefields.

The spiritual sea seemed to belong to a separate dimension altogether, whereas the scarlet water-attuned genetic energy was in Zhang Lie's current dimension.

The two sources of energy were linked and made manifest by Zhang Lie, and they both surged forward as Zhang Lie swung his twin blades.

The two blades combined spiritual and genetic energy, willpower and time. All that melded into a tsunami which surged toward Silver.

The combination of these disparate energies was so potent that it could destroy any lifeform's body and soul.

Around the vortex of reality and illusion, the scarlet sea and spiritual sea spun around each other, forming a massive tsunami that shook the entirety of the void, which began to show signs of cracking apart.

Space shattered.

The attack that combined the real and the illusory, which had decimated everything in its path and slaughtered no less than Feitian of the xuluo and the death spirit king. However, against Silver, even this technique didn't have the desired effect.

Silver slowly stretched out an arm. The mysteries of life, which went beyond human thought and mathematical logic, reached out—and Zhang Lie's real-and-illusory attack fell apart in Silver's hands.

Silver nodded. "An excellent attack, one that can cause me harm. Don't feel bad—it's not a deep or obvious wound, so you can't see that I'm wounded."

Silver remained floating above the throne, not looking for a single moment like it had been injured.

Yang Ze shook his head. "Even our captain's having difficulty with this opponent..." How was anyone meant to attack Silver if Silver could dissolve any attack before it could land?

Wilbow praised, "Father, you've really grown so much stronger since your rebirth! Zhang Lie, I urge you to surrender now—don't waste everyone's time!"

Sun Mengmeng retorted confidently, "Our captain will surely win!"

Wilbow extended his arms. "You've all seen their confrontation. What makes you think Zhang Lie will win?"

Sun Mengmeng replied seriously, "Our captain has always been like this. Regardless of how frightening the enemy is, how mind-boggling their strength, he has never lost."

Wilbow shook his head. "Your blind faith is ill-placed."

From Wilbow's perspective, it was impossible for Silver to lose. Win? How could Zhang Lie ever hope to turn such an unfavorable situation around?

"[Ninesoul Dragonblade—Third Form: Separating Earth and Sky]!" White light split the void, cutting apart the horizon. The black- and white-colored energy that went into the slash erupted like a volcano. White energy drifted toward the skies, and black energy caused the sea to quake.

As the two shades of energy combined, everything in sight was destroyed.

A patch of void and chaos expanded where the horizon had been. Even Silver had to pay attention to Zhang Lie's attack.

The source of life dispersed Zhang Lie's attack once more.

Silver called out, "Submit to me. Resistance is futile. As thanks to your contribution in facilitating my rebirth, I'll give you a chance to submit. Kneel to me and swear to be my warrior henceforth—I only have Wilbow left, and I'll need some additional subordinates, after all."

Clearly, Silver looked favorably on Zhang Lie and the members of Team Zenith.

"This is your sole opportunity, for you and the rest of your team." Silver wanted to collect all the members of Team Zenith. "Death or submission—make your choice."

Zhang Lie stuck out a third finger. "I choose the third option."

Silver laughed. "What other choice have you?"

"I just need to kill you!"

Chapter 1134: Turning Back Time

Silver inclined its head to the void and laughed. "Ha! You think you can kill me? On what grounds?"

Zhang Lie replied, "You're a newborn, not a reborn individual. Even if you were reborn, you existed in the past, back when you were a weakling. No matter how strong you are now, you can't wipe away that past."

Silver cocked its head. "So what?"

Zhang Lie pointed all around Silver. "On this battlefield exist traces of your past selves, all those that faced imminent death."

Silver retorted, "And yet you didn't succeed in killing me. Instead, you gave me a new lease on life."

"I may not have done it in the past, but I can still do it now."

Silver roared in laughter. "Indeed? And what can you do?"

Even its newfound power didn't allow it to return to the past. Speeding up time and halting time were two different matters entirely, and halting time and going back in time even more so.

Zhang Lie had displayed the ability to speed up time during their fight, but reversing time required four higher degrees of strength than that.

Could the Zhang Lie of the present accomplish such a feat? Silver didn't believe it.

Zhang Lie shook his head. "Correcting the mistakes of the past doesn't require that much work. [Ninesoul Dragonblade—Fourth Form: Warping Space and Time]!"

In Zhang Lie's sight, time seemed to suddenly reverse. Zhang Lie and Silver's shadows manifested around him, shadows of the past.

Zhang Lie's attacks rewound, and Silver reverted to the form of a magnificent door. The door shattered and turned back into a ball of light as world fragments burst from it.

Silver returned to his original form as the king of keys, surrounded by twin dragons, one black and one red, mired in a whirlpool of annihilation. Time stopped.

Although Silver didn't share Zhang Lie's vision, it could sense that Zhang Lie had managed to capture something.

"Changing the present doesn't require going back into the past. As long as I kill the past you, the present you shall be no more," Zhang Lie explained coolly. He stepped through the void and appeared before Silver, the blade in his hand lifted high into the air.

The blade landed far from Silver's current position, where there was nothing but the void. The sword strike had no target, certainly not Silver itself, but Silver felt a threat to its existence stronger than anything else to date.

The temporal energy surrounding Zhang Lie spun furiously. It didn't know what Zhang Lie was about to cut, but it subconsciously realized that it couldn't allow Zhang Lie to succeed.

Silver extended a hand. The mysterious source of life, which bypassed rational thought and mathematical logic, struck out.

Zhang Lie didn't stop, and he didn't defend against the incoming attack. He allowed it to strike his body, destroying over half of it in a tightly constrained explosion.

Sun Mengmeng shrieked, "Zhang Lie!"

"Stop!" Sun Xiaowu hurriedly blocked Sun Mengmeng from rushing toward him.

Wilbow's eyes widened. "Is he dead?"

Even Zhang Lie couldn't survive such an attack.

Wilbow shook his head and sighed. "He had a chance to live... what a pity."

The members of Team Zenith froze where they stood.

Zhang Hanxiang was stupefied. "How could it be? Brother couldn't have died!"

Zhang Lie's sword fell straight down. The next moment, it was Silver's turn to freeze.

Wilbow shook his head pensively. "If he had surrendered, things wouldn't have played out in this fashion."

The members of Team Zenith saw an unbelievable sight. As the blade fell, it struck the king of keys' past form—a shadowy remnant of when the king of keys had died after being struck by Zhang Lie's [Second Form: Piercing the Soul].

Zhang Lie's blade split the remnant in half, and that part of his body which had exploded now restored itself in shocking fashion. It didn't regrow; rather, the fragments of his body that had evaporated were now restoring themselves once again, as if time were being played backwards.

As Zhang Lie's blade landed, the temporal remnant shattered.

"You—you established a link to the karma of space and time!" Silver held Zhang Lie's gaze as its body began to crack.

As though it had revealed forbidden knowledge, the cracks on its body swiftly propagated. The next moment, as though its body were made of porcelain, it shattered and turned into dust, drifting away in the shockwaves from the fight.

The door of strength turned into a chaotic rift, as though what had just happened had never existed at all. The mysterious source of life, which bypassed rational thought and mathematical logic, winked out of existence.

Zhang Lie sighed in relief. If not for his recent interactions with karmic power in all its forms, endowing him with greater understanding of the gift he now possessed, he wouldn't have been able to reach new heights with his Fourth Form.

Zhang Lie could never have killed an enemy of the past with this attack before—it was fortunate that he had developed this ability in the intervening period.

Wilbow's mouth opened wide as he gaped. His heart jumped and thrummed in shock. "What have you done?!"

His father, who had seemed to rise to invincible heights, had fallen to a simple strike of Zhang Lie's blade, leaving behind a murmured, fragmented sentence that was impossible to comprehend. Wilbow couldn't accept this outcome.

Zhang Lie shrugged. "I simply attacked the king of keys in the past, killing him before the situation could devolve to this extent, finishing him off as I should have. And since the king of keys has died, then Silver could never have existed—if I were to kill you as an infant, the 'you' in the future could never exist, either."

Yang Ze concluded, "It's just as if you were to fail to shoot your shot at a crucial period—if that happened, the you of the present wouldn't exist."

Zhang Lie nodded. "That's the idea, but the context..."

Zhang Hanxiang asked, "What do you mean, shoot your shot?"

"Ignore this vulgar fellow!" Sun Mengmeng dragged Zhang Hanxiang to her side before glaring at Yang Ze.

"Haha!" Yang Ze scratched his head in embarrassment.

Wilbow took a long time to comprehend what Zhang Lie had said. "You—you can turn back time?!"

Zhang Lie shook his head. "No. I simply killed the king of keys in the past."

Wilbow cried out, "Isn't that the same as turning time back?!"

Zhang Lie glanced toward the void in the distance. "Nothing so extreme."

Turning back time would be like having regressed, giving him memories of the future. In killing the king of keys, Zhang Lie hadn't reached such vaunted heights, and he certainly couldn't share the fact that he had indeed regressed in time.

Wilbow emphasized, "Killing someone in the past and changing their future— isn't that turning time back?!"

Chapter 1135: Cannot Be Overwritten

Zhang Lie spread his arms. "If I really had turned back space and time, would you all still have memories of the king of keys transforming into Silver?"

Everyone hesitated.

Yang Ze asked, "If the king of keys of the past has been killed, then why do we still remember Silver's existence? Shouldn't our memories have been overwritten?"

Zhang Lie explained, "Memories can't be overwritten so easily, let alone for entities on the level of superior kings like all of you. Memories are a record of time, a source of the past. It won't be overwritten in the short term, but as time passes, your memories will gradually become blurry, then forgotten, just as if you were in a dream."

Yang Ze glanced at Zhang Lie meaningfully. "So space and time are easier to overwrite than human minds and hearts?"

Zhang Lie shrugged. "I've never reached such a stage, so I can't say. All I did was attack the past. However, what you've claimed isn't entirely accurate. After some time passes, you'll naturally forget about Silver's existence."

Yang Ze sighed. "Space and time are truly mysterious, aren't they?"

Fang Yi, who had the most intuition about spacetime among the rest of them, remarked, "If you could understand spacetime, then it wouldn't be our captain using his attack—it'd be you."

Yang Ze folded his arms. "Just because I'm unable to accomplish that right now doesn't mean I won't be able to do so in the future."

Fang Yi remarked, "You didn't even intuit anything when we encountered the twelve stelaes—I doubt you'll be able to go too far along this route."

Yang Ze pursed his lips and thought for a moment, but couldn't refute Fang Yi's words.

Zhang Lie turned toward Wilbow. "You're the last one. How should we deal with you?"

Yang Ze asked, "What do you plan on doing? It looks like we've won."

Wilbow raised both hands. "I surrender!" Wilbow had no intention of fighting to the death. If his father had been killed, his resistance would surely be equally futile.

Zhang Lie considered him. "Just how should I deal with you?"

Wilbow suggested, "Hey, Yang Ze! You promised to spare me if you won!"

Yang Ze glanced up at the void. "I mentioned it, did I? Or didn't I?"

Li Feng commented, "If you want to surrender, you'd better be a valuable asset."

Wilbow pledged, "I'm a combatant on the level of a superior king!"

Sun Mengmeng frowned. "I don't think we lack that..."

Sun Xiaowu cocked his head. "Are superior kings all that strong?"

If anyone else were to make this claim, Wilbow would have smashed their heads in. Superior kings lay at the peak of the three thousand worlds! Just how many inhabitants of the third realm could claim to be superior kings?

However, even Wilbow had to remain silent against this crowd—all nine of whom were on the level of superior kings, and who had even killed superior kings of antiquity.

The world of primordial chaos excepted, the nine humans in front of him had to represent the strongest force within the third realm.

Wilbow was certain that Team Zenith, as a premier force that had risen up, was a match for the king of chaos' subordinates. It was a force consisting of nine combatants that went beyond the level of superior kings, in alliance with three newly evolved superior worlds.

Except for the world of primordial chaos, none could stand against it.

Wilbow didn't want to die; he would much rather submit. Against this vicious crew, his strength and might paled in comparison. If they were to attack him all at once, he wouldn't be able to survive for even a single second.

Zhang Lie alone was an impenetrable existence. Even after his father was reborn as the otherworldly figure Silver, who was stronger than he could even fathom, far stronger than his father had been.

Even so, Zhang Lie slew Silver with a single cut. Zhang Lie couldn't be understood by regular means, either.

Zhang Lie's gaze turned murderous. "You killed my cherished pet, Gold Comet. Give me a reason to let you go."

Gold Comet had accompanied Zhang Lie ever since he entered the third realm.

Wilbow's desire to live came back in full force. He hurriedly announced, "I know where the mantis is being kept!"

"Oh? You mean to say that my pet's still alive?" Zhang Lie let a wisp of his genetic energy loose upon hearing that, frightening Wilbow to no end.

Sun Mengmeng frowned. "Didn't the king of keys state that Gold Comet was dead?"

Wilbow shrugged. "That's what Father said, but it was a lie. There are too many aspects of that beast that were worth research and investigation. Even if it wasn't going to submit, neither we nor Father could bear to kill it."

Despite its unwillingness to submit to the king of keys, Gold Comet's whole body was a pile of treasure. If they were able to identify the key characteristics of Gold Comet's development, they would have been able to reproduce Zhang Lie's monarch-grade farm.

Zhang Lie instructed, "Bring me over."

Wilbow asked, "Aren't you going to claim Father's superior world's energy for yourself?"

Silver's rebirth had consumed all the superior world's energy that the king of keys possessed, but Zhang Lie had slain the king of keys before he turned into Silver. As such, there were large numbers of world fragments and deposits of world's energy in the void surrounding them.

Before Zhang Lie left, he decided to collect all the world's energy.

The king of keys, custodian to myriad worlds, host to a miniaturized third realm, boasted a frightening amount of world's energy, and even the remnant energy left over from the fight was about thirty superior worlds' worth.

In comparison, the three newly evolved superior worlds were like destitute beggars. Who knew how much superior world's energy the king of keys had possessed at full strength?

Thirty superior worlds' worth of energy would allow them to cultivate even more monarch-grade lifeforms. Zhang Lie would be able to max out his monarch gene fragments, as would the members of Team Zenith.

"Lead the way!" Zhang Lie instructed, after collecting all the deposits of energy.

Wilbow obediently marched before them. "Actually, Father hid that beast within his galaxy of worlds."

Zhang Lie frowned.

Sun Mengmeng asked in concern, "But the king of keys is..."

Yang Ze asked, "Now that the king of keys has been killed by our captain and the worlds within his body have been shattered, forming the mess of rubble in front of us, can we be sure that Gold Comet is still alive?"

Wilbow replied, "Even so, the strongest lifeforms are able to cling to life. It's not so easy for such a strong beast to die."

Chapter 1136: Not Related by Blood

Wilbow told the members of Team Zenith, "In order to hide that beast, 'Gold Comet', Father established an isolated pocket dimension specifically for it. Even with Father's death, that beast wouldn't have perished."

Zhang Lie frowned. "But wouldn't the spatial dimensions have been messed up by the resulting explosions?"

Wilbow nodded. "Quite so. If the king of chaos were willing to work with us, things would be far simpler."

Space peeled apart like an onion, one with twenty-four layers in all.

Nightdemon walked out from within. "I'd be happy to help."

Zhang Lie told him, "It looks like you won't get your wish."

Nightdemon shrugged. "It was a foreseen outcome. The intention was for both sides to act as stimuli for the other, but it looks like the king of keys was too weak to do so. To think you would possess such incredible control over karma and spacetime—it looks like I'll have to reevaluate your strength."

Zhang Lie laughed. "Ha! Should I apologize for having killed the king of keys?"

Nightdemon continued blithely. "It's true that I did take advantage of you, and you gave me a good show, so I'll help you break open a portal, I suppose."

Wilbow brought everyone toward a particular world fragment. "It's around here."

Nightdemon's hands grasped the Shining Trapezohedron tightly. A ray of light shone at the world fragment, peeling apart layer after layer of space before a wormhole was finally revealed.

Everyone passed through to find Gold Comet in poor condition, tightly locked up and chained.

Upon sensing a familiar aura, Gold Comet's eyes opened. He shook as he saw Zhang Lie and the others, his body struggling to free itself, but there was to be no reprieve from the chains.

Zhang Lie reached out and caressed Gold Comet's carapace. "There's nothing to worry about anymore!" He unsheathed Guicang and cut apart the chains.

Sun Mengmeng cried out, "Zhou Ying!"

"Leave it to me. I'll heal Gold Comet to peak health in no time!"

Her 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, 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.

Zhou Ying didn't conserve any of her energy. An ocean of vitality and natural energy flooded Gold Comet's body, forcing the stakes out and regrowing abused and missing flesh.

Gold Comet recovered in no time. He excitedly pranced around Zhang Lie, and everyone smiled.

Wilbow also let out a long sigh of relief upon seeing that Gold Comet was unharmed. Gold Comet's life was tied to his own. If Zhang Lie and the others found Gold Comet doing too poorly, he would surely pay the price.

Now that Gold Comet had been unchained and healed, however, there was little to worry about.

Wilbow asked tentatively, "Since the beast is fine now, would it be possible—"

Upon catching sight of Wilbow, Gold Comet immediately rushed toward him, his scythes raised and crossed in the form of an X. On Zhang Lie's approval, it would immediately cut Wilbow apart.

Zhang Lie nodded. "You can go free for now. Stay in the Zongming world. We'll need to ensure that you don't have any ulterior motives in mind."

Wilbow sighed in relief. "How could I dare to hatch a plan in secret?"

It sounded ridiculous, but Wilbow was certain that the superior kings of antiquity had lost entirely in their gambit.

They had once been the peak force of the third realm, led by none other than the king of chaos, but by this point, the king of keys had been killed, as had the various superior kings of antiquity. The governance of the third realm was about to change irreversibly.

Wilbow predicted that there would soon be a heated war between the original peak force of the third realm, represented by the king of chaos and his followers, and the newly minted force consisting of Zhang Lie and the members of Team Zenith.

The king of chaos and his followers were so strong that even Zhang Lie was unlikely to be able to confront him, but if Zhang Lie were allowed to grow, there would ultimately come a time where he

could do so. If Wilbow were loyal enough, he would be recognized by Zhang Lie and granted a reward commensurate with his contributions.

It would be a different sort of life than he was used to, but not an entirely unpleasant one.

Zhang Lie had no clue what Wilbow was thinking about. "Let's go back, then."

Before Nightdemon left, he reminded them, "Remember to come to my night banquet!"

"We'll consider it."

Zhang Lie and the others quickly found themselves back in the draconian world. The members of Team Zenith stretched. "We're back!"

"We've finally returned." Sun Mengmeng released a deep breath.

They had just gone through a rather frightening, exhausting adventure.

Upon seeing Gold Comet by Zhang Lie's side, the draconian sage easily figured out the outcome of the battle. "As expected of you, Zhang Lie. Even the most ancient king is no match for you."

His gaze landed on Wilbow. "But this guest..."

He hadn't seen Wilbow in their party when they were setting off. The draconian sage had known Zhang Lie for quite some time, but he had never met Wilbow before.

Wilbow waved a hand in greeting. "Hello, newly ascended superior king! I'm Zhang Lie's new subordinate."

Zhang Lie waved a hand. "Ignore this fellow. He was the king of keys' son, but he surrendered after the king of keys was slain."

The draconian sage's eyes widened. "The king of keys' son?!"

Zhang Lie continued, "You don't have to worry that he'll do anything against the draconian world. I'll bring him to the Zongming world soon enough, and have Li Zongming keep him under guard."

The draconian sage looked as though he were about to throw a fit. "That's the king of keys' son!"

"That's right."

"Is it really alright for you to kill the king of keys and kidnap his son?" the draconian sage cried out. "What if he seeks revenge?"

Zhang Lie turned around. "Well, that's true. What do you think, son of the king of keys?"

Yang Ze laughed and fingered his neck. "Should we just kill him, then?"

Wilbow, however, didn't treat this like a joke. He tensed up. "Don't worry, newly ascended superior king. I might be the king of keys' son, but we're not related by blood!"

Chapter 1137: Snacks of Love

In the end, Zhang Lie brought Wilbow to the Zongming world.

Li Zongming welcomed them with a curious look on his face. "What happened, Zhang Lie?"

Zhang Lie spread his arms. "What else? I'm right here."

"But how did you end up with this fellow?" Li Zongming pointed at Wilbow.

"He's here to serve as a bodyguard for your world for now."

Li Zongming's face turned dark. "Hold on, I'm a little confused. You beat the king of keys, didn't you? What happened to him?"

"He's dead."

Li Zongming continued, "In that case, why are you with someone who used to belong to the king of keys?"

"He surrendered and is willing to follow me instead."

Li Zongming glanced at Wilbow suspiciously. "How do you know he truly intends to do so?"

Wilbow clutched his chest. "Please don't doubt my unwavering loyalty!"

Li Zongming cried out as he extended a hand, "What loyalty? You were with the king of keys! Now that Zhang Lie's killed the king of keys, you're willing to follow him instead. You're a lily-livered coward! Dig out your liver if you dare—we'll see whether it's as red as it should be."

Wilbow pulled out a knife, cut open his stomach, then rummaged within it and pulled out a blood-drenched liver, which he placed on Li Zongming's hand. As he sheathed his knife, the wound healed at a rate visible to the naked eye.

Entities on the level of superior kings could heal quickly from any wound that wasn't charged with energy or connected to natural law—for instance, attacks infused with genetic energy or the world's energy. All other types of attacks were little more than scrapes.

Li Zongming glanced speechlessly at the liver in his hand.

Wilbow sketched out a cut on his chest with his dagger. "My heart's red, too. Do I need to dig it out for you?"

Li Zongming hurriedly shook his head. "No, no, that's disgusting!"

Li Zongming was used to the bloodiness of war, but even so, it was different from having a bloodstained liver in his hand—just like how it would be disgusting to see someone eating his own excrement despite the fact that everyone produced excrement daily, or feeling disgusted upon seeing others dig their noses when you did the same thing as well.

Zhang Lie pretended to be ignorant. "I don't know whether he's truly loyal, either, so I'd like to leave him here for now."

Li Zongming cried out, "Isn't that the same as leaving a potential bomb in my world?!"

"Yes, it is."

"You admit to it that easily? Why not leave him in the draconian world?"

"The draconian sage isn't as strong as you are."

Li Zongming was again rendered speechless by Zhang Lie's response.

Zhang Lie continued, "You're stronger than the draconian sage, so if he does something, you'll be able to stop him. On the other hand, the draconian sage would be at a loss as to what to do with him. Furthermore, I'm not frequently in the draconian world anymore, and it'd be difficult for me to keep an eye on this fellow."

Furthermore, the draconian world possessed his monarch-grade farm, the most important resource he had in the third realm.

"And what of Qianlin's safety?"

Zhang Lie hesitated a little before nodding. "I'll take her with me as I leave."

Li Zongming sighed. "Tell her yourself. It's between the two of you, so it's better if I don't butt in."

Zhang Lie headed straight to the palace to find Li Qianlin, who was, as always, so beautiful it looked as though she had stepped out of a portrait. Despite the fact that Zhang Lie had just been through a heated battle, the two of them had seen each other quite recently.

Li Qianlin said, "Father told me that you went off to fight another incredibly strong foe, the most ancient superior king."

Zhang Lie nodded. "He really was quite strong."

"What was the outcome?"

"Well, I'm back."

"Did you manage to kill him?"

Zhang Lie nodded.

Li Qianlin beckoned him in. "I made you a few snacks, which I made myself."

Zhang Lie strode in and immediately sampled one. "The taste is exquisite. You've gotten much better—and these are fresh, aren't they?"

Li Qianlin nodded. "I made them today. I make a new serving daily, waiting for you to return."

"No wonder you've gotten so much better recently." It was because of all the practice she had gotten from making them so frequently.

"I didn't make them daily to get better, but because I was waiting for you." She worked at the snacks with all her heart, wanting to see Zhang Lie's pleased expression when he tried them. Li Qianlin continued to smile. "I was hoping to see you return every day, ready and waiting for my snacks."

Zhang Lie felt as though he was consuming not just the snacks, but also her heartfelt wishes and blessings.

Li Qianlin propped up her lower jaw with her hands curiously. "Can you tell me about it?"

"What?"

"What happened to you during this last excursion away from the Zongming world?"

Zhang Lie explained how he had tracked down the king of keys and finally engaged in a battle to the death with him.

Li Qianlin listened patiently, her eyes intently on Zhang Lie's face.

Zhang Lie could sense Li Qianlin's eyes turn moist.

Li Qianlin clutched her chest. "I made snacks daily hoping for your return—but I was so worried you might never return! That's why I did this daily, pining and hoping to believe that you would one day return and tell me all about your exploits."

Zhang Lie lowered his head. "I'm sorry for making you worry."

"There's no need. Perhaps I'm too useless—unlike Sun Mengmeng, I can't fight alongside you, and neither can I help you. All I can do is make you snacks."

Zhang Lie shook his head vehemently as he tugged on Li Qianlin's hands. "That's nonsense! Your snacks can warm my heart and wipe away my stress. What I've worked so hard to accomplish all this time is to be able to taste these delicious snacks, to enjoy these periods of relaxation and rest that can warm my heart."

Zhang Lie's corny words made Li Qianlin laugh, lifting her mood. "It's nothing so exaggerated."

Upon witnessing that Li Qianlin's moods were shifting for the better, Zhang Lie continued even more fervently, "No, I've been understating it, even. I'm sure I've been born just to sample your snacks, surely!"

Li Qianlin laughed. "Thank you for comforting me." The worry and concern she had felt waiting for Zhang Lie day after day—all of it dissipated like smoke. "I had been thinking of drugging the snacks to make you stay by my side, but it looks like I won't have to resort to that after all."

Zhang Lie glanced at the snack in his hand, not sure if he should consume it after the recent revelation.

Li Qianlin laughed again at his hesitation.

Chapter 1138: No Need To Worry

Li Qianlin assured Zhang Lie, "Don't worry, I gave up on my plan to drug you after recalling that you're immune to third-realm poisons."

So you really did think about this plan in some detail! Women truly couldn't be roused to anger, and the most beautiful were frequently the most deadly.

"Follow me."

"Where?" Li Qianlin asked.

"We'll leave the Zongming world for now and head to the draconian world instead."

Li Qianlin cocked her head. "And then you'll ditch me there?"

Zhang Lie went silent.

"I'll feel the same way no matter where I am." As long as I'm without you, it's all the same to me. "At the very least, however, this is my homeland."

Li Qianlin's reasoning left Zhang Lie uncertain of how to respond. "Or do you intend to keep me company all throughout?"

"I'm sorry." Zhang Lie was unable to give her a firm promise.

"My intention isn't to blame you." Li Qianlin knew that Zhang Lie's excursions to combat stronger and stronger foes was to protect them, to protect the entirety of the Zongming world.

"I'm sorry."

Upon witnessing Zhang Lie's dejected expression, Li Qianlin was silent for a few moments. She replied, "Well, I am getting a little tired of staying home. I don't mind accompanying you."

As she packed and prepared to leave, Zhang Lie informed Li Zongming, "I'll be taking Li Qianlin with me for some time."

Li Zongming nodded, beckoning them away.

Li Qianlin asked, "Why did you want to bring me to the draconian world all of a sudden?"

"I wanted to spend more time with you."

"Couldn't we have done that here?" She felt as though there were something Zhang Lie was keeping from her.

"It doesn't feel that safe around here."

Li Qianlin cocked her head. "Isn't that all the more reason for you to stay?"

"Your father's around, too."

Li Qianlin narrowed her eyes. "What's the real issue?"

Zhang Lie confessed, "The king of keys had a son who surrendered, and I'm leaving him in the Zongming world for now."

Li Qianlin's eyes widened. "Isn't that equivalent to leaving a bomb here?!"

Zhang Lie waved a hand. "No, nothing so serious, and he has no intention of seeking revenge. Even if he did, don't underestimate your father's strength. After absorbing the spoils of war he's gained, your father's as strong as any superior king of antiquity. There are only a rare few people who would be able to hurt your father in his own world—as far as I know, only the members of Team Zenith."

After all, superior kings had an extreme advantage in their own worlds.

After that, Zhang Lie returned to the draconian world, where he immediately made a beeline for the genetic lifeform farm to check on Zhu's progress. He found it to be filled with pits and holes, with a large number of genetic lifeforms' carcasses around.

The draconian sage and the members of Team Zenith were all gathered at the farm.

Seeing the bloodstains on their clothes, though the blood was from the genetic lifeforms, Zhang Lie asked dubiously, "What's going on?"

"Zhang Lie, you're back!" Zhu rushed up to him and hugged him tightly.

The draconian sage let out a deep breath. "Zhang Lie, you're finally back! We wouldn't have known what to do otherwise."

Zhu lowered her head in apology. "It was all my fault. The unusual monarch-grade lifeform went on a rampage."

"What happened to it?"

Zhu frowned. "It grew even faster than expected and became particularly recalcitrant. I thought this was an ordinary part of its growth and didn't pay much attention. It's all my fault."

The draconian sage added, "Actually, that lifeform has misbehaved more than once, and it took I and Zhu's combined effort to stop it from rampaging."

"Bring me over."

Deep within the farm, the two rampaging lifeforms had calmed down.

The special monarch-grade lifeform had, shockingly, reached a stage beyond even ordinary monarch-grade.

"A post-monarch-grade lifeform... no wonder even the disaster-grade mistmeld clam soulshard had little effect on it," Zhang Lie surmised.

It had gradually been freeing itself from the influence of Zhang Lie's disaster-grade mistmeld clam soulshard, which was very potent, but ultimately restricted by its grade.

The fact that it could even influence monarch-grade lifeforms was impressive enough, but that was it. At most, it would enforce obedience from monarch-grade lifeforms, but those lifeforms that went beyond it would be extremely difficult to control.

"Even so, the mistmeld clam soulshard should have had some effect, especially in conjunction with Zhu's special ability. It looks like this monarch-grade lifeform is truly special."

Was it a mutant that had come into existence by natural chance?

Perhaps it had been willing to lie low while it was amassing its strength, taking advantage of the farm's abundant resources and nourishing food, biding its time until it was beyond even the draconian sage's control.

When it ascended to monarch-grade and stabilized its foundations, this unusual lifeform finally felt strong enough to break free—only to find the members of Team Zenith back in the draconian world.

Against the members of Team Zenith, who were able to take down even the superior kings of antiquity, the unusual genetic lifeform was little threat.

"It's a bit dangerous..."...almost like a ticking time bomb.

Zhu lowered her head in shame. "Zhang Lie, it's all my fault. I didn't take proper care of the farm..."

Sun Mengmeng shook her head. "No, Zhu, it isn't. We were too indiscriminate with our attacks, and we ended up killing more lifeforms than we should have."

Zhang Lie waved a hand. "They're just genetic lifeforms—it's no matter. Conveniently, I have a number of genetic lifeforms under temporary storage in the scaleman world, and it's past time I reclaimed them. I'll be heading to the scaleman world shortly to claim those lifeforms and replenish our losses. Zhu, don't worry—this wasn't your fault."

Li Qianlin hugged Zhu and caressed her head.

"Right, we can't blame Zhu for this. If there's anyone to blame, it's the person who spends all his time gallivanting about without even coming to check on the situation."

Zhang Lie touched his nose, tacitly acquiescing.

On the other hand, Sun Mengmeng defended him. "Our captain's simply trying to protect the three newly evolved superior worlds! He risks his life in every fight—it's all thanks to him that we can live in such an idyllic fashion."

Zhang Lie calmed them down. "Alright, alright, let's not argue about this further."

Zhu asked, "Shall I continue feeding it?"

Zhang Lie thought for a moment. "Let's do so. I'm curious just what its limits might be."

To the draconian sage, Zhang Lie was undoubtedly playing with fire, but he had the strength to do so. Despite the fact that the unusual monarch-grade lifeform was beyond a regular monarch-grade one in strength, it paled in comparison to Zhang Lie.

The draconian sage asked worriedly, "What if the lifeform goes on a rampage again?"

Chapter 1139: Unusual Mutation

The draconian sage was worried because this was his world. Zhang Lie wasn't frequently in the draconian world anymore, and the members of Team Zenith were following him around as they waged war on the superior kings of antiquity, leaving only him, a rather weak and helpless superior king, behind.

If there were another rampage, he would have to shoulder the burden on his own. However, this unusual genetic lifeform was beyond monarch-grade, and even he couldn't do anything about it.

Zhang Lie replied, "Now that Gold Comet's back, I'll let him guard the farm. Gold Comet has exhaustive experience in skirmishing. He might not be beyond monarch-grade yet, but his combat acumen and experience are incomparable to this unusual genetic lifeform's."

After all, the genetic lifeforms within the farm had all been grown essentially artificially, like lions and tigers that had been reared in a zoo.

Gold Comet had fought and earned his way to his current strength. Unusual though this post-monarch-grade lifeform might be, it had barely any combat experience to speak of, save a few recent skirmishes with the draconian sage.

In other words, Gold Comet was far and away the superior lifeform when it came to an actual fight.

Upon hearing that Gold Comet would be around to safeguard the draconian world, the draconian sage sighed in relief.

"Gold Comet would easily be able to suppress this post-monarch-grade lifeform," the draconian sage agreed.

Zhang Lie continued, "However, before that, we need to make sure that this lifeform knows that there's a price to pay for its mischief—that it has to fear our reprisal."

The draconian sage asked, "How?"

"Zhu, were there any other monarch-grade lifeforms that you cultivated in the meantime?"

Zhu nodded. "I've been working very hard, and I managed to coax one more monarch-grade lifeform out."

Zhang Lie caressed Zhu's sea-blue hair. "Not bad!"

Zhu laughed. "Keep praising me, Zhang Lie!"

Zhang Lie continued to caress Zhu's hair as he motioned for the members of Team Zenith to bring that monarch-grade lifeform over. They would slaughter it right before the unusual post-monarch-grade lifeform's shocked and furious gaze.

Zhang Lie sneered at the unusual lifeform. "If you aren't obedient, this is what's going to happen to you."

Zhang Lie then handed Zhu the spoils of the battle against the king of keys. "There are thirty superior worlds' worth of energy here, enough to sustain this farm for quite some time."

Zhu, who had never seen such a huge stockpile of treasure before, was shocked beyond belief. The draconian sage had to wipe away his drool.

Afterwards, Zhang Lie left with Li Qianlin and headed toward the scaleman world on the back of the multicolored disaster-grade dragon.

The scaleman king welcomed the two of them. Noting how intimate Li Qianlin seemed to be, he ventured, "Master, is this your wife?"

Li Qianlin flushed red.

Zhang Lie nodded. "Ah, you found out."

Li Qianlin kicked Zhang Lie's leg, but by this point, her kicks felt barely any stronger than if he were scratching an itch. On the other hand, Li Qianlin winced—it was as though she had kicked a steel bar.

Zhang Lie turned to her. "What's the matter? Are you alright?"

Li Qianlin glared at Zhang Lie, the annoying fellow.

Zhang Lie coughed. He turned to the scaleman king. "You mentioned that you had a large surplus of post-peak-grade and disaster-grade lifeforms?"

The scaleman king nodded fervently. "Yes, Master! Shortly after you left, there was another swell of breeding lifeforms, and the farm's almost stuffed full. I've been concerned about what to do with them."

Time in the area had been sped up tremendously by the authority of the superior king. As the scaleman king's strength grew and the scaleman world gained more energy, the rate at which the genetic lifeforms grew and reproduced would only increase. Between Zhang Lie's last departure from and arrival to the scaleman world, the number of post-peak-grade and disaster-grade lifeforms had increased fivefold.

The scaleman king asked, "Do you have need of these lifeforms, Master? It's difficult for me to handle them too much, and there are so many that the farm's almost beyond capacity."

The scaleman king had already renovated the farm and doubled its size, but the rate at which these lifeforms were growing was simply ridiculous.

"Thankfully, the scaleman world's been growing as well, and there hasn't been a problem yet. If you need any, Master, please take them away," the scaleman king offered.

"Very well. I'll take all the lifeforms beyond superior-grade."

The scaleman king asked, "Not all of them?"

"You'll need some stock to keep breeding, won't you?"

The scaleman king replied, "There's no need, Master. After all, we still have a tradition of annual royal hunts around here, though it's essentially just me, my brother, and my nephew. It's a festive occasion for us all."

"No, I'd be embarrassed to take them all—and the draconian world isn't equipped for them all, at any rate."

The scaleman king urged, "No need for the courtesy, Master. All my accomplishments are due to you."

Zhang Lie was growing a little impatient. "I'll be direct, then. Keep rearing the superior-grade lifeforms for me here for now, and once you amass a large number of disaster- and peak-grade lifeforms, I'll take them off your hands. I'll also come and replenish my stock of genetic lifeforms as and when I need them, treating your hunting grounds as a second farm. Is that acceptable?"

The scaleman king bowed. "I'm happy to serve, Master."

Zhang Lie controlled a large number of the lifeforms with his disaster-grade mistmeld clam soulshard, then left with them in tow.

Li Qianlin asked curiously, "Just what's your relationship with the scaleman king? He seems very respectful of you."

"I gave him a push during a time of need." Zhang Lie slowly retold to Li Qianlin his escapades with the scaleman king, who had once been the ninth prince of his people.

When he finished the story, she sighed. "To think you were able to raise a prince no one thought highly of to one of the three newly ascended superior kings of the third realm..."

Zhang Lie replied, "It's hardly as impressive as that. He still needs to grow much more."

"You really are a demanding master, aren't you? He's already a superior king, a man at the peak of the three thousand worlds, with the same status as my father! There are only four superior worlds left among the three thousand, and he leads one of those four! How much further do you want him to go? It's unrealistic to expect him to become the next king of chaos."

"Now that you mention it..."

Chapter 1140: I Destroyed Them All

Zhang Lie returned to the draconian world with a large group of lifeforms he had obtained from the scaleman world.

There were five thousand superior-grade lifeforms, a thousand peak-grade lifeforms, a hundred post-peak-grade lifeforms, and even a dozen or so disaster-grade lifeforms, far more than sufficient to account for the losses from the unusual lifeform's rampage.

Even the draconian sage was shocked by Zhang Lie's efficiency. If not for Zhang Lie, he would have thought that the genetic lifeforms were plotting a rebellion against the draconian world.

Zhu was similarly shocked beyond belief to see so many new lifeforms to rear.

Zhang Lie instructed her, "I've controlled the lifeforms with my mistmeld clam soulshard. I'll be leaving them in your care."

Zhu nodded fervently. "Yes, Zhang Lie!"

Zhang Hanxiang came over. "When I heard that a large group of genetic lifeforms had been brought back to the draconian world, I knew you had to be involved, Brother."

Zhang Lie asked, "Are you here to have a look at the genetic lifeforms, Hanxiang?"

Zhang Hanxiang pouted. "I'm not so free. Brother, Hong Tianqi dispatched a few third-realm hunters to summon you."

Zhang Lie frowned. "What's the matter?"

"He seems to want to ask about the current distribution of power in the third realm."

"What's there to discuss?" Zhang Lie didn't think there was anything particularly noteworthy.

Even so, Hong Tianqi was the highest authority of the united world federation, and he had dispatched quite a few hunters to search for Zhang Lie. Zhang Lie couldn't simply ignore him.

After all, Hong Tianqi was only doing his job. The last few times they had spoken, Hong Tianqi looked particularly harried, and there was no way he would seek Zhang Lie out like this if there weren't urgent business.

Zhang Lie turned to Li Qianlin. "Qianlin, stay here for a day or two. I'll have to return to the Milky Way to have a chat with Hong Tianqi."

Li Qianlin waved at him. "Go, go. Don't worry about me—I'll be around."

Zhang Hanxiang took hold of Li Qianlin's arm.

"Brother, hurry and go. I'll look after Qianlin. Nothing will go wrong."

Zhang Lie dipped his head in acquiescence as he shattered space and headed to the teleportation apparatus that led back to Earth.

Upon witnessing the sudden event, the hunters milling around the apparatus were all shocked, only to belatedly realize that it was Zhang Lie. The hunters were shocked and excited—by now, Zhang Lie was one of the premier idols of the third realm.

Zhang Lie returned straight back to the Zenith Dojo, where he sent Hong Tianqi a message immediately.

Hong Tianqi had clearly been waiting for Zhang Lie's call, because he picked up immediately. "What's the matter?" Zhang Lie asked.

"I heard something major happened in the third realm."

"It's been resolved, now."

Hong Tianqi asked, "Troops from the superior worlds of antiquity invaded the draconian world, didn't they?"

As the highest authority of the united world federation, Hong Tianqi was privy to at least this much information, but he was clearly unaware that Zhang Lie and the members of Team Zenith had dealt with the invasion and subsequently taken down all the superior kings of antiquity.

What they had accomplished would forever be recorded in the annals of the third realm.

"Everything's resolved."

"Everything's resolved... did you manage to deal with that army, then?"

Zhang Lie sounded rather upset. "Is this all you came to speak with me about?"

"What do you mean, 'is this all'? The draconian world's the base of the third realm hunters! Of course I have to pay attention—and the invasion of a superior world of antiquity is no trifling affair. You're the strongest hunter in the third realm, and you must know something the other humans are unaware of. That's why I sought you out for more information."

The superior worlds of antiquity lorded over the third realm.

Back when Hong Tianqi was a third-realm hunter, he wasn't even aware of the upper echelons of strength that these superior worlds represented, and had only learned of them after becoming the highest authority of the united world federation.

If not for the fact that Zhang Lie had started participating in these circles, he would still be unfamiliar with them, and he had always been invested in learning what information he could.

When he heard that the humans' home base, the draconian world, had evolved into a superior world, Hong Tianqi was simultaneously excited and worried—excited that the humans had managed to augment their strength and base of operations significantly, and that all the third-realm hunters would benefit as a result.

Although he was unfamiliar with the precise evolution of a superior world, it was easy to guess that humanity's status would rise commensurately. On the other hand, he was worried that the sudden evolution would cause trouble—for example, if conflict arose between the humans and the indigenous people of the world, the draconians; or perhaps if there were a clash between the humans and another world that had merged with the draconian world.

Of course, these were unfounded worries. If Hong Tianqi had a better grasp of the situation, he would have realized that none would dare to provoke the humans in the third realm any longer.

Everyone in the third realm knew that the humans were a bellicose race, one primed for war. They had invaded fifty different worlds one after the other—none would dare provoke such monsters.

It was normal that Hong Tianqi was worried about a superior world's invasion, but Zhang Lie rebuffed Hong Tianqi's interrogation. "What could have happened? You're worried over nothing. I've destroyed all the superior worlds of antiquity except the world of primordial chaos."

Hong Tianqi shrieked in shock, "Hold it, what did you just say?!"

Zhang Lie winced as he clutched his ear. "Don't get so excited!"

Hong Tianqi asked, "Are we talking about the same superior worlds?"

Zhang Lie sounded rather confused. "What other superior worlds could there be?"

Zhang Lie had all but finished his exploration of the third realm, and the only interesting location he had yet to check out was the world of primordial chaos.

"The superior worlds of antiquity are the overlords of the third realm, aren't they?"

"I... suppose so..."

To the native inhabitants of the third realm, superior worlds were entities beyond their reach, the sky above the sky—but to Zhang Lie, they were hardly anything worth speaking of.

Hong Tianqi continued, "Just how did you manage to take nine of them down, then?!"