

U. Warlord 701

Chapter 701: Another Core

Following tradition, the three princes would be sent away from the capital to serve as lords of their own estates.

Depending on their relationships with the ninth prince, the three princes were treated very differently.

The crown prince's lands were rich and fertile, and he had everything he could possibly want there. On the other hand, the third prince was sent to barren land. The ninth prince clearly bore a grudge against the third prince, who had tried to steal his master away from him. The seventh prince's land was rather normal, neither rich nor barren.

The Heijie left with the seventh prince, who promised that he would parcel out some of that land to them.

With the king of the realm in power, it would be tremendously difficult for any of the princes to revolt.

Once everything was settled, the king of the realm asked, "Master, one of the fourth-level beasts has finally evolved. Would you like to head over now? Please, let me send you on your way!"

"Thank you. I'll accept the offer."

With the wave of a hand, Zhang Lie vanished from the king of the realm's sight. The king of the realm had teleported him all the way to the depths of a desert, where Zhang Lie sensed an ancient, primordial aura—the signature of a disaster-grade lifeform.

Genetic energy rippled around Zhang Lie's body. As he raised an arm, water-attuned genetic energy imbued with spatial force circled his fists, moving so rapidly that a hurricane of sand seemed to form around him.

Then, Zhang Lie punched forward. The energy erupted in a flood, drowning the sand from above.

The ground beneath Zhang Lie exploded. A giant dragon of sand emerged from beneath him, soaring hundreds of meters into the air. Its scaly armor was pitch-black, with blade-like protrusions that seemed to be able to cut anything.

The disaster-grade lifeform had been preparing a sneak attack on Zhang Lie, but Zhang Lie had attacked the moment he sensed its presence.

Zhang Lie's [Fists of the Silent Sea] fell like a waterfall from the heavens, striking the disaster-grade lifeform directly.

A frightening wave of energy erupted from the collision. Sand and dust burst into the air, filtering the sunlight and turning the skies dark. The disaster-grade lifeform shrieked in pain as its crystalline armor burst apart, a heavy gash on its head.

If it weren't a disaster-grade lifeform, this blow alone would have bisected its body. Even so, the blow was sufficiently strong that it flung the lifeform away like a half-broken burlap sack.

Subsequently, the lifeform burrowed back into the sand, trying to escape.

"[Fists of the Silent Sea: Quake]!" Zhang Lie struck with his right arm. Even before his punch materialized, the air began to crack.

The world shook. The ground beneath his feet quaked. The skies trembled, and sand and dust exploded in a circle around him.

As the punch landed, space itself seemed to distort, and the desert shuddered ominously. A burst of energy rushed into the air, propelling the sand upward in waves thousands of meters tall. The disaster-grade lifeform was flung up out of the sand.

"[Fists of the Silent Sea: Soar]!" Without giving it an opportunity to react, Zhang Lie punched at it again. Waves of energy warped the space around him, causing the particles of air to vibrate so rapidly that they annihilated anything in the vicinity of the punch.

The disaster-grade lifeform lifted its tail high into the air, forming a shield of sand, but the strength of Zhang Lie's blow tore it all apart. As the disaster-grade lifeform roared, sending a veritable flood of sand against Zhang Lie's attack, an explosion erupted in the skies.

Hot wind and flurries of sand scoured Zhang Lie's face. With the sand blocking his vision, Zhang Lie was unable to make full use of his mistmeld clam soulshard, but he didn't mind. Brute force was all he needed here, after all. Genetic energy condensed from all over his body. With another punch, he summoned a gigantic serpent.

"[Fists of the Silent Sea: Fade]!" The serpent, thousands of meters long, seemed to encircle the entire desert with its appearance.

It shot out and bit the neck of the disaster-grade lifeform, which struggled as though its life were on the line. Its pitch-black body tangled together with the serpent's, and the protrusions from its carapace cut the serpent apart like blades.

However, the serpent's body was an amalgamation of corrosive darkness- and water-attuned genetic energy, and it began to dissolve the disaster-grade lifeform's carapace instead.

The disaster-grade lifeform's carapace was surprisingly resilient, however, and the serpent couldn't finish it off just yet.

"[The Boundless Blade: Yawning Wave]!" Zhang Lie didn't intend to wait. He made a stroke with his finger, sending a formless will shooting forward.

His attack was plain and ordinary, seemingly unthreatening. The disaster-grade lifeform spun up a shield of sand with its tail, but Zhang Lie's plain attack cut through the sand as though it were nothing, followed by the disaster-grade lifeform's carapace.

As the attack penetrated deep into the lifeform's body, it exploded.

The disaster-grade lifeform was annihilated in an instant. Moments before death, the disaster-grade lifeform cut off the lower half of its body and expended all its energy at once to manipulate the entire desert.

The sand all around them morphed into countless beasts, which flung themselves at Zhang Lie and swallowed him whole. Zhang Lie raised an eyebrow. Summoning the blade Guicang, he slashed forward, shattering the world.

The entire desert split in two, and the disaster-grade lifeform's body along with it.

[You successfully killed a disaster-grade blackhorn viper. By consuming the core of the disaster-grade blackhorn viper, you may receive one to ten disaster gene fragments.]

Zhang Lie sheathed his sword and found the disaster-grade lifeform's genetic core in his head.

It was a mud-yellow color, and it seemed to attract the sand all around him. When Zhang Lie's palm touched it, he could feel pinpricks of pain.

He frowned. "How should I return?"

He felt something focus its attention on him—some manipulation of space from afar.

Zhang Lie allowed the energy to grab ahold of him and send him away, returning him to the palace within moments. Clearly, the king of the realm had been paying attention to his fight.

Zhang Lie glanced all around him. "Is court still in session?"

The king of the realm chuckled. "Master, your fight finished too quickly."

Zhang Lie had killed the disaster-grade lifeform so quickly that even the king of the realm would be unable to match his speed.

"Master, would you like me to teleport you to the soon-to-evolve fourth-level beast?"

"No, not yet. I'll wait until it's fully a fifth-level beast," Zhang Lie replied, then left.

After his ascension to the king of the realm, the ninth prince had granted Zhang Lie a manor within the palace. This would be Zhang Lie's first time heading there. When he saw the signboard proclaiming the name of the manor, he couldn't help but smile—the manor had been granted to 'the protector of the realm'.

Zhang Lie rather liked the position that the king of the realm had thought up for him.

Servants came pouring out of the manor before he could make his way within. They gathered outside in two neat rows, bowing respectfully as they welcomed him. There were all sorts of beauties among the servants, sourced from any number of alien races...

Chapter 702: Another Evolution

Zhang Lie's mouth twitched. Was this really the work of the king of the realm, who was still little more than a teenager? Did the king of the realm really think him so lecherous? Just what was he thinking?

Surely not. Zhang Lie realized in just an instant that this was probably an idea that someone else had suggested to the king of the realm in an ill-guided attempt to induce Zhang Lie to remain in this world.

Unfortunately for them, Zhang Lie, who was in the middle of his second life, was no longer such an inexperienced greenhorn that he would lose his mind at the sight of beautiful women.

He ignored them all, prohibited them from bothering him unless they were explicitly summoned, and began the process of absorbing the disaster gene fragments into his body.

Zhang Lie cut his palm with Guicang, then allowed his blood to drip onto the disaster-grade core. Like a wad of cotton, the disaster-grade core continuously absorbed Zhang Lie's blood, dyeing it red. The sand that surrounded the core began to avoid Zhang Lie's palm, until it too was dyed red.

Zhang Lie had to reopen the wound a few times before the orb was entirely a clear, vibrant blood-red color. He clutched the prickly disaster-grade core as he sent concentrated, rainbow-colored genetic energy into it for over an entire hour before he felt it starting to soften.

After another ten minutes or so, the entire core had softened completely.

As Zhang Lie clutched the crystalline orb, flecked with blood-red grains of sand, he felt some unusual sense of kinship with it. Once he felt such a sensation, Zhang Lie couldn't resist his impulses any longer, and he swallowed the core whole.

As the core slid down his throat, Zhang Lie felt a fiery, numbing sensation spread throughout his body. Subsequently, all that energy contained within the core burst apart.

Zhang Lie hissed as his body began to turn red, the color of a boiled prawn. Blood frothed and boiled within his body as a terrifying energy rampaged his body from the inside out. Blood seeped from his skin and pores, then boiled in the air. The residue detached itself automatically from his body, forming blood-red grains of sand that revolved around him.

Twenty disaster gene fragments were a threshold for evolution. Zhang Lie believed that he wouldn't undergo such an evolution again considering that he had already become a disaster-grade lifeform, but it had happened nevertheless.

Perhaps because Zhang Lie was finally getting used to absorbing disaster gene fragments, or perhaps because his status of life had increased to that of a disaster-grade lifeform, the process was far more painless than before.

After a moment, Zhang Lie shut his eyes calmly. This level of pain was something he was far too used to—it would be easy enough to bear.

His blood boiled, his body swelled, and golden light emanated from his body.

As the golden light spread, the bloody grains proliferated, revolving in Zhang Lie's chambers and forming a miniature hurricane. Unfortunately for the rare treasures that decorated the room—on the king of the realm's orders—all of it was scoured and destroyed by the bloody grains that surrounded Zhang Lie.

The king of the realm, noticing the disturbance, shook his head with a smile in familiar exasperation. He waved a hand and used the realm's authority to isolate Zhang Lie's room.

He was a young king in the prime of his power. The previous king, who was ailing and growing old, and thus unable to control the realm's authority completely, had only managed to block off the light emanating from Zhang Lie's chambers.

The new king of the realm was young and yet immature, but he was able to manifest greater power.

That day, when Zhang Lie absorbed the disaster-grade core in the ninth prince's quarters, there was no one around. Now, however, Zhang Lie's estate was filled with servants, and it would take quite some time to send all of them away.

In court, a few of the officials noticed the changes in the king of the realm's expression.

"Is something the matter, your majesty?"

The king of the realm shook his head. "It's nothing. You can continue."

As Zhang Lie absorbed more disaster gene fragments, they changed his body from the inside out. His muscles enlarged. Genetic energy circulated through his framework, faster and faster.

As he assimilated the disaster gene fragments into his body, Zhang Lie gave off stronger and stronger beams of light. Circulating genetic energy through his body now took just over ten seconds, an incredible and previously unimaginable speed,

The blood-colored sand began to revolve more and more quickly. Zhang Lie's body gave off popping sounds, and his evolution was spurred further and further onward by the energy of the disaster-grade core.

His bones broke down and regrew time and again, and his capillaries burst before coming back thicker and thicker.

The entire room where his body was located was being scoured clean.

The king of the realm's barrier began to crack. The energy that Zhang Lie absorbed from the disaster-grade core made him so strong that he was unconsciously affecting space itself.

His eyes and mouth began to radiate rainbow light, which seeped out through the barrier that the king of the realm laid down. The cracks widened, and the entire manor began to shake. The king of the realm had no choice but to dismiss court, then teleport over to Zhang Lie's manor.

The servants and maidens knelt down upon seeing the king. "We welcome your majesty."

The king of the realm, however, had no attention to spare for them. He hurriedly reinforced the barrier by physical contact.

By that point, Zhang Lie was undergoing the most crucial part of his metamorphosis. The bloody grains of sand were slowly turning rainbow-colored, forming a gigantic cocoon wrapping around Zhang Lie. Suddenly, black beams of light shot out from within the cocoon, along with huge waves of energy.

The king of the realm hurriedly reached out to contain the energy within.

If he allowed it to escape, it would level the entire capital to the ground. [1]

The king of the realm gritted his teeth as he tried to vent the energy away. Sweat trickled down his head. "Just what is Master up to? He would have destroyed the entire capital if I hadn't done anything!"

According to the lingo of the Milky Way, Zhang Lie was all but a starbreak annihilator in a human form.

Even the king of the realm's reinforced barrier began to crack. He knew that, once it did, the frightening energy within would engulf him within moments. Even so, he didn't give up. He continued pouring energy into the barrier, attempting to vent whatever energy Zhang Lie was exuding.

As the cracks continued to propagate, however, the king of the realm felt his strength waning. Just when he was about to reach his limit, the ferocious energy from within relaxed, and the king couldn't help but sigh in relief.

He had almost perished.

To be frank, he had never expected that, as the king of the realm, he would almost lose his life trying to vent the excess energy that Zhang Lie was exuding upon treading new ground with his cultivation...

Chapter 703: Another Farm

Such an embarrassing event made the king of the realm promise himself that, once his control over the realm were solidified, he would devote himself to cultivation so that nothing like what happened that day could happen again.

Cultivation was strength; cultivation was might—he had to stop relying on his master too much. Because he had been accompanied by Zhang Lie, the king of the realm lacked a driving force for improving his strength. After all, anyone he couldn't defeat, Zhang Lie could.

But what if Zhang Lie himself were the problem, just like what happened today?

Just the excess energy that Zhang Lie gave off was enough to level the entire city. If Zhang Lie hadn't reined in that energy in time, even the king would have been swallowed up whole.

Zhang Lie didn't care about what the king of the realm, who stood outside his chambers, thought. He was deep in thought as he scrolled through his data.

Zhang Lie: a disaster-grade lifeform

Framework: Foundation, Lv. MAX; Ninecarp Transformation, Sixth Form: River Dragon
Techniques: Rippling Walk (pinnacle), Three-Wave Crescendo (pinnacle), Calm Waters (pinnacle), Fists of the Silent Sea (pinnacle), The Boundless Blade (pinnacle), Eclipse (pinnacle), Syzygy (pinnacle), Ninesoul Dragonblade (advanced), Blade of the Heavens (intermediate)

Genes: Basic, 160; Mutated, 150; Superior, 150; Peak, 150; Disaster, 20

Soulshards: White Grub (superior), Blood Ant (superior), Potbellied Toad (mutated), Eternalspring Cocoon (superior), Dragonwolf (superior), Moonlight Wyrms (peak), Golden Roc (peak), Mismeld Clam (disaster)

As Zhang Lie stepped outside his chambers, the ninth prince bowed. "Congratulations on your success, Master."

The king of the realm's hands were still trembling. He hadn't yet fully recovered from the shock of venting all that excess energy that Zhang Lie was giving off.

Zhang Lie asked curiously, "What are you doing here? Is court over?"

The king of the realm rolled his eyes at him. It's all your fault!

"Well, it's rather convenient. Send me to the fourth-level beast that's about to evolve, will you?"

"Now?"

"Is there a problem?"

The king coughed. "Naturally not, Master, but please stay far away from the capital when you absorb these cores. I'm very worried that the energy you give off will be enough to destroy the capital."

"Ah, I overlooked this issue. That's not a problem."

The king of the realm nodded. "In that case, let me send you to where the evolving fourth-level beast is located."

Spatial energy locked in on Zhang Lie and whisked him away, sending him to the depths of the deep sea.

As he felt the pressure bearing down on him, Zhang Lie experienced a momentary sensation of discomfort.

A weaker hunter might have been unable to bear with the sudden change in pressure, and would explode on the spot. However, Zhang Lie was hardly weak. Just one or two breaths was all it took him to acclimatize himself to this new biome. Such was the strength of a disaster-grade lifeform, after all.

Zhang Lie could sense a potent lifeform around him, but he didn't know where that lifeform was located. He looked all around, but he wasn't in much of a hurry. Instead, he released rainbow fog around himself and instructed the lifeforms that fell prey to gather around him.

Subsequently, he began rearing lifeforms in the deep sea, just as he had done in the second realm.

For two whole months, Zhang Lie let them roam freely around him while he solidified his foundation after his recent advancement.

One day, the king of the realm whispered telepathically in his head, "Master, that fourth-level beast has finally evolved!"

Only then did Zhang Lie find the disaster-grade lifeform that he had spent two months feeding. It was so big it looked like an underwater mountain. In comparison, Zhang Lie was far smaller a figure.

Just one eye of the lifeform was as large as a gymnasium. The moment Zhang Lie appeared in front of it, the disaster-grade lifeform mired in darkness sensed the strength in Zhang Lie's body. It had lived for countless years in the depths of the sea, and it had never encountered anything as mysterious as Zhang Lie.

Just then, Zhang Lie's eyes shone with a rainbow gleam, causing the disaster-grade lifeform's mind to go blank.

The illumination from his gaze allowed Zhang Lie to identify the lifeform's true identity: a gigantic sea turtle larger than even the whirlpool tyrant he had encountered way back when.

Zhang Lie reached a hand out to the disaster-grade lifeform's brain, trying to extract its core directly. As he applied pressure with his palm, the disaster-grade lifeform's skull began to crack. The crack quickly propagated through the lifeform's body, causing it to writhe in pain. As it did so, the rainbow gleam in its eyes began to recede. It opened its mouth wide, like a gigantic black hole. Zhang Lie felt a tremendous suction take over his body.

Currents of seawater converged around the sea turtle's mouth, as if trying to push Zhang Lie within the turtle's belly. Zhang Lie felt as though he were fighting against the entire sea.

As expected, it was easy for a disaster-grade lifeform to break through his compulsion. Nevertheless, Zhang Lie could defeat it on the basis of brute strength alone.

"[Fists of the Silent Sea: Quake]!" Zhang Lie's fists rippled with water-attuned genetic energy imbued with spatial force.

The entire sea seemed to swirl around him and his arms, revolving at faster and faster speeds.

It was as though Zhang Lie were battling for control over the seawater with the disaster-grade lifeform. As both of them used their techniques, a whirlpool formed between them, one with such strength that it sucked in all manner of aquatic lifeforms nearby.

As Zhang Lie punched forward, the oceans trembled. Half the ocean seemed to have been struck by that blow, and the seawater began to froth.

The force was so huge that it spread even to the surface of the sea, forming a gigantic wave that seemed as though it would swallow up the shore.

The king's face fell. "Master, just what are you doing?"

He immediately teleported to the scene and suppressed the roiling oceans.

Even the gigantic disaster-grade lifeform was unable to hold out against the effect of this punch. Its mountainous body was forced back time and again.

Zhang Lie's genetic energy exploded, shaking the entire ocean and forming a huge geyser of water over its surface, hundreds of meters tall. The seabed cracked; the seafloor crumbled. Ocean debris and dead lifeforms were sucked into the current.

Zhang Lie's punch had rocked the entire sea.

The king of the realm stared open-mouthed as he sensed what was going on underwater. He knew that Zhang Lie was strong; he had broken the walls of the capital, which had withstood over a millennium of invasions.

Even so, he thought that that was the extent of Zhang Lie's power—but the destruction that Zhang Lie was wreaking on the seafloor now made him rethink that notion. If this punch had landed on the capital's walls, half the capital would have been demolished in an instant.

To be frank, though Zhang Lie had held back then, it would have been impossible for him to wreak such havoc. The most important factor augmenting his strength was the fact that he was now fighting underwater, and his genetic energy was water-attuned.

Chapter 704: The King's Duties

Even so, more surprises lay in wait for the king of the realm. He was shocked that the disaster-grade lifeform managed to survive Zhang Lie's punch, even if its body was heavily wounded and its skull was one good hit away from shattering.

"It looks like you're quite durable, aren't you?"

The disaster-grade lifeform, entirely enraged at the beating it had received at Zhang Lie's hands, made to smash into Zhang Lie with its massive body.

"[Fists of the Silent Sea: Quake]!" The world shook. The sea quaked. The ground beneath his feet shuddered. Water gathered and rippled out from Zhang Lie. He punched forward, shattering the constraints of space and time. Everything in sight exploded.

Waves thousands of meters tall erupted over the surface of the sea.

The king of the realm tried his best to curtail the disturbance as he grumbled, "Master, can't you hold back?!"

Deep in the sea, the disaster-grade lifeform's head exploded. However, its core wasn't located in its brain, so despite the injury, the lifeform was unruffled. Not only that, a second head poked out of its shell.

By now, Zhang Lie was used to the unusual abilities and techniques that disaster-grade lifeforms possessed, and he took this new development in stride.

"[Fists of the Silent Sea: Soar]!" Zhang Lie's technique possessed such strength that it splintered space. The distorted space turned the depths of the sea into a void of chaos. Spatial distortions and rends sliced the lifeforms within to pieces, and the disaster-grade lifeform's wounded body grew even more battered.

"[Fists of the Silent Sea: Fade]!" Zhang Lie summoned a serpent, thousands of meters long, with a massive infusion of genetic energy, which began to corrode at the turtle's shell.

Subsequently, he drew Guicang and beheaded the turtle's second head.

"[The Boundless Blade: Yawning Wave]!"

The slim beam of sword energy that this technique now produced didn't seem threatening, but within it was condensed the full force of the sea. It pierced through all the obstacles in its way, then exploded within the turtle's shell, annihilating half its body as it did so.

[You successfully killed a disaster-grade mountainbearer turtle. By consuming the core of the disaster-grade mountainbearer turtle, you may receive one to ten disaster gene fragments.]

Zhang Lie extracted a dark blue core from the turtle, one that looked as though it contained an entire sea within. As he retrieved the core, he felt the entire ocean seem to revolve around it. A prickling sensation filled his palm.

This disaster-grade lifeform was surprisingly resilient, considering it had only just evolved.

After the battle was over, the king of the realm teleported himself to Zhang Lie's side.

"Master, is the battle over?"

Zhang Lie could sense the fluctuations in space coming from behind, but he didn't turn around. "You didn't have to come over just to fetch me."

The king of the realm rolled his eyes at him in exasperation. "Master, do you think I wanted to be here? You don't realize how devastating your abilities are. If I hadn't shown up, countless lifeforms who lived by the sea or within it would have perished. Master, where do you plan to absorb this genetic core?"

Zhang Lie replied, "Right here. Will you guard me?"

The king of the realm shuddered as he thought back to the disturbance that Zhang Lie's fight had caused. "You'd better go elsewhere, Master."

"Right here. Is that inconvenient?"

Don't you damn well know? "It's a little inconvenient..." The king of the realm wanted to scream at his master, but he couldn't get the words out of his mouth.

After all, his master was still his master, and, more importantly, even after ascending to the throne, he couldn't beat him.

In the end, the king of the realm transported Zhang Lie to the top of a mountain.

Zhang Lie cut his palm with his sword, then dripped blood onto the core. The moment it touched the sky blue core, the blood was quickly absorbed into its interior.

Like a wad of cotton, the disaster-grade core continuously absorbed Zhang Lie's blood, dyeing it red, along with the water within it. Zhang Lie had to reopen the wound a few times before the transformation was complete. Then, he closed his eyes and began pouring concentrated, rainbow-colored genetic energy from his body into the core for over an entire hour before he felt it starting to soften.

After another ten minutes or so, the entire core had softened completely.

As Zhang Lie clutched the crystalline orb, he felt some unusual sense of kinship with it. Once he felt such a sensation, Zhang Lie couldn't resist his impulses any longer, and he swallowed the core whole.

As the core slid down his throat, Zhang Lie felt a fiery, numbing sensation spread throughout his body. His face turned blue, and he began to tremble. His arms and legs turned cold and stiff. Energy ravaged his body, but his blood didn't boil. Instead, it froze over, attacking his body via another vector.

The air crackled. Zhang Lie felt as though he were surrounded by water-attuned genetic energy.

The disaster-grade deep-sea turtle's core was particularly compatible with Zhang Lie, himself a water-attuned cultivator. The core merged easily with his body and began pumping genetic energy within. He felt as though he were situated in the middle of the ocean, feeling his body being battered like waves, genetic energy spreading out from him like waves...

As the waves struck his body, his bones creaked, and his muscles strained under the force. Zhang Lie gritted his teeth and bore with the incredible pain. The pressure of the sea locked up his body, freezing it in place even as energy surged through it.

His genetic energy quickly combined with the deep-sea turtle's. Excess energy vented from his eyes and mouth in a flood of deep blue light. The mountain shook. Rock quaked and crumbled as Zhang Lie's framework merged seamlessly with the disaster gene fragments.

Zhang Lie felt the blue disaster-grade energy surround him like a cocoon.

With a shout, Zhang Lie burst the cocoon in a flood of rainbow-colored genetic energy, sending a torrent of water into the air around him. Everything seemed to vibrate, and cracks propagated down the mountain.

The king of the realm, watching from afar, sighed. "As expected of Master—even a small advancement in his strength is enough to cause a mountain to crumble..."

Fortunately, he had sent Zhang Lie up into a deserted mountain, one with nothing at all around it, so it wouldn't matter even if the mountain were destroyed...

Chapter 705: A Troublemaker

Despite his self-assurance, however, even the king of the realm was startled the very next moment.

The mountain, unable to bear the energy that Zhang Lie had sent deep into its interior, trembled and broke down. The entire mountain collapsed.

The king of the realm:...

He felt that, if his master were to advance a few more times, the world that his father had left him would be entirely destroyed.

Zhang Lie: a disaster-grade lifeform

Framework: Foundation, Lv. MAX; Ninecarp Transformation, Sixth Form: River Dragon
Techniques: Rippling Walk (pinnacle), Three-Wave Crescendo (pinnacle), Calm Waters (pinnacle), Fists of the Silent Sea (pinnacle), The Boundless Blade (pinnacle), Eclipse (pinnacle), Syzygy (pinnacle), Ninesoul Dragonblade (advanced), Blade of the Heavens (intermediate)

Genes: Basic, 160; Mutated, 150; Superior, 150; Peak, 150; Disaster, 30

Soulshards: White Grub (superior), Blood Ant (superior), Potbellied Toad (mutated), Eternalspring Cocoon (superior), Dragonwolf (superior), Moonlight Wyrms (peak), Golden Roc (peak), Mismeld Clam (disaster)

With the second disaster-grade lifeform in this world defeated, Zhang Lie was nearing the end of his tenure in this world.

In truth, Zhang Lie hadn't planned on staying here for so long. If not for the primordial starflower and the piece of the tattered map, he might have left far sooner.

Because he had remained in the third realm all this time, Zhang Lie didn't realize what ramifications his actions had in the Milky Way at large. Beforehand, he had hidden his identity, but now that the dust had settled, there was no reason to go incognito any longer. He had restored his former appearance, and his actions in the third realm shocked the entire galaxy.

Now that Zhang Lie was a famous individual in the world federation, almost all the races of the Milky Way were keeping tabs on him.

"What? Zhang Lie took down a warlord?!"

"He should have just ascended to the third realm! How could he have grown stronger so quickly?"

"Zhang Lie doesn't need to acclimatize at all—he was a warlord from the moment he entered the third realm!"

To the races of the galaxy, the peak of the third realm were the warlords.

That Zhang Lie had managed to kill a warlord so quickly, without even acquiring all his gene fragments, was testament to his impossible combat ability.

"Is this the power of his limit fragments and disaster gene fragments...?"

Everyone in the Milky Way knew that advancement brought with it growing pains.

Once the hunters ascended, they would go from the peak of a lower realm to the chaff of a higher; this was basically an unwritten rule. Even those hunters who had made names for themselves in the second still had to fight for their lives and claw their way toward the peak of the third.

The hunters' period of weakness meant that survival was an issue. If they were to leave their respective cities and venture into the wilderness, they could easily die.

Some of the third-realm hunters who harbored a certain dislike for Zhang Lie for one reason or another had hoped to teach him a lesson in the third realm, but the fact that Zhang Lie was able to climb the warlord ranking immediately made them have no choice but to give up on their plans.

Some of the races discovered an even more interesting point: Zhang Lie hadn't arrived in the third realm in a human settlement, but rather ten worlds or so away from it, on the Yinlian homeworld.

They were even more shocked— just what had happened to Zhang Lie to lead to such estrangement? Could he have ventured there immediately after ascending to the third realm? But it was so far away—it had to be exceedingly dangerous! Was there anything special about that world?

The aliens were very curious, but they had long since gotten used to improbable and exceptional things happening to Zhang Lie. Zhang Lie was Zhang Lie, after all.

His friends and family had all been somewhat worried, but after hearing the latest news, their fears were assuaged.

Sun Xiaowu grumbled, "I told you all, didn't I? There's no need to worry about our captain—he'll survive anything the third realm throws his way!"

Sun Mengmeng chuckled. "I wonder who it is that hasn't been sleeping or eating properly during this period of time?"

Sun Xiaowu rolled his eyes. "Sorry, I don't intend to be taunted by someone who shouts Captain's name in her sleep."

Sun Mengmeng flushed red.

Yang Ze glanced at the other members of Team Zenith. "I have a bold plan."

Zhou Ying followed up, "I have an immature suggestion."

Li Feng nodded. "I understand what both of you are thinking, because I feel similarly."

Fang Yi spoke for all of them. "Let's ascend to the third realm!"

Sun Mengmeng nodded. "Now that the situation in the kingdom of Limit has stabilized, Captain's inheritance and the empress of the seas should be enough to deal with any threat."

"Limit will be able to survive just fine without us at this point."

Sun Xiaowu agreed. "Once Jun Jiuxiao, Ye Xianchen, and Hong Xiao ascend and obtain their peak gene fragments, they'll be able to form the pillars of the kingdom."

Yang Ze concluded, "In that case, it's well past time for us to ascend."

Zhou Ying shrugged. "We already have our disaster gene fragments maxed. There's no reason to remain in the second realm, and I'd like to follow in our captain's footsteps."

Li Feng said, "Let's talk to Zhang Hanxiang and Hong Xi about this. Once we finish our preparations, we can set off."

Zhang Lie had no idea what was happening back on Earth, because he didn't have access to a teleportation apparatus and was unable to leave the third realm.

However, he was in no hurry. He began to use the Jinghun under his control.

Borrowing the authority of the king of the realm, he went around the entire world capturing genetic lifeforms, then rearing them in the royal hunting grounds. Subsequently, using the remnant authority of the past king there, he had the lifeforms duke each other out in order to produce a disaster-grade lifeform.

This sort of strategy required immense numbers of superior- and peak-grade lifeforms, and he wouldn't be able to manufacture very many with the lifeforms of just one world—so he would steal lifeforms from other worlds as well.

He asked the king of the realm how many nearby worlds there were.

"Master, there are three medium-sized worlds, ten small worlds, and one large world."

Zhang Lie nodded. "Tell me how to get to them."

"Master, what are you planning?" The king of the realm frowned. He was somewhat afraid of his master, and worried that he was about to set a plan in motion that would destroy his home. Others might not be able to manage such a feat, but Zhang Lie...

"I just want to rear a few genetic lifeforms!"

The king of the realm thought back to Zhang Lie's three beasts, White, Whiter, and Red Comet. While he was weak, White and Whiter had taken care of him, and he was on very good terms with them. Red Comet preferred to be aloof.

"Very well. Let me give you the coordinates."

"Do you have any wormhole shuttles?"

The king of the realm nodded, then handed Zhang Lie the largest craft in the imperial treasury.

Chapter 706: The King of Moxing

The silver-sleek craft looked like a battleship, so large it could fit thousands of men inside.

The king of the realm introduced, "My father made this craft himself. Supposedly, he intended to use it to conquer other worlds."

"Oh? It'll be very useful, then!"

Zhang Lie stored the beasts and hypnotized Jinghun in the shuttle as he steered it into a wormhole.

Thus began the legend of Zhang Lie and the Jinghun. With the scalemen world as their home base, they began to attack all the middle-sized worlds around them. Using Zhang Lie's disaster-grade mistmeld clam soulshard and the Jinghun's ability to control lifeforms, they sent whatever they could capture back to the scalemen world.

Zhang Lie's actions were initially very successful. By hypnotizing the alien races of those worlds, he was able to obtain information about the location and number of peak- and superior-grade lifeforms within.

Although there were also reports of disaster-grade lifeforms, most of those were legends or myths, and Zhang Lie didn't have the time to confirm each one. At the beginning, in what now seemed like a fit of idiocy, he had done something like that following the sura monarch of stars' notes, wasting three years of his time.

It was far more efficient to cultivate disaster-grade lifeforms instead. However, Zhang Lie and the Jinghun made such a big disturbance as they captured more and more lifeforms that they aroused the attention of the kings of the realm of those worlds.

For instance, in a world known as Moxing, Zhang Lie had just controlled a large number of beasts when the king of the realm himself appeared before Zhang Lie and asked in a high-and-mighty tone, "Who are you and what are you doing here? Are you planning to start a war of the worlds?"

Zhang Lie ignored his questions and asked calmly, "Does your world have any disaster-grade lifeforms? I suppose you would call them fifth-level beasts."

The king of Moxing frowned. "Fifth-level? what are you planning?"

"To absorb their cores. If you refuse, that's fine, we can search for them slowly on our own as well. We might also bring a few specialties from this world home with us—you won't mind, will you?"

They had caught enough lifeforms from this world already, at any rate. If the king of the realm were able to direct them to a disaster-grade lifeform, that would just be the cherry on top.

Zhang Lie had no time to spare; he knew what was coming. Before then, he had to acquire as many disaster gene fragments as he could to strengthen himself.

The king of the realm glanced behind Zhang Lie and saw a huge procession of lifeforms being transported through the wormhole. The procession of lifeforms was crowded and stretched as far as the eye could see, like a long river trailing down from the distance.

Genetic lifeforms weren't particularly valuable, and they were nuisances in that they frequently attacked cities and villages. However, these were resources that the aliens depended on to grow stronger.

Furthermore, once too many lifeforms were removed from the world, past a critical mass, they would find it difficult to reproduce, destroying the food web in the local ecosystems and even causing some species to go extinct.

Such occurrences weren't purely theoretical, either. In the past, there had been a kingdom surrounded by forest. The citizens of the kingdom were allowed to gather whatever resources they needed from it, and were even encouraged to do so by their king. When the entire forest was cut down, the kingdom turned into a desert.

These genetic lifeforms that were everywhere didn't seem particularly important, but it would be far too late to regret it once they went extinct.

Most importantly, these were lifeforms of Moxing! Why should he allow the arrogant alien in front of him to claim them?

The king of Moxing shouted, "Stop your foolish actions. All these lifeforms are important to this world, and if you continue seizing them unreasonably and illegally, I'll expel you forcefully!"

Zhang Lie was unperturbed. "I believe I've made myself clear. Tell me where the disaster-grade lifeforms are, and I'll leave after acquiring their cores. Otherwise, I'll have to search for them myself."

The king of the realm narrowed his eyes. "Are you threatening me?"

"If you want to understand it that way, I doubt I can dissuade you."

Zhang Lie remained calm despite knowing that the alien in front of him was the king of this realm.

The aliens of this world were pitch-black, with two long antennae growing out of their heads. Serrated blade-like protrusions grew out of their arms and legs, and their skin was reflective and shiny. In some sense, they looked like cockroaches.

The king of this realm was far larger and muscular compared to those of his cohort.

"A mega-cockroach?" Zhang Lie murmured to himself.

The king of the realm was so angry he looked as though he could explode at any moment. Although he didn't understand what a cockroach was, he was certain it couldn't be anything good. Red light and white smoke flared from his body.

"No one has dared to speak to me like that for a very long time. None of you will leave this place!"

"Ha!" Zhang Lie glanced at the king as though he were a fool, while the nearby Jinghun shot him pitying glances.

The Jinghun warlord, Ren Kunjing, asked, "Do you need me to make a move?"

Zhang Lie waved a hand at him curtly. "There's no need. A king of the realm of a medium-sized world is hardly someone I have to worry about."

Ren Kunjing sighed and shook his head, glancing at the king as though he were a corpse.

This was the first time in years that the king had been so humiliated.

He struck first, so rapidly that he broke through the constraints of the world in mere moments. His fist was just about to land on Zhang Lie's body when Zhang Lie widened his palm and caught the fist easily as an explosion struck the point of impact.

"Is this all you've got?" Zhang Lie's voice was somewhat condescending.

The king of the realm howled. Energy flared from his body, and he rained punches down on Zhang Lie.

However, Zhang Lie easily deflected or blocked each of his blows. A gust of wind surrounded the two combatants. The difference between them was apparent: one of them was attacking at full strength, and the other was defending leisurely with just a hand.

"[Rune: Control]!" As he dealt with the king's punches, Zhang Lie summoned his gravity and anti-gravity tablets and sent them down crashing by the king's side.

Black ripples emanated from the two gravity-altering tablets, forming a localized region of distorted gravity.

The field of energy distorted the king's blows, and he frowned immediately as he loosed a punch. "This—control over gravity?!"

In his panic, his punch went wide. He used his powers over the realm to try to correct the misaligned gravity, weakening his defenses considerably.

Fights between experts were concluded in mere moments; even the smallest opening could be exploited and turned into a lethal flaw.

Zhang Lie combat experience meant that he caught all such openings. His fists rippled with energy. Streams of water revolved more and more quickly around his wrist, augmented by spatial force, summoning what seemed to be a massive whirlwind that sucked up even the genetic lifeforms and made the shuttle toss and turn.

Ren Kunjing summoned a crystalline barrier in front of the lifeforms and the Jinghun to shield them from the aftermath of the attack.

As Zhang Lie punched forward, space shattered before him.

The king of Moxing grew alarmed, unable to believe that a mysterious alien would be able to command such strength. He had no further time to think before Zhang Lie's tsunami swallowed him whole...

Chapter 707: A Fist Like a Maul

Water-attuned genetic energy exploded through the air, and ripples of energy emanated from Zhang Lie.

Ren Kunjing's crystalline barrier was unable to withstand the force of the impact, and it shattered within moments. Exasperation flared through his eyes—he was entirely focused on defense, and yet he was unable to block even the secondary shockwaves that resulted from Zhang Lie's attack. The difference in their strength was simply too large.

It felt like a gulf that couldn't be breached—the difference between man and god, rather than man and man. To Ren Kunjing, Zhang Lie was nothing less than a godlike existence.

As Ren Kunjing's crystalline barrier shattered, the aftermath of Zhang Lie's attack blew past him. A disaster had just struck.

A hurricane formed from water-attuned genetic energy roared through the skies, sucking up the very earth itself, uprooting the trees and gigantic boulders it came across. Even the larger genetic lifeforms didn't escape unscathed; they too were sucked up into the hurricane. The Jinghun held on with as much strength as they could muster, but the weaker among them were already starting to be swept up in the hurricane's path.

It was as though hell had descended on the world.

Ren Kunjing stood in the eye of the hurricane, allowing his body to be buffeted. He was the second-strongest present besides Zhang Lie, and the only one who was able to stand upright with nothing but his own power.

Although he wasn't able to protect his kin and the lifeforms he was escorting, he could at least protect himself.

Zhang Lie's punch had struck far too large an area for him to do anything against. Back in the world of the scalemen, Ren Kunjing had barely been able to block a punch from Zhang Lie, but Zhang Lie had grown far too rapidly since then.

In some sense, Zhang Lie was indirectly responsible for the death of the old king of the realm.

The warlord leaderboard had existed in the third realm from almost the very beginning, but only the top ten warlords generally had the strength to kill a king of the realm. In the past, Ren Kunjing would hardly have been a match for the king of the realm.

These kings were the strongest existences of the third realm, and even old kings possessed near-boundless power. In the past, only those among the top ten warlords had ever managed to kill a king of a medium-sized world, and only the top warlord had managed to kill a king of a large world.

However, one man was all it had taken to dramatically increase the strength of all races of the Milky Way: Zhang Lie.

Zhang Lie! He had appeared out of nowhere and raised the upper limit of strength that any race in the Milky Way could aspire to.

Limit fragments and disaster-grade lifeforms—these were concepts that no one had ever heard of, but Zhang Lie seemed to understand them intimately.

All the races in the Milky Way benefited, and Ren Kunjing was one such beneficiary. The knowledge that disaster-grade lifeforms existed widened the horizons of all the hunters in the Milky Way, and they were no longer satisfied with just hunting down peak-grade lifeforms.

It was well known that there were lifeforms stronger than peak-grade, but no race had ever demonstrably shown that there were lifeforms strong enough to require their own category and designation.

There had never been those strong enough or dedicated enough to hunt down such disaster-grade lifeforms. They had investigated some examples of these particularly strong lifeforms in the past, but no one had discovered the secret to absorbing these genetic cores.

Ren Kunjing glanced at Zhang Lie, who stood floating in the air, surveying the land with the arrogance of the strong. It was he who had shared that secret with the world, too.

Ren Kunjing had begun idolizing Zhang Lie without even knowing it.

In the past, only the top ten warlords of the third realm had possessed the strength to kill the kings of medium-sized worlds, but he, nothing more than a mid-rank warlord, had been able to do the same thanks to the advancements that Zhang Lie had introduced.

Zhang Lie didn't know that, after the revelation of disaster-grade lifeforms, the entire galaxy had gone mad trying to hunt them down. Among the most fanatical were the Jinghun, who boasted a unique racial talent that allowed them to hunt down such lifeforms with ease. Meanwhile, many other races who were interested in hunting down such lifeforms didn't even know where to start.

Ren Kunjing had successfully absorbed disaster gene fragments, and it was this increase in strength that ultimately allowed him to take down the king of the realm.

That day, Zhang Lie shocked Ren Kunjing again. His growth rate exceeded anything that Ren Kunjing had ever known, and the increase in his strength was obvious.

"Just how many disaster gene fragments has he obtained during this period of time...?"

Ren Kunjing was starting to feel sorry for the cockroach-like king of the realm. For someone like him to be antagonizing a monster like Zhang Lie—well, his life would be forfeit.

The king of the realm had vanished entirely, but not because his body had been annihilated.

"Teleportation? Unfortunately, that won't be effective against me."

Zhang Lie quickly identified where the king of the realm had gone by studying the remnant spatial fluctuations on the battlefield. "[Fists of the Silent Sea: Quake]!"

Even before his punch landed, the skies had begun to shake violently. The space around him exploded, and the king of the realm, who was hiding in an extra-dimensional space, was critically damaged by the attack.

His face was the color of mud, and he could barely keep the blood spilling out of his mouth.

He had been planning to launch a sneak attack on Zhang Lie, but Zhang Lie had divested him of that opportunity.

As he spat blood out of his mouth, the king of the realm shouted, "Stop, please! I surrender!"

Anyone who could become the king of the realm would hardly be a fool. The king had made use of the realm's power and was still defeated in one blow—he knew he wouldn't be able to win on brute strength alone.

His arrogance and superiority had been wiped clean from his face, leaving behind nothing but an unctuous smile behind.

Zhang Lie thought that the matter was resolved, only to see the king of the realm's eyes suddenly grow wide. He exclaimed, "What's that behind you?!"

Zhang Lie turned around, giving the king of the realm the window of opportunity he needed to flee.

Ren Kunjing shouted, "He's running away!"

The king of the realm smiled, then stepped through a spatial portal he had created on the spot. Of course he was running away! The man in front of him was far too frightening; he would have to fear for his life if he remained behind.

In principle, as long as he were supported by the world itself, no one would be able to kill him...

However, the king of the realm didn't notice the attack that Zhang Lie was charging up on one arm.

"[Fists of the Silent Sea: Soar]!" A frightening punch sent spatial rends tearing through space, ripping the king of the realm's body apart...

Chapter 708: A Terrifying Hunt

The king, who thought he had escaped safely, was caught unaware and offered up no resistance. He was torn up by the spatial rends like a wet rag.

A rain of blood splattered through the sky as Zhang Lie clutched his head. "Ah, I lost control!"

Ren Kunjing clapped. "Congratulations on killing a king of the realm!"

Zhang Lie sighed. "All I wanted to do was kill a disaster-grade lifeform."

Now that he had killed the king too, Zhang Lie couldn't afford to stay—he didn't want to rouse any more trouble.

Ren Kunjing sent the remaining lifeforms into the wormhole, then left with his men. They had collected enough genetic lifeforms, and no one wanted to deal with the king of the realm's successor.

The next king of the realm would surely seek Zhang Lie out in an attempt to get revenge, but Zhang Lie certainly wasn't going to let himself be killed. If he were to kill the next king, yet another one would pop up and continue seeking revenge on Zhang Lie, forming a vicious cycle with no end.

That would be a waste of Zhang Lie's time.

He transported the genetic lifeforms to the hunting ground and allowed them to kill each other. The first disaster-grade lifeform that popped out, however, was Red Comet.

Zhang Lie was speechless. He did want to have Red Comet, White, and Whiter grow stronger, but not that strong...

After rearing the three of them for so long, Zhang Lie couldn't bear to kill Red Comet. Instead, he left in search of more genetic lifeforms.

"There isn't much time left..." he sighed, glancing at the skies.

Subsequently, he and the Jinghun headed off to a second medium-sized world.

The king of the realm they met this time was far more intelligent. Just one blow from Zhang Lie was enough to make him submit.

The king of the realm gave Zhang Lie a winsome smile, hoping to make him his ally, but Zhang Lie refused. He promised to leave as soon as the king of the realm revealed the location of any disaster-grade lifeforms on that world.

The king of the realm sighed, but he acceded to Zhang Lie's request.

The lifeform from that world was a lava toad, one whose habitat was an active volcano.

The path leading into the volcano was studded with obsidian, so blisteringly hot that Zhang Lie would have burned up if he didn't have the body of a disaster-grade lifeform.

The king of the realm watched Zhang Lie from afar, curious as to just how strong this mysterious alien from another world was. If Zhang Lie were badly hurt after killing the disaster-grade lifeform, he would take the opportunity to finish Zhang Lie off.

Zhang Lie leapt into the volcano and struck immediately. His fists rippled with water-attuned genetic energy imbued with spatial force.

As the energy coiled around his arms, the sudden influx of water disturbed the air within the volcano, sending a huge burst of ash into the air and turning Zhang Lie soot-black.

Nevertheless, Zhang Lie's aura continued to rise rapidly. The water-attuned genetic energy swirling around him condensed around his arms, kneading space as though it were nothing more than paper and sending superheated air belching out of the volcano crater. A storm descended and dispersed the air.

As Zhang Lie punched forward, the gathered energy erupted in a flood, sending lava shooting up hundreds of meters high. The entire volcano shook.

Zhang Lie leapt forward. The energy from his punch had caused an eruption, and a flood of lava rushed out of the volcano. Boulders flew out of the volcano like meteors, and the atmosphere turned an ashy red, as though the end of the world was nigh.

The king of the realm widened his eyes in shock. He had underestimated Zhang Lie, not expecting that he would be able to cause a disaster of such magnitude with an errant blow. He began cleaning up Zhang Lie's mess immediately, quelling the lava and diverting its flow.

He dug a huge hole at the bottom of the volcano and sent the streams of lava into it.

In the meantime, as the volcano spewed out lava, it also spewed out a disaster-grade lifeform—a dark red toad, covered in magmatic armor.

Radiant light glowed from the cracks in the armor. The toad was about the size of a cruise ship, and it sent a flood of lava pouring out of its mouth at Zhang Lie.

"[Fists of the Silent Sea: Fade]!" Zhang Lie's fist morphed into a demonic serpent, one which swallowed the lava whole.

The serpent coiled around the toad as it struggled to escape, stripping itself of its outer layer of magma. Zhang Lie appeared in front of the toad before it could free itself. He stood atop its nose as his eyes glowed rainbow, stilling the struggling toad.

Zhang Lie beheaded it with one blow, then retrieved the disaster-grade core from its carcass.

The fiery-red core seemed to be filled with magma and the explosive strength of the volcano. It radiated such heat that even Zhang Lie found it scalding to the touch.

The king of the realm sighed as the pit he had dug filled with lava. He wiped away the sweat on his forehead.

If he hadn't responded in time, the cities and villages closest to the volcano would have been caught in the aftermath of the explosion, and they could well have been wiped away.

The king of the realm glanced up in vexation at the black ash roiling through the skies. Flakes of ash drifted down from the air like snow; if he didn't handle this well, there would be long-lasting impacts on the atmosphere and the life in the region...

Chapter 709: One More Departure

Despite the cataclysm brewing above him, the king of the realm didn't regret informing Zhang Lie where the disaster-grade lifeform was, because he knew he would have been unable to defend against the attack Zhang Lie had just displayed.

If he really were to fight against Zhang Lie, he wouldn't even have a twenty percent chance of winning.

Even if the volcano were ruined, it was just a patch of land. The king of the realm could clean it up readily with his powers. On the other hand, if he were to fight against Zhang Lie, he would surely die.

The choice between a patch of land and his life was obvious.

Moments later, Zhang Lie pulled out the disaster-grade core and waved farewell to the king of the realm, who sighed. Didn't the stranger know how to clean up his own messes?

Zhang Lie left the world without a second thought. He returned to the world of the scalmen, to the mountain which he had destroyed by absorbing a disaster-grade core there. He sat now in its remains as he began absorbing his second core.

Zhang Lie cut his palm with his sword, then dripped blood onto the core. The moment it touched the lava-red core, the blood was quickly absorbed into its interior. It sucked up more and more of Zhang Lie's blood until it turned blood-red. The heat felt as though it were receding from the core; the core now responded to his touch.

Zhang Lie opened his wounds again and again until the core became perfectly transparent. Then, he closed his eyes and began pouring concentrated, rainbow-colored genetic energy from his body into the core. It took him an entire hour before he felt the core start to soften.

After another ten minutes or so, the entire core had softened completely.

As Zhang Lie clutched the crystalline orb, within which lava seemed to creep, he felt some unusual sense of kinship with it. Once he felt such a sensation, Zhang Lie couldn't resist his impulses any longer, and he swallowed the core whole.

The next moment, his body turned fire-red, as though he were molten steel. His blood boiled, his body swelled, and the earth beneath him started to melt. A pillar of flame burst into the air as the disaster gene fragments reformed his body from the inside out.

Genetic energy circulated through his framework, faster and faster. As he assimilated the disaster gene fragments into his body, Zhang Lie gave off stronger and stronger bursts of flame.

Circulating genetic energy through his body now took just over half a minute, an incredible and previously unimaginable speed, and his evolution was spurred further and further onward by the energy of the disaster-grade core.

The temperature of Zhang Lie's body grew to a shocking degree. The earth beneath him had melted almost completely, and lava now pooled underneath him.

The king of the realm was speechless. An entire mountain had vanished from sight the first time Zhang Lie absorbed disaster gene fragments there; now, even its remnants were going to be eradicated too.

Half a month ago, a mountain had dotted the landscape there; now, it seemed like there would be nothing left.

Flames roared out of Zhang Lie's eyes and mouth, and a vortex of hot wind formed around him. The air surrounding Zhang Lie spontaneously combusted. He was wreathed in flame and cocooned in lava. As black light speared the cocoon, a huge wave of energy poured out and dyed the skies red.

Zhang Lie: a disaster-grade lifeform

Framework: Foundation, Lv. MAX; Ninecarp Transformation, Sixth Form: River Dragon
Techniques: Rippling Walk (pinnacle), Three-Wave Crescendo (pinnacle), Calm Waters (pinnacle), Fists of the Silent Sea (pinnacle), The Boundless Blade (pinnacle), Eclipse (pinnacle), Syzygy (pinnacle), Ninesoul Dragonblade (advanced), Blade of the Heavens (intermediate)

Genes: Basic, 160; Mutated, 150; Superior, 150; Peak, 150; Disaster, 40

Soulshards: White Grub (superior), Blood Ant (superior), Potbellied Toad (mutated), Eternalspring Cocoon (superior), Dragonwolf (superior), Moonlight Wurm (peak), Golden Roc (peak), Mismeld Clam (disaster)

Half a month later, the large number of lifeforms Zhang Lie stole from various worlds finally led to the birth of another disaster-grade lifeform.

After absorbing this lifeform's core, Zhang Lie reached a grand total of fifty disaster gene fragments. He was very lucky that the lifeform had even condensed a soulshard—the disaster-grade lifeform was a phantasmagorical desert fox, and its soulshard was a gown of gauzy fabric.

The gown was what resulted from distilling the night sky seen from the desert into a garment. It was breathtaking and striking beyond words, but unfortunately, it didn't seem like something a man could wear.

"Well, I do need to prepare a gift for that lass..."

Glancing at the skies, the king of the realm sighed. "Master, must you leave?"

After Zhang Lie told the king of the realm that he was about to leave, the king of the realm sought out Zhang Lie for an audience.

Zhang Lie downed a cup of wine. "I have my own affairs to take care of, and no time to waste."

Zhang Lie didn't want to leave so quickly, either. He hadn't finished acquiring all his disaster gene fragments, but the incident in the future was about to happen. Zhang Lie couldn't afford to stay here any longer; if he couldn't prevent this incident this time around, he would regret it for the rest of his life.

The king of the realm was very curious as to just what his master was thinking about. He knew how strong his master was; what could be so important for him to behave in such an urgent fashion?

"What's the matter, Master?"

"Nothing. I'm just off to hunt down a wife, to do something I never managed to do before!"

Thanks to the world map that the Jinghun had provided, Zhang Lie had confirmed the location of the world he would have to head towards. He had expected that it would be a journey requiring him to pass through multiple worlds, but in truth, he was right next to the world in question.

This time around, he couldn't leave any regrets behind!

"Hunting down... a wife?"

"More or less," Zhang Lie replied.

"Do you need my help?"

"You're trapped in this world as the king of the realm. You can't leave now!"

The king of the realm asked, "Can't you stay just a little while longer?"

Zhang Lie had almost forgotten that the king of the realm, despite having inherited his position already, was only a teenager.

He placed a hand atop the king of the realm's head. "Don't forget, you're a king of the realm now. You're no longer the youth who needed me to survive—this world belongs to you, and you need to learn to be independent now!"

The king of the realm sighed. "Master, will we ever meet again?"

"If you work hard enough, I expect we will. We'll have plenty of time in the future."

The king of the realm nodded. "Take care, Master."

"You too." Now that the youth had become king, it was past time for Zhang Lie to take his leave...

Chapter 710: The Palace on Mt. Yun

Mt. Yun, located a hundred miles outside the city of Dongyang, was the tallest mountain there, though its height, at a paltry 800 meters above sea level, was nothing to boast of.

The reason it was famous was because the mountain boasted more than five dozen luxurious manors, within which lived politicians and dignitaries of all sorts. The higher up the mountain a manor was, the higher the position of those within.

There was only one road winding up the mountain from its base; the other face of the mountain was a steep cliff.

Today seemed to be a special day, because the road, not more than twenty meters wide, had turned completely pink from bottom to top. The reason it was pink was because the road had been carpeted with orchid petals so thick they were inches deep. Even from hundreds of meters away, one could smell their intoxicating scent.

The trees on either side of the mountain were dressed in wedding gowns—yes, not just draped in white cloth. Each tree's gown was custom-made and white as snow, with lace frills and necklaces of pearl. They signified immaculate purity, flawlessness.

The land within a hundred miles from Mt. Yun had been locked down and placed under security. This wasn't something that could be accomplished with wealth alone—one needed strong political backing as well.

Since last night, the entire region had been cleaned to spotlessness.

Someone strong had dispelled the clouds in the air, making the sky shine as brightly as a gemstone. Rays of light from the morning sun struck the mountain in its entirety.

Outside the cordon, quite a few citizens had gathered. As they looked toward Mt. Yun, they murmured to themselves.

The aliens of this world would easily be considered beautiful to the human eye. They boasted silver hair, gemstone-like eyes, green or blue or red, snowy-white skin, slim bodies, and sharp ears like those of an elf.

"Is the wedding about to begin? It's said to be the largest interrealm wedding in a lifetime! Even from afar, it's a sight to behold. Look at those people manipulating the very clouds!"

"Indeed! It's a grand occasion. Apparently, the strongest champions of the eastern and western realms will put together a show."

"The wedding ceremony will be hosted first in the east, and then in the west..."

"Ah, the luck of that western brat—he'll be marrying the princess of the east, the daughter of the eastern king himself!"

"It's a pity that she'll end up as nothing but a political sacrifice..."

"That's how arranged marriages are, you know."

"What a pity..."

"Who knows? No one has seen the princess' appearance before. What if she's an ugly old hag?"

"Che! The princess might be a mystery, but everyone has seen the handsome prince of the west, the son of the western king. Despite its being a political marriage, I can't imagine that the two parties would differ too much in terms of appearance."

It was hard to believe that at the top of the mountain lay what was essentially a palace. The buildings in the palace were layered atop each other, melding occidental and oriental architecture into an impossibly cohesive whole.

Pink and white were the colors of the day, and it seemed almost as though the entire palace had put on a wedding gown itself.

The palatial manor was a hundred acres wide, with lavish interior furnishing. The outdoor pool was filled with clear blue water. Water drained out of one end of the pool and down its edge like a waterfall toward the next layer of the palatial structure, a pond filled with a hundred and eight gleaming silver fish.

By then, all manner of guests had arrived at the patio next to the pool, with all manner of luxury transportation: carriages drawn by superior-grade lifeforms.

Aliens in formal attire arrived at the palace, one after the other. Most of them were personages that the public would hardly ever have the opportunity to see—businessmen and politicians all, each influential in their own right.

Suited attendants passed through the crowds of guests, passing them beverages and exquisite hors d'oeuvres.

Mt. Yun was located on a large world, and it didn't seclude itself as a medium-sized world might. Instead, it harbored close connections with quite a number of worlds surrounding it, as though it were the center of a constellation. It was linked to countless medium-sized and small worlds, each of which were linked to other large worlds as well.

There were many intelligent races in large worlds, each with their own cities and settlements. They welcomed alien visitors and cooperated with them to mutual benefit, much like a modern-day metropolis. The races of the Milky Way were no exception.

The current king of the east was collaborating closely with the races of the Milky Way on all manner of projects, and the guests at the wedding reception included many of the strongest races of the Milky Way: the Tianxin, the black eagles, the Poxian, the Jinghun, the starbeasts, the Jindao, the winged—over half of the top hundred races of the Milky Way had representatives present.

The worlds of east and west were large even by third-realm standards, with rich, fertile land and an immense wealth of resources. Even the hundred strongest races of the Milky Way were happy to make connections with the indigenous races there.

A lithe, middle-aged man stood out from the crowd. His suit was immaculately pressed, his waist and back straight, his hair cropped short, his face handsome and his gaze resolute.

"Has anything unusual happened around the Milky Way recently?"

He was surrounded by over a dozen people, and it was apparent that he held a high position even among this influential crowd. All intelligent lifeforms of the world of the east knew his name: he was the youngest-ever king of the eastern realm, Li Zongming, as well as the host of today's reception.

One of the aliens of the Milky Way suggested, "Perhaps Zhang Lie, the champion of mankind?"

"The champion of mankind? What about him?"

He discovered how to absorb disaster-grade cores, as well as the existence of limit fragments! That was what the guest wanted to say, but the indigenous races would hardly understand what he was talking about.

"Indeed, the champion of humans. The reason he's special, well... he managed to get into the warlord ranking almost immediately upon entering the third realm. He's ranked 85th now."

"Oh? Don't all you intelligent aliens suffer from a period of weakening upon entering this realm?"

"Yes, but not him. That's why he's special!"

Li Zongming's interest was piqued. "A curious individual. I'd like to meet him someday."

Just then, an attendant whispered a few words in Li Zongming's ear.

Li Zongming smiled and inclined his head. "I apologize, but I'll have to excuse myself. The delegation from the west has arrived."