

U. Warlord 441

Chapter 441: Making a Move

Zhang Lie's face fell. He had thought Xueju cruel enough, but Xuechi was even worse. Xueju was just perverted—insanely so, but far better in comparison than Xuechi, who bathed in human blood.

The humans who escaped from the interior of the palace felt as though they had been granted a new lease on life.

Within Xuechi's treasury was a large number of valuable herbs, soulshards, weapons, and the like. Among them, part of the valuable ores and minerals was distributed to the rock spirits. Most of the herbs were given to the Yeluo for their recipes, the shinier baubles and trinkets taken by the crag eagles, and the rest divided by the humans.

Zhang Lie glanced at the map of the lands surrounding Xuechi and focused on a specific marker. "Could this be..."

The world federation was once again shocked.

"Astounding—Zhang Lie's made headlines again!"

"It's been a long time since we received news about Zhang Lie. I heard that he went to build a city—how did it go? I haven't heard anything."

"I'm sure he succeeded, of course! It isn't as if founding a city is anything too impressive. Zhang Lie could accomplish such a feat in his sleep!"

"Go on, keep boasting! Don't you know how much manpower and resources building a city takes? Look at the expense that it took to build our four human cities! How much did it cost, and how many people had to die for it?"

"A city can protect millions of denizens and act as shelter for ten times that number, so no matter what it costs, every race has tried their hardest to build cities for themselves. Do you think Zhang Lie alone can accomplish what it takes a whole race to do? That's ridiculous!"

"Well, he's already succeeded."

The two hunters were chatting away on a message board.

"Really? Zhang Lie left Qi with no more than three thousand people. How did he manage to assemble a workforce?"

"He compelled alien races to join the city and contribute to labor. Our city now has four major alien races in it!"

"Hold on, let's not talk about his city for the moment. Haven't you heard of what Zhang Lie's done lately? Go look!"

[Champion of mankind, Zhang Lie, takes down another sura kingdom!]

"What?! Is Zhang Lie so strong that he can take down these kingdoms at will now?"

"Does Zhang Lie have some sort of enmity against the sura? He's already claimed two kingdoms!"

"I've seen more sura kingdoms destroyed this year than in the last decade..."

"Well, that's because no one dared provoke the sura over the last decade! After all, they're the hegemony of the second realm, and no one would dare to mess with them. What can we humans do? The sura roam all over and treat us as nothing but food. All we could do was hide—the only one brave and foolhardy enough to attack their city is Zhang Lie!"

"That's why he's making history!"

"I already thought that Zhang Lie was bold and daring, but after seeing this piece of news, I'm realizing that he's completely fearless!"

"Not only did he take down a sura capital and build over it, he's taken down a second sura capital now. What's he going to do next, wage war against the sura?"

"Zhang Lie hasn't ever feared anything—I'm sure he'll welcome war with open arms."

"He's made massive contributions to the human race, hasn't he? Saving ten thousand prisoners from one sura kingdom, then twenty thousand from this one... He's a shoo-in for the interstellar peace prize!"

"That's hard to say. After all, he made waves for issuing a bounty on the Musi clan."

"Two sura kingdoms in a row... Zhang Lie's truly a hero!"

Within the palace of the sura empire of stars, a blood-red pillar of light flooded the skies, causing the entire kingdom to tremble.

"What did you say happened to my godson?!" the monarch of stars roared.

The official who had come to report to him trembled and shook like a leaf. "Your majesty, according to those survivors of the purge, Xuechi has fallen."

After taking down the capital of Xuechi, Zhang Lie had his men clean the entire kingdom of any rabble and rescue whatever prisoners remained.

Part of the sura, upon finding out that their capital had fallen, ran away silently in the night. Some of these sura sought refuge in the empire of stars, where the information they brought was transmitted to the emperor's ears.

The monarch of stars thundered, "Who did this?!"

"According to the sura refugees, a group of allied invaders who claimed that they came from a city called Renhuang."

The monarch of stars narrowed his eyes. "Renhuang, is it?"

The official replied, "I believe it's very possible that this is related to what happened to Xueju. Your majesty, I fear for King Xuechi. His whereabouts are unknown, and his kingdom was destroyed in his absence..."

The monarch of stars snorted. "Do you think my godson would lose to a human?!"

"No, your majesty!"

"I believe that those humans who are purportedly occupying the city are just a front. The true mastermind behind the affair is simply trying to disgust me. Nevertheless, we can overcome any ploy they have with brute strength."

"Yes, your majesty! You're absolutely right—brute strength trumps over everything! No nefarious plan or ploy can stop us. Your majesty, your intention is..."

The monarch of stars waved a casual hand. "If one godson is unable to deal with everything, send all seven over at once. Force this city of Renhuang to capitulate."

Opposite him, in the sura king's treasury, Zhang Lie saw a marker on a map that reminded him of that special location in his past life where a special peak-grade lifeform apparently lived. All he had heard of this location were rumors, and finding a hint to it here was an unexpected reward.

"Zhang Lie, look at this!"

Sun Mengmeng walked over with a book from the sura king's treasury.

Zhang Lie glanced at it and asked, "What's this?"

Unfortunately, he had no understanding of the sura script.

Sun Mengmeng replied, "I learned a little of the sura script from Xia Na. This is the journal of the sura king Xuechi himself, and he's recorded the whereabouts of a number of strong genetic lifeforms nearby.

As you know, there's an arena within the capital. The sura very much enjoy watching humans fight against these genetic lifeforms."

Chapter 442: Seven Sons

Zhang Lie knew this very well. By the time he entered the arena, all the humans within had been slaughtered to the last. The sura had done so in order to avoid having those humans join the invaders' forces.

"That's why the sura from Xuechi are particularly fond of capturing genetic lifeforms and humans," Sun Mengmeng explained.

"The diary describes the locations of all genetic lifeforms around, and several among those are on the same level as the elephant you lured back into the city."

"Peak-grade lifeforms, you mean?"

"I believe that's right."

Zhang Lie pointed at the unusual marker on the map. "Is there any mention of this marker in the diary?"

"Yes, one. It was left behind by the previous sura king, who discovered an unusual valley. with extremely strong genetic lifeforms within. Upon killing those lifeforms, their souls would remain within the valley.

"Allegedly, once the number of souls reached a certain threshold, something horrendous would happen. The previous sura king returned from the valley heavily wounded, and he perished after leaving these words behind. Before that, he warned his kin never to step within the valley."

"As expected!"

"Zhang Lie, do you know something about that valley?"

Within some battlefield in the second realm was hill after hill of skeletons.

Each of these hills were twenty or thirty meters tall, and they were composed of both human and alien bones. The skulls were warped and distorted, as though something horrifying had happened to them before their death.

Crows flew overhead, pecking on grisly pieces of meat hanging from the skeletons.

A sura king sat quietly at the apex of the highest hill of bones, an executioner's sword over his shoulder. Crows circled his head.

"Your highness!" an elder called out from below.

The sura king jumped down from the hill. "Is the painter here?"

The crows flew into the air, startled.

The sura king murmured in excitement, "I want to have a painter capture my art. Elder, what pose do you think I should make?"

This sura king, Shouta, enjoyed stacking up corpses in skeletal mountains, then displaying it as art.

The elder frowned. "Your highness, that painter has gone crazy."

"Really? Are all such painters so fragile? In that case, find me a new one."

"The monarch of stars sends word, your highness."

Shouta's eyes lit up. "A letter from Godfather? Is he finally allowing me to participate in the war between the sura empire of stars and the other three sura empires?"

The elder shook his head, sighing. "I think the chance of that is minimal. After all, your highness, your fondness for these skeletal hills will lower the morale of both the enemy troops and our sura troops.

In the heat of battle, this sura king had been known to decapitate everyone within sight, even those of his allied forces.

The sura king sighed. "You don't understand true art. Only my third brother understands me."

The elder spasmed. "I'm not sure he wants to understand your art, either."

The sura king took the missive from the elder and hemmed at it. "Interesting, very interesting."

Shouta wasn't the only one who had received the missive.

In an icy cellar, another sura king glanced at the beauty frozen in a coffin of ice. "What an exquisite specimen!"

Within the coffin, the beauty's skin was turning a shade of blue, and her face was ashen. She was a corpse. Orbs of light glowed by her feet. She was draped in a white wedding dress, a true corpse bride.

The sura king's eyes filled with infatuation as he glanced into her eyes, as though they were sharing an embrace.

"How perfect you are, how exquisite! You must have a similarly beautiful name—how about Shasha, or Meimei? Ah, I've got it—I'll call you Shamei!"

This was the sura king Shicang.

An urgent knock came from the doors to the cellar as the sura king frowned. "What's the matter?"

"Your highness, the monarch of stars has sent you a missive."

"Slide it in."

The letter slid in through a crack in the door. Shicang didn't allow anyone else to step inside his chamber of collections, not even a finger. All documents had to be transferred into the room through a small slit in the door.

He picked up the letter and walked up to the coffin, where he kissed the corpse on the lips. His eyes were starry. "I can't believe that there are alien bodies that could have become such exquisite masterpieces. I was right to have steeled my heart and killed you!

Give me a moment, darling. I need to read this letter now, but I'll come back and cherish you more later!"

Shicang closed the lid of the coffin and placed it back in its spot. This chamber was filled from head to toe with coffins, and each coffin contained a young girl's body.

When he read the sura monarch's letter, his eyes flashed.

On a stone bed in a dark chamber lay a young girl. Her hands and legs were strapped to the bed, and a gag was stuffed into her mouth. Tears glimmered on her face. No matter how she struggled, she was unable to free herself.

A sura king walked up to the little girl and grinned evilly. He rubbed his palms and caressed the girl's face.

This sura king's eyes were very special, because... he didn't have eyes. Regardless, he seemed to be able to see. He caressed the girl's face again gently.

Her eyes were very pretty, wide and round, just like jewels. The girl began to writhe and struggle. She tried to yell out, but the gag stopped her from being able to do so.

He licked his parched lips. His eyes shone with greed and desire. The sura king suddenly stuck his fingers into the little girl's eyes and pulled them out of her face.

Tears of blood streaked down the little girl's face. The sura king hurriedly grabbed a can filled with a murky green liquid and threw her eyes inside. Looking at those eyes, the sura king smiled with joy.

This was the sura king Moyan.

Chapter 443: The Seven Crazyies

The sura king Moyan glanced at the jar of eyes in his hand, unwilling to put it down before spending a long period crooning at it.

On the table beside him was laid out jar after jar, each with a pair of eyes.

"The 230th pair!" Moyan exclaimed. Two sura fighters walked in, and the sura king pointed at the girl whose eyes had been taken from her.

Even without the sura king saying anything, the two sura fighters knew what to do. They had already done the same thing countless times before. They dealt with the little girl still lying on the stone bed.

Usually, these blinded victims would become food for the sura or for the creatures that they were rearing. Only a lucky few would be sent back to the prisons. The young girl laid out in front of them would have exquisite taste and flavor, with tender, juicy flesh. The sura fighters would smuggle her out, send her to a restaurant they knew well and have her prepared for them.

One of the sura fighters said, "The elder came over with a missive which he left with me, your highness, so that I could hand it to you after your affairs were over."

Moyan frowned as he read the missive. "This is from the empire of stars?"

In yet another sura palace, a sura king was enjoying a meal.

He was very particular about every aspect of the feast. The dining hall was decorated in white. Young sura maidens were playing a beautiful melody, and a bouquet of white flowers was placed at the very center of the long table.

The sura king delicately sliced apart the meatball on his plate and placed it in his mouth with a fork. He chewed slowly, savoring every last detail, and praised, "Today's testicles are excellent, better than yesterday's."

Unlike the other sura kings, he had skin as white as snow. His body was lithe and graceful, his voice soft and melodic. He was a far cry from any other sura, let alone the sura kings.

This sura king was Gaoyuan.

The chef beside him introduced, "I tried adding in some heisong wine, and I extracted the testicles from a young man who just reached adulthood."

Gaoyuan shook his head. "The flavor isn't strong and rich enough. I prefer raw testicles. The meal you prepared from that human child wasn't bad; his testicles were divine."

"I would be happy to repeat the dish, your highness." The chef placed a flagon of wine on the table. "Your highness, would you be willing to try the wine that I've just brewed? I've made it with the testicles of 99 different lifeforms, and it has a unique mouthfeel."

"Very well. Pour me a cup," Gaoyuan instructed, lifting a cup to him.

The chef poured the wine into the cup. The liquid was sticky and shot through with veins of white, and it indeed had a very unique odor.

Gaoyuan took a sip and nodded in satisfaction. "Very good. This is the best wine I've ever had; send some to my room."

"Yes, your highness!"

"However, I think even this wine can be improved further. Use 999 different lifeforms next time—the intensity, mouthfeel, and scent should all be enhanced."

The chef spasmed. He had thought himself perverted enough to follow in the sura king's footsteps, but he was clearly far too ordinary.

The sura king had no upper limit for his perversion.

During their last meal, he had heard that the sura king had a brother who enjoyed sex with male humans, who was likewise a sura king—it felt as though no ordinary sura would be able to aspire to such a vaunted position without some perversion or another.

The chef replied honestly, "Your highness, I fear that it would be too sticky and gelatinous for wine."

"I enjoy that mouthfeel," Gaoyuan replied.

The chef's mouth spasmed again. "I'll give it a try, your highness."

At any rate, he wasn't about to test it. The chef specially employed a few human females to test the taste and flavor of his creations.

Gaoyuan smiled. "If the taste isn't up to par, you can try brewing some wine incorporating the testicles of 9,999 lifeforms instead. I'm sure the flavor will be even more enhanced then."

By that point, it would probably solidify into jelly, the chef murmured to himself.

Just then, an elder walked in. "Your highness, have you finished your meal?"

Gaoyuan motioned to the flagon of wine containing a thick white-colored liquid within. "I've finished my meal. Would you like to try the chef's newest brew, elder? The mouthfeel is very interesting."

"Is it dangerous, your highness? Will it explode?"

Gaoyuan laughed. "Haha, elder, you truly are funny! You're one of my trusted subordinates. Why would I want to cause you harm?"

The elder eyed the chef, who secretly made an abortive hand motion. The elder surmised, "It looks like this might be even more dangerous than a bomb and poison combined."

Gaoyuan glanced at the chef, who immediately lowered his head. "Your highness, it looks like you have some business with the elder, so I'll take my leave now."

Before he left, he could hear Gaoyuan asking once again, "Elder, are you sure you won't have some?"

The elder rolled his eyes. "In that case, there wouldn't be any point to my hiding during your meals, would there?"

Gaoyuan sighed. "What a shame. Except for my fifth brother, none in this world understands me..."

"Your fifth brother's dead."

Gaoyuan stilled. The cup of wine in his hand burst into pieces, and thick white liquid spilled out. "What did you say?"

The elder handed him a missive. "This is from the monarch of stars, and it explains what happened."

Gaoyuan shook his head in disbelief. "It's impossible! We're all godsons of the monarch of stars. No sura would dare raise a finger to us!"

On a large four-poster bed, two figures were tussling with each other.

From outside the door came a guard's booming voice. "Your highness, a missive for you!"

"Who's there? Don't you know that I'm doing something very important with the elder?" the sura king shouted back in displeasure.

The other figure in bed was an old sura whose face was covered in wrinkles, whose cheeks were still suffused with a faint blush that had yet to fade. "Your highness, if there's something important to be done, please go ahead. Matters of state are far more important."

This sura king was very young, and he looked no older than fifteen or sixteen. He kissed the elder's forehead. "Nothing could be more important than you."

His name was Suiyue.

"Ah, well..." The elder turned his head to hide his blush.

"Shall we continue?" Suiyue giggled.

From the outside, the guard continued, "Your highness, this is a missive from the empire of stars!"

"What? From godfather?" Suiyue excitedly jumped out of bed, dressed himself, and hurriedly took the letter.

Chapter 444: Seven in Unison

Upon reading the letter, Suiyue rubbed his lower jaw. "For something like this to have happened... it looks like the nine of us will be convened again."

A sura king was constructing something with cut-up pieces of human bodies. In front of a cross, he was continuously assembling, disassembling, and reassembling severed limbs. "The left arm on the right, the right arm on the left, the two legs on the bottom..."

"No, no. The two legs facing straight out, the head in the very middle, the body hung up... one arm in the head's mouth?"

A piece of brutal, bloody, and crazy 'artwork' was thus finished.

The sura king glanced at his 'sculpture' and frowned. "I feel like I'm missing something, a new horizon, a new truth. Compared to my human centipede from before, this is nothing. As I expected, the artistry of living things is far greater than that of the dead."

The sura king beamed with pride as he recalled his past work. His body trembled, and he almost climaxed from the recollection.

This sura king was Fenghe. He looked cultured and was dressed well, with a monocle over one eye. That eye was a compound eye similar to those that insects possessed.

Despite his appearance, his thoughts were crazed and vulgar.

After all, to become a sura king required some amount of insanity.

He walked out of his atelier and into his dungeon, which was filled with all sorts of monsters—lifeforms that somehow managed to live with just their buttocks and two legs; that had their two arms and legs swapped with each other; that had three heads, each from a different creature; that had a brain spliced together with a hundred others.

Fenghe soon reached his newest creation, a gigantic creature over three meters tall, with seven heads in all. The first one was natural and rested atop its neck; the other six grew in a line from chest to stomach. The creature had eight arms in all, and the stitches from forcibly grafting the arms on were clearly visible.

Fenghe glanced at his work with wonder. "It looks like this experiment was a success. I'll call you Fenghe Creation #107."

The monster bashed itself against the metal bars as its primary head yelled out, "I'll kill you!"

The head that grew out of the creature's chest begged, "Please kill me!"

The second head that grew out of the creature's chest shouted, "Save me!"

The fourth head in line hoarsely muttered, "I want to die."

All seven heads spoke simultaneously and independently, causing Fenghe to smile. "Very good. The experiment really was successful."

Just then, a sura with antlers on his head and wings behind his back flew down. "Your highness, there's a missive from the monarch of stars!"

"Let me have a look." Fenghe glanced at the letter and sighed. "What a shame! It looks like I'll have to be separated from my art for some time."

A handsome sura with bull's horns was hugging a beautiful human woman, who asked him, "Why do you treat me so well, your highness?"

"Why do you like me even though I have a bull's horns, then?"

The beautiful woman seemed a little frightened by the question. Taking a deep breath and drumming up her courage, she asked, "I'm a human, aren't I? Those of your race treat me like nothing more than cattle. But you released all the humans enslaved within your kingdom just for me—how could it be worth it?"

The handsome sura tilted the woman's head up as he whispered, "For you, everything is worth it."

The beautiful woman's eyes dilated. "Your highness..."

The handsome sura suddenly said, "There's something I'd like to get your help with, actually."

"Anything for you, your highness."

"I have a few brothers who haven't had a taste of a human for quite some time."

"What?!"

The woman was still in a daze when the door to the room burst open and thirty sura rushed inside, pouncing on her and pinning her onto the bed. The woman's eyes widened as she yelled, "Save me, your highness! Didn't you say you loved me most in the world?"

The handsome sura's eyes brightened as he watched the scene. "Indeed, indeed! That's why I most want to see you scream and yell out in despair before you die unwillingly."

He watched on as the woman's clothes were torn off her body, revealing her snow-white skin, and then as the sura restrained and raped her. So excited did he become that his head slowly transformed into that of an ox.

This was the sura king Niutou.

Another sura walked into the room. Niutou turned and asked, "Do you want to join in too?"

The sura glanced at the struggling woman in bed and pursed his lips. "I'm tired of it, your highness—you must do this twenty times a year at the very least. Right, I have a letter for you."

Niutou nodded and glanced at the letter in his hands. "What happened to the humans that were released from the kingdom?"

"We've sent some sura to capture them again, and they've now been corralled and sent to a nearby city."

Niutou nodded. "Choose a beautiful woman among them and repeat the process."

The sura nodded. He knew that, against thirty adult sura, the human woman had no chance of surviving.

After Niutou opened the letter and began reading through it, he added, "Leave the selection for later. I have something more important to do at the moment."

Sun Mengmeng asked, "What's our next goal, Zhang Lie?"

"All of you in Team Zenith should kill these peak-grade lifeforms to acquire more peak gene fragments. Remember to bring the leader of the rock spirits, along with the Yeluo chieftain.

"Make sure to bring the leader of the rock spirits with you at any cost. The rock spirit has grown much stronger since the raid, and I think it should be able to suppress a peak-grade lifeform by itself."

Given all the metal it had absorbed, the rock spirit's defense was hard for even Zhang Lie to penetrate. With the rock spirit around, Zhang Lie was certain that, even if the members of Team Zenith were ambushed by a group of peak-grade lifeforms, there wouldn't be a problem.

To be frank, the rock spirit would only be there for added security; it wasn't difficult for the members of Team Zenith, working together, to take down a peak-grade lifeform.

They were much like family to Zhang Lie, and he certainly wasn't going to allow them to die.

"What about you, Zhang Lie?" Sun Mengmeng asked.

"I'm planning to go to a certain location."

"Where? Can't we accompany you?"

Zhang Lie replied frankly, "It's a little dangerous, and given your strength, you wouldn't be able to be of much help."

Sun Mengmeng lowered her head in disappointment—Zhang Lie's words meant that the members of Team Zenith would only drag him down.

Zhang Lie rubbed Sun Mengmeng's head. "Don't worry about me just yet. Focus on strengthening yourselves. I'll definitely need all your help in the future."

"I understand, Captain!" Sun Mengmeng's spirits were kindled once again.

Chapter 445: The Nine Kings Gather

A motley group smelling heavily of blood slowly made its way into the kingdom of stars. All the sura present wore steel masks, and their hands and feet were shackled together. They were chained around a carriage in the center bearing the insignia of a small tower of six human heads.

The sura from the kingdom of stars watched on curiously as the procession made its way forward.

"Who are these? They look so funny!"

"Are you really a sura from the empire of stars? Don't you know who he is? Those strange people are the famed troop of crazies from Shouta, and the person in the carriage is the godson of the monarch of stars!"

The kingdom of Shouta is somewhat like a subsidiary of the empire of stars, but also somewhat not. The monarch doesn't have any children, so it's very likely that the next monarch of stars will be one of his nine godsons."

"Sorry, I'm not from around here, so I don't know as much about all this as you do." The other sura apologized and continued asking, somewhat embarrassedly, "Does that mean that the sura in the carriage is the crown prince?"

"Yes, you can understand it that way. As you know, the stronger you become, the harder it is to produce offspring. Given the monarch of stars' strength, it's very likely that the empire will pass down to his godsons."

Another group of sura walked in through the city gates, their faces veiled. As they entered, their surroundings turned cold. The sura that were around them found their breaths turning into white puffs of air.

Leading the carriage were two skeletal horses. The black carriage itself was completely sealed, as though it were a coffin, and bore the insignia of a god of death. The skeletal horses burned with icy blue flame.

"This is the monarch of stars' second son, the sura king Shicang."

The third group entered the city—with no sura attendants, but rather a group of frightening lifeforms that left the sura spectators rather nauseated.

Even the carriage itself was being dragged along by a lifeform with seven arms and eight legs. The insignia was of a spliced head, the left half of which was a sura and the right half of which was a beast.

"This is the monarch of stars' third son, the sura king Fenghe."

After glancing again at the first two sura kings' processions, the sura asked timidly, "Are the godsons of the monarch of stars all so... extraordinary?"

"That I can't say, but there are rather normal-looking carriages, aren't there? Keep on looking."

The fourth group was the most normal. After it had passed through the city gates, the sura couldn't help wondering, "Is he really a godson of the monarch of stars too?"

The disparity between the processions was simply too large.

"Indeed. Make sure you don't offend any of them—apparently, they all like very different things, but having those things done on you is uniformly a fate worse than death."

The knowledgeable sura sighed. "It looks like the nine sons are convening again."

"What's this?"

"Whenever the monarch of stars assembles his nine godsons, repercussions are felt all throughout the sura realm. I wonder what will come of this meeting?"

The fifth group of sura was led by a group of gigantic ox-headed sura and pulled by a few oxen, which breathed flame out of their nostrils as they snorted. All of them looked to be at least peak-grade lifeforms.

The sura frowned. "Something's wrong. Where's the sura king Xueju? Niutou shouldn't have entered fifth..."

Some of the other sura also noticed something amiss.

Those newcomers to the capital asked, "Why does this sura king not have any sura in his procession?"

"This sura king is of mixed blood between the sura and the minotaurs. There are quite a lot of minotaurs in his kingdom, and his most trusted advisors are also minotaurs themselves."

The sixth group was of a group of elderly sura. Even the horses pulling the carriage looked as though they were steps away from death. The carriage bore the insignia of a grandfather clock.

"Is this the weakest of the nine godsons? Why are his retainers all so... old?"

"No, something's wrong!" What the second sura was paying attention to wasn't the procession, but rather the unusual ordering of the princes. "No Xueju, and now no Xuechi either? Just what happened?"

The last sura king to enter was Gaoyuan. His carriage and guards were rather ordinary; all his guards were strong, muscular men. However, none of the residents of the capital focused on him. They were more astounded by the fact that the sura kings Xueju and Xuechi were missing.

Some suggested that the two kings had decided to break away from the empire of stars, and others that they had quarreled with the monarch of stars and refused to attend the meeting as a result.

No one guessed that the two kings were already dead. After all, the monarch of stars and his godsons were so strong that no sura thought anyone foolish enough to challenge them.

While the capital was embroiled in furious discussion, the meeting began.

Zhang Lie arrived at the valley marked in the map in Xuechi's study. From the outside, the valley looked to be perfectly normal, filled with natural beauty—fresh air, green grass stretching toward the horizon, and clear, running water.

According to the diary of the late Xuechi, Zhang Lie entered the valley through a secret tunnel, one whose entrance was covered by vines. Without the diary, Zhang Lie would surely not have discovered this entrance.

All he had heard in his past life were information and rumors, but none of the fine details.

Upon entering the valley, he found himself deep within a glade of trees.

"Is this really the valley I've heard so much about in my past life?"

A superior-grade lifeform swooped down and extended its sharp claws at Zhang Lie, thinking to kill this foreign intruder. Zhang Lie snorted, jumped up, and charged up a blow with his fist.

All he knew about the valley in front of him was that, through some special technique or another, he could summon a peak-grade lifeform that would drop a very special soulshard when killed.

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

Before the fist even struck the lifeform, it exploded from the waves of power that radiated from the fist. Blood and feathers filled the sky.

Chapter 446: A House of Perversion

[You successfully killed a superior-grade fiery eagle and obtained its soulshard. By consuming the flesh of the superior-grade fiery eagle, you may receive one to ten superior gene fragments.]

"As mentioned in the diary, all the lifeforms here are cruel and ferocious..."

The glade of trees was located along one side of the valley. Zhang Lie leapt down the cliff like a meteor and landed on the valley floor with a big boom that echoed throughout the valley and caused the ground beneath him to crack.

All sorts of genetic lifeforms were startled by the impact of his fall. Zhang Lie glanced around at his surroundings and saw three superior-grade lifeforms nearby. Indeed, the valley seemed densely populated with strong lifeforms.

When they saw Zhang Lie, they were initially frightened by the noise he had made, then enraged that he was encroaching on their territory. They rushed toward him at once.

"[Fists of the Silent Sea: Fade]!" Zhang Lie threw out one lone punch, so strong it warped the space all around his fist. Ripples of energy spread out from him, destroying all the lifeforms below superior-grade in the vicinity.

Announcement after announcement could be heard in his head; Zhang Lie ignored them all. He sent slashes of sword energy flying around him with his sword, finishing off the heavily wounded superior-grade lifeforms as well.

[You successfully killed a stargrass demonwolf. By consuming the flesh of the stargrass demonwolf, you may receive one to ten superior gene fragments.]

[You successfully killed a redmoon tortoise and obtained its soulshard. By consuming the flesh of the redmoon tortoise, you may receive one to ten superior gene fragments.]

[You successfully killed a fistborne rabbit. By consuming the flesh of the fistborne rabbit, you may receive one to ten superior gene fragments.]

Zhang Lie again ignored the announcements as he continued roaming through the valley. Over the next few days, the valley would remain in a constant state of upheaval as Zhang Lie slaughtered his way through its denizens.

The sura king Shouta walked into the monarch of stars' palace carrying a cloth-wrapped executioner's sword behind him.

Within the palace was a long table, around which seven chairs were arrayed. Shouta sat down at the first chair.

He wasn't too different from the other sura kings—not the godsons of the monarch of stars, but rather the rulers of the other sura territories all around.

He had astounding musculature and gave off an emperor's aura, but compared to the others, the stench of blood was too strong and concentrated around him, so much so that no amount of washing could remove the stench.

The blood had seeped into his aura and spirit. To look at the sura king Shouta was to look at a sea of corpses, a river of blood.

As Shouta walked into the palace, the air itself seemed to take on an iron tinge. There were scars all over his body, and a particularly long one by his neck, a testament to the battlefields he had waded into and survived.

"So you're already here, butcher."

The sura king Shicang strode into the meeting room in a long robe, his feet not even touching the floor. Black smoke wafted from his robe, and the air in the room turned cold.

Shouta folded his arms. "What do you mean, 'butcher'? I'm far more sophisticated than that—I don't sell meat, I'm an artist, an artist of the battlefield!"

Shicang continued, "I heard you waged war against a few nearby kingdoms, three from alien races, and two sura. You rushed in yourself and slaughtered an entire swathe of defenders, then made towers out of their heads. What was it, thirteen thirty-meter tall towers?"

Shouta shook his head. "Eighteen."

Shicang sighed and tilted his head. "Cruel and barbaric."

"I don't want to be lectured by a necrophile."

"Ah, you're both here!" Fenghe strode in, and both Shouta and Shicang greeted him. "Hello, third brother."

His appearance was well-received, so much so that one was led to suspect that it was the most perverted of the nine who were most respected by their brothers. Shouta and Shicang didn't get

along well because neither respected the other's perversion, and neither thought the other worthy of their level.

Shouta called out, "Third brother, I've made a few new creations!"

Fenghe nodded. "I heard about your exploits on the battlefield. Has Father let you participate in his wars yet?"

"Don't mention it—he always rejects me, and I get so mad I have to take my anger out on the sura kingdoms nearby! Only art can pacify my soul—only art can bring me peace."

Shouta then waved a hand around. "Let's not talk about such unpleasantries. I made a few other sculptures recently, and I feel like my expertise is growing even higher. One of my towers went forty meters tall."

Fenghe sighed. "Eldest brother, you want to be an artist, not an architect, don't you? That means that you can't just focus on height, but rather skill, expression, and elegance. Did you paint this tower of yours? I'd love to discuss it with you."

Shouta scratched his head in embarrassment. "Well... another of my painters went crazy, and I haven't been able to find a replacement yet."

Fenghe:...

Shicang:...

Fenghe replied seriously, "It looks like you must have made significant improvement, then. How long did the last painter last?"

"Three months or so. This painter's mental state is weaker than the last, and he only managed to survive a month."

Fenghe nodded. "Keep working hard."

Moyan walked inside. "Ah, are all of you here already? Butcher, necrophile, and third brother!"

Shouta glanced up at him. "Oculophile, I heard you vanquished a sura kingdom next door to yours."

Moyan shook his head. "Don't call me an oculophile. I have no idea what you're talking about—I'm just a blind man."

"Indeed?" Shouta couldn't help but laugh. "If you're just a blind man, then there's no one in this world who's ordinary."

Fenghe smiled. "Fourth brother, I recently made a creation whose body is filled with eyes all over. Would you like to have a look?"

Moyan whirled around. "When, where?"

Shouta spread his arms. "I told you, an oculophile is an oculophile."

"Have you found any pretty eyes lately, fourth brother?"

Moyan replied, "Two days ago, I extracted a pair of eyes from a human girl. They're very pretty, innocent and pure, unclouded by despair or age. They're like angels' eyes, and I'm besotted with them."

Niutou strode inside. "Butcher, necrophile, seamster, and oculophile, are you all here already?"

Everyone present frowned. Fenghe replied politely, "Please don't call me a seamster. You can address me as an artist, but I'd rather be called a biologist. I've been searching for the truth behind life, to reach the pinnacle of evolution with my mortal hands."

Niutou shook his head, then sat opposite the group of sura kings. "In other words, you're a mad scientist."

Chapter 447: Dragon's Eye Soulshard

The ground and clear streams were dyed a lurid red by the fresh blood from the genetic lifeforms that lay all around Zhang Lie.

Invisible energy filled the air, floating out of sight—spiritual essence.

All lifeforms had souls. Upon their death, spiritual essence would dissipate into their environment. Under ordinary circumstances, such spiritual essence would disappear rapidly. However, the mud in this valley was very special, and it could bind the spiritual essence and prevent it from dissipating.

Zhang Lie killed lifeforms in the valley for three whole days, finding quite a large number of superior-grade lifeforms, but never the special peak-grade one that was his goal.

Nothing in the valley could stop his massacre, not even a group of peak-grade lifeforms.

Zhang Lie was certain that the spiritual density in the valley was nearing the required threshold. He retrieved all the mutated- and superior-grade soulshards from his soulspace and smashed them all to pieces, causing spiritual essence to burst out in a thick fog. The spiritual essence in the air began to froth, as though Zhang Lie had poured gasoline over a burning fire.

Pinpricks of light appeared in the air like fireflies, dyeing the entire valley an extraordinary blue. The light began to revolve and whirl violently, causing the entire valley to do the same. Spiritual essence condensed into a pale blue whirlwind, forming a large shape in the very middle.

As more and more spiritual essence condensed, the shape's features became clearer and clearer, resolving into a translucent pale-blue lifeform with many eyes dotted all over its body, a round head, and eight feelers much like an octopus.

"It's finally appeared!" In his last life, Zhang Lie had learned a little of the lifeform before him, but even so, he found it very difficult to believe that the creature in front of him was a genetic lifeform.

In truth, it couldn't be considered one such. It was a lifeform made out of spiritual essence, and could even be considered a mutated soulshard of sorts. Its attack power was likely on par with that of a peak-grade lifeform.

In Zhang Lie's past life, the monarch of dragon's eye had gone alone to this valley of souls, where he slaughtered the lifeforms within for days on end.

This was where he discovered the unusual qualities of the valley, and when he killed a sufficient amount of genetic lifeforms and reached a critical density of spiritual essence in the valley, a spiritual lifeform appeared. Upon killing that lifeform, he obtained a special soulshard—the only one in the second realm that was able to enhance his eyes.

The spiritual lifeform's eyes all looked toward Zhang Lie. Each pupil was slitted; white rays of light shot out from those eyes toward Zhang Lie.

Zhang Lie dodged the white rays of light with a flap of his wings.

"[Rune: Control]!" The image of a dragonturtle appeared before him as Zhang Lie raised his hand. Ripples spread out from the two tablets, sealing the lifeform's will and power.

The two tablets were particularly effective against a spiritual lifeform—the squid's body turned pale, and its eyes listless.

Zhang Lie flapped his wings and shot toward it.

"[The Boundless Blade: Expulsion]!" Zhang Lie's sword energy gathered into a tall wave that crashed down on his opponent, causing the squid's body to break apart like an egg. From within rushed out a translucent pale blue dragon, its body covered not with scales, but countless pairs of eyes.

Somehow, it looked simultaneously pretty and frightening.

The moment it emerged, its eyes glowed with bright light, and spiritual essence circled around it.

"[First Form: Parting the River]!" Gleaming light honed the edge of Zhang Lie's sword, and a beam of sword energy rose into the air. The light pierced the very heavens and formed an arc in mid-air, slicing apart the currents of spiritual essence that drifted toward the creature.

The spiritual dragon opened its maw wide, revealing a gigantic eye within. It had pretended to be weak to trick Zhang Lie; Zhang Lie's momentum meant that he wouldn't be able to dodge whatever attack came his way, but he didn't intend to dodge regardless.

The sword in his hand grew as bright as the sun. With frightening strength, he thrust it into the dragon's throat.

"[The Boundless Blade: Requiem of the End]!" Sword energy speared the dragon from the inside out.

[Ninesoul Dragonblade—Second Form: Piercing the Soul]!" Zhang Lie's spiritual attack severed its soul with a blinding burst of light.

As the pale blue apparition vanished, the will of the world announced, [You successfully killed a peak-grade dragon soul and obtained its soulshard.]

A pale blue orb appeared in front of Zhang Lie. Unlike other soulshards he had seen to date, what rested within this soulshard wasn't a weapon or armor, but rather a curious eye.

Put differently, the soulshard itself looked like a dragon's eye—this was the dragon's eye soulshard.

Even Zhang Lie couldn't hide his exhilaration. The monarch of dragon's eye had grown into his power and his name almost entirely because of this soulshard.

Zhang Lie immediately materialized the soulshard. His eyes turned slitted, and everything he saw seemed to slow down.

Upon flying up into the air, he found that his vision had improved to a frightening extent. He was able to see even beyond the valley, to penetrate the bodies of the lifeforms outside the valley and sense their souls directly, to attack them with just his eyes...

For this soulshard alone, the trip was completely worth it.

After acquiring the soulshard, he immediately left the valley and returned to Renhuang. By that time, the raiding party had returned as well. Everyone had partaken in the spoils of war except the wood spirits, who hadn't participated in the raid.

Just the fact that the kingdom of Xuechi was destroyed and that the citizens of Renhuang had avenged themselves was worthy of a celebration—with Zhang Lie as governor, the citizens felt as though they would never have to suffer injustice.

Not long after Zhang Lie returned, so too did the members of Team Zenith, who had gone out hunting the peak-grade lifeforms described in Xuechi's diary.

They had managed to defeat all the peak-grade lifeforms without any injury at all—the leader of the rock spirits served as tank and vanguard while the hunters of Team Zenith struck down one peak-grade lifeform after another.

Chapter 448: Aged Wine

In the empire of stars, the nine sura kings' meeting continued to progress.

Niutou said, "So, mad scientist, I heard that some of your creations escaped from their cells and rampaged through seven nearby kingdoms, three of which were sura kingdoms."

Fenghe shrugged. "Those are all rumors. My creations never escaped or rampaged; I was just conducting a small-scale experiment. I was shocked to learn that the nearby sura kingdoms were incapable of dealing with even the least of my creations."

Shouta snorted. "Let the weak sura kingdoms die—they aren't needed."

Fenghe continued, "Right, sixth brother, I heard that you cleared your entire kingdom of humans for one of your little games."

Niutou's face turned dark. "Don't insult me, mad scientist. These aren't games for me—they're my true feelings."

"Oh, is that so? How many times have you expressed your true feelings to human women, then?"

Niutou frowned. "Thirty times, forty times, give or take—I don't remember the precise number!"

Fenghe shook his head. "If you can't even remember how many times you've done it, how can you be so confident your feelings are real?"

Niutou replied slowly, "You need to inject all your feelings into a flower to have it bloom for you, don't you? I don't need to remember how many times I've done so to do it over and over again. And when the flower blooms, when it reaches the acme of its beauty, you pluck it and destroy it, petal by petal—I'm shivering just remembering the ecstasy I feel from doing so."

Fenghe looked at him agape. "I knew you were perverted, but not to what extent. I've really underestimated you."

Moyan shook his head. "By this point, you can't call it 'perversion' anymore. It's 'craziness'."

"I'm no pervert! If you have to give me a title, call me a florist. It takes time and effort, wealth and power and deliberation. The more you put in to secure a flower's bloom, the greater the pleasure you feel when you reap the rewards. I'm sure all of you can understand this ecstasy."

The other sura kings noisily moved their chairs away from Niutou.

"Right, seamster, I heard you made something particularly interesting recently."

Fenghe rolled his eyes as he introduced his own creation. "A true Argos indeed, with 360 pairs of eyes embedded all over his body, even on the soles of his feet. To make this creature, I had to kill 180 humans."

Moyan was happily listening to Fenghe's recounting when the sura king Suiyue walked in.

Niutou waved a hand at him. "Ah, the gerontophile."

Suiyue tsked at him. "You simply don't understand the charm of the old. People are like wine, and they mature as they age. What's wrong with liking those slightly older than I am?"

Niutou's lips spasmed. "Slightly older? They're five times your age! Most people take lovers differing by no more than a decade in age, and even the crazy ones might span only two or three decades, but you're closing in on a century's worth of difference!"

Suiyue shrugged. "Love transcends the boundaries of time."

"And gender?" Niutou questioned.

Suiyue replied seriously, "If our fifth brother were present, he would agree. You have sex with the opposite sex only to procreate; true love is with those of the same sex."

Everyone turned silent. No one suspected that they would be able to change Suiyue's perspective with just a single argument.

Shouta sighed. "I can't believe someone dared to make a move against a sura king, particularly one of us."

Shicang narrowed his eyes. "And I can't imagine that one of us would lose against a human."

The last sura king, Gaoyuan, walked into the room. His gaze swept over the meeting table. "It looks like we've all gathered."

He sat down at the last empty chair and placed a flagon of wine on the table. Shouta asked, "Is this to memorialize our departed brothers?"

"It really was a pity that our fifth brother's dead. We got along very well, and I don't know who I'll have such deep conversations with in the future. Just like me, he's a cultured sura."

Gaoyuan sighed. "I've had a chef specifically brew this wine to commemorate his passing. Have a taste and see if you like it—if you do, I'm planning on spreading it far and wide across the sura lands."

Gaoyuan poured a cup of white-colored wine for everyone, then raised his cup high into the air. "To our fifth and seventh brothers."

The sura kings consumed the wine and began to frown. Only Gaoyuan sipped at it slowly, as though trying to savor each drop. Fenghe placed the cup down and smiled wryly.

Shouta asked, "Why does this wine taste strange?"

Moyan shook his head. "I don't like the flavor."

Niutou's frown cut across his head. "There's something familiar but foreign about this taste. I don't like it."

Suiyue turned to him. "Is that so? I like the taste myself, but I don't think it's aged enough. Do you have any vintages of this kind?"

Gaoyuan shook his head. "This is a novel brew."

"In that case, let me order a thousand casks of this wine, aged for at least ten years, in advance!"

Gaoyuan nodded. "As many as you want. Once it's ready, I'll contact you."

Shicang turned to Fenghe and asked curiously, "Why haven't you had a taste?"

Fenghe smiled back at him kindly. "Have you all considered what our youngest brother might brew wine with?"

The kings all around the table froze.

Shouta, Moyan, and Niutou's cups smashed against the ground with three identical clinks.

Hoping against hope, Shouta forced back his fear as he asked, "Ninth brother, how did you brew this wine?"

"With the best ingredients, of course."

"Which are...?"

"The testicles of 99 different species."

Shouta, Moyan, and Niutou's eyes all widened as they tried to retch up the wine they had swallowed.

Gaoyuan continued, "My chef's currently working on an even more high-quality brew, involving the testicles of 999 different species. Shall I send you all a complimentary cask when it's ready?"

Suiyue clapped his hands. "That would be great!"

Shouta grimaced as he called out, "Ninth brother, what have we done to you to deserve this?"

Moyan added, "Why have us consume such poisoned wine? We're brothers, aren't we? We can sort everything out with a pleasant conversation instead!"

Chapter 449: Monarch of Stars

Niutou pursed his mouth. "What toxic wine! I've never had anything worse!"

"This sort of poison, this—I can't bear it anymore!"

The three sura kings whose faces had been turning green after Gaoyuan's revelation suddenly became to vomit at once.

Gaoyuan twisted his head. "What are they doing?"

Suiyue shrugged. "Who knows."

Fenghe clapped vigorously. "Amazing! No one has ever managed to take down three sura kings in one sitting. Ninth brother, congratulations—your accomplishment won't be replicated for a millennium, I'm sure of it!"

Shicang, who likewise hadn't drunk the proffered wine, asked, "From today onwards, can I call you a master poisoner?"

Gaoyuan finally understood what they were insinuating. "What? But this is a top-quality brew! Do any of you truly understand brewing?"

Shouta's face was pale. "Top quality?! Leave it for yourself, then!"

Niutou sighed. "And to think they call me perverted! Compared to you, I'm hardly worth mentioning."

Moyan sighed as well. "I feel much the same way. Compared to those who have fallen to true perversion, I'm hardly anything."

Gaoyuan shouted, "I'm just a culinary connoisseur, someone who aspires to the acme of food!"

"A poison connoisseur, perhaps?" everyone replied simultaneously.

"A testicle connoisseur!"

Fenghe palmed his face. "To have ordered all the men in your kingdom be castrated—I had thought you nothing more than a fanatic like our fifth brother, but I've really underestimated you."

Moyan concurred. "You're more perverted than any of us here, and I think all of us agree on this point. If anyone ever tries to call me out on my fetish, I'll mention that yours is worse."

The other sura kings nodded.

Gaoyuan shook his head. "No, no! You're my fourth brother—how could you be so modest? I'm sure you're far more perverted than I am."

Moyan shook his head quickly. "No, surely not. You might be my younger brother, but you're far more perverted than I am. You're a stain on my honor, I say!"

Shouta nodded and gave Gaoyuan a thumbs up. "Fourth brother is right. You're the most perverted among us, we'll all grant you that!"

From the three brothers' expressions alone, ignoring their actual dialogue, one would almost think that they were each demurring some honor politely.

Gaoyuan shook his head. "Fourth brother, you've extracted the eyes of countless humans. Please have more confidence in yourself."

Moyan countered, "Ninth brother, you're a connoisseur of testicles. Isn't that fact enough to have you be considered the most perverted among us?"

"I've told you already, I'm just a gourmand! Surely I'm far less vicious or brutal than our eldest brother? He's a butcher, through and through! All of us combined would have a lower kill count than him."

Shouta folded his arms. "Nonsense! The necrophile surely has killed more humans. His entire kingdom's full of corpses."

Shicang's brows furrowed. "Don't drag me into this."

Shouta rolled his eyes at him. "As though you aren't a pervert in your own right!"

"I'm a collector, only that."

Shouta shrugged. "I doubt I've killed as many people as you've collected."

Shicang shook his head. "Is someone perverted just for killing people? Look at Niutou—he's never killed anyone except on the battlefield, but we consider him crazier than a pervert."

Moyan nodded. "And our eighth brother as well—he's barely killed anyone, but they fear him more than they do us."

It was Niutou's turn to frown. "What? Who's calling me crazier than a pervert?"

Suiyue looked aggrieved. "I'm just a gerontophile! What's wrong with that?!"

Niutou rolled his eyes. "Even an ordinary gerontophile would be disgusted by you."

Fenghe tried to pacify all the sura kings. "Brothers, let's not fight over these things. What's wrong with a little perversion between men? Surely you wouldn't want Father to see us fighting."

Everyone shouted, "Shut up, you mad scientist!"

"What? What's wrong with my passion for science, for biology?"

None of the sura outside the palace could have imagined that the seven sura kings, potential candidates to become the future monarch of stars, were squabbling with each other like little children.

Just as the situation looked to be spiraling out of control, a red-robed elder walked in and asked, "What are all of you discussing?"

Everyone quieted down and returned to their seats. Shouta asked, "Why are you here, elder? Where's Father?"

The red-robed sura was an elder of the empire of stars. He slowly replied, "His majesty had something that required his attention, so he dispatched me to supervise the meeting for the moment to prevent any infighting."

Clearly, the monarch of stars had anticipated such a fight occurring.

The elder sat down by the center of the table. "You've all received the missives, haven't you?"

Shouta countered, "Elder, if we hadn't, how would we have known to gather here?"

The elder nodded. "Very good. In that case, what do you think of the information presented in the missive?"

Shouta shook his head. "To be honest, I'm very surprised that our fifth and seventh brothers were killed."

Shicang added, "By a human, no less."

Fenghe closed his eyes in contemplation. "It's possible that it wasn't in direct battle, as the missive alluded to."

Moyan advised, "We should try to be cautious. Our enemy might be lurking in the background."

Niutou suddenly raised his head. "What does Father think?"

"My thoughts are simple: we'll crush them with brute force."

The monarch of stars pushed open the doors to the meeting room and marched in, his aura dwarfing that of anyone else's in the room.

The seven sura kings present were all leaders and rulers in their own right, but even their auras were magnitudes weaker than the monarch of stars'.

"Long time no see, godsons!"

"Godfather!"

As soon as the monarch of stars emerged, the seven perverted sura kings immediately began acting like the paragons of virtue, and the monarch gave them all a big hug.

He instructed them seriously, "No matter who it was that killed your fifth and seventh brothers, we'll make them pay. We'll strike quickly and lethally, as fast as possible. This matter concerns not just my reputation, but also the reputation of the entire empire of stars. We must make it known that you godsons aren't to be touched."

Chapter 450: Attack of the Seven Sons

The sura elder added, "Indeed, if others were to find out that the monarch of stars didn't seek revenge for the death of his godsons, the reputation that the empire of stars received by defeating three other empires in one fell swoop will be erased completely."

The monarch of stars nodded. "No one will respect me, and no one will respect you."

The seven sura kings' faces turned serious.

The monarch of stars was right. The death of their fifth and seventh brothers was something that should have concerned them as much as their godfather.

Regardless of who the culprit behind their murders was, that culprit had to die.

Fenghe asked, "If this was a ploy by other empires to destroy the reputation of the empire of stars, what should we do?"

The monarch of stars replied, "Defeat them, of course! If you can't defeat them, I'll do so myself. No matter what, the culprit will pay for this crime."

The empire of stars has had a big victory recently, and anyone who's trying to suppress our might is only courting death. I'll back all of you up—find that culprit and kill him."

"Godfather, with your assurance, we can certainly relax."

Fenghe suspected that the deaths of his brothers could be due to other sura empires who wanted to prevent the ascendancy of the empire of stars. The empire of stars had defeated an alliance of three empires and demonstrated itself to be the strongest of the sura empires.

Moyan asked, "What if we find some evidence, but the sura empires refuse to admit what they've done?"

The monarch of stars slammed a palm on the table. "For killing my godsons, if you find even one shred of actionable evidence, I'll lead a charge against them myself!"

The seven sura kings smiled in relief. With the monarch of stars backing them up, they would have nothing to fear.

"However, I can't provide you with any support. You'll have to rely on yourselves." The monarch of stars sighed. "My enemies are lurking in the dark. I don't know who they are, nor what power they possess. I have to remain in the empire of stars in order to react instantly to an attack or another."

The sura kings nodded, finding the monarch's explanation reasonable. If the monarch of stars himself were to lead the charge against another sura empire, he would be leaving his empire undefended and open to attack.

The empire of stars could not strike, or it would leave itself undefended.

Shouta clapped his hands and smiled. "In that case, we'll have to take the lead. We won't disappoint you, Godfather—if we can't accomplish even this task, we aren't fit to be your godsons! I can handle this small city of humans, this Renhuang, myself."

He rubbed his hands in glee, unable to hide his anticipation to clash against the humans.

Shicang smiled. "Don't be too overconfident."

Everyone began to laugh—it was a joke, and interpreted as such.

As the monarch of stars began planning for the attack, the seven sura kings watched on with excitement.

Fenghe smiled maliciously. "It's been a long time since I've let out some of my older creations in the dungeon, and they're craving some fresh human blood."

Moyan was equally excited. "I wonder what beautiful eyes I'll be able to obtain? Apparently, humans have eyes of all colors."

Gaoyuan laughed. "I heard there were quite a number of alien races in Renhuang, so I can probably collect a number of interesting testicles."

Shicang added, "My troops need to be replenished as well."

Shouta cried out, "Hey, all the heads of the citizens of Renhuang are mine! You can't snatch them!"

The monarch of stars palmed his face. "All of you—my goodness, just who do all of you take after?!"

"You, of course," Fenghe replied smoothly.

They all knew that the monarch of stars was known as the beast king before his ascendance.

In his youth, he enjoyed having sex with the genetic lifeforms that roamed the second realm. He wandered the extremities of the realm for quite a long period of time, starting with regular lifeforms and subsequently moving on to mutated-, superior-, and finally peak-grade lifeforms.

Whenever he saw a lifeform he hadn't yet encountered before, he would pounce on it, defeat it, and have sex with it right then and there.

Because of his special... hobbies... he was always battling with these lifeforms, and his strength grew rapidly as a result. His unusual behavior was also what earned him the name 'beast king'.

Sometimes, the monarch of stars got tired of these beasts and set his sights on members of alien races instead. One estimate suggested that the beast king had had sex with over half the species in the second realm, and he grew so notorious that even genetic lifeforms would flee from his sight.

When the beast king built his own city, he named himself the king of stars. Because of his strength, his city quickly grew into an empire.

When their plans were finished, the monarch of stars dismissed the seven sura kings, who made their way out of the empire. The content of the meeting quickly made its way through the entire empire of stars under the auspices of the monarch of stars.

The monarch and the elders made it widely known that they were planning to attack Renhuang because, from their perspective, their target wasn't Renhuang itself, but rather the forces that were supporting it from the background.

Most humans wouldn't have any access to news from the sura empires, but certain races in the second realm did—for example, the wood spirits. A sura walked out of the empire of stars and morphed into a member of a race that bore a surprising similarity to the wood spirits.

He beckoned toward a bird and strung a note to its claws. "Tell the wood spirits that the seven sura kings of the monarch of stars will attack Renhuang."

At that moment, Zhang Lie was unaware of the sura response to his sacking of Xuechi. He was traveling through a mountain range with the members of Team Zenith as he searched for his next target.

There had been nothing pressing lately, so it was an excellent time to finish acquiring the rest of the gene fragments that he needed.

"How about this, Captain? According to the diary of the old king of Xuechi, there are three peak-grade lifeforms that live within this cave, respectively with an ice, thunder, and a wind attunement! If we can finish them all off, we'll be able to get thirty peak gene fragments at once. However, I'm not certain we'll be able to handle three such lifeforms at the same time."

"It won't be a problem. Let's attack!"

As a result, the first people who found out about the impending invasion of Renhuang were those who frequently browsed the hunters' forums and saw the newest thread that had been created.