

## U. Warlord 721

### Chapter 721: Defeating Both Kings

The sudden change in Li Zongming's attitude was because Zhang Lie hadn't taken his life even when he was clearly capable of doing so. However, Li Zongming was the king of the realm, and he certainly couldn't let Zhang Lie go so easily.

Zhang Lie had ruined the wedding between east and west, crippled the king of the west's son, and kidnapped his own daughter. He had destroyed the two kings' reputation, and Li Zongming could hardly be seen to side with him or to give him any quarter.

In order to maintain the dignity of his position as the king of the realm, Li Zongming had to strike with full force. If Zhang Lie were able to survive this blow, that would imply that Li Zongming had tried his best and failed to stop Zhang Lie; on the other hand, if Zhang Lie couldn't, then he would perish for his crimes.

Li Zongming continued, "There's no need to worry about the guests on Mt. Yun. Immediately as I strike, I'll teleport them all away."

"Oh? Well, then, let's face off—[The Boundless Blade: the River Lethe]!"

Zhang Lie lifted the blade in his hand high above his head as pitch-black energy exploded from him. He looked like a demon descending on the world. Li Qianlin gaped. "He truly is a demon king..."

The pitch-black genetic energy covered up the skies, causing the aliens of the Milky Way to panic. Even they had never seen genetic energy so vast and so concentrated.

Zhang Lie was displaying strength on par with those of the top three warlords of the realm, and disaster struck even before his technique took form. His genetic energy roared as it took the form of a vast, angry sea, whose sheer presence alone was wreaking all sorts of havoc on the world.

Waves charged forward, lapping the shore, sounding like peals of thunder, like stampeding hooves. They roared through the skies like galloping steeds, like thundering dragons. The surface of the sea frothed with angry waves, like dragons emerging with the tide.

The pressure made everyone feel as though there were mountains weighing down their heads, making them unable to breathe.

Countless deepsea lifeforms took shape in the raging sea, rushing out of its surface and soaring through the skies. In mere moments, the skies were dark, gloomy, and filled with clouds.

As the clouds grew darker and lower, descending toward the surface, thunder crackled. The waves grew more and more agitated, as though they were competing with the wind for attention, and roiling black waves swept across the entire sky.

Half the sky was golden; the other half was dark.

As Zhang Lie swung his sword, the roaring waves all morphed into black dragons, crashing against the might of the golden sun. From the ground, the spectators witnessed an epic clash between light and darkness.

The golden sun emerged from the pitch-black sea, evaporating the seawater with violent sunlight. The entire sea seemed like a monstrous lifeform, and the water, the feelers with which it wrapped around and began to devour the sun.

The sun, which had crept halfway out of the sea, was pulled back within and assaulted by countless ink-black lifeforms, its energy slowly drained away.

Frightening waves of energy struck the air. Li Zongming thought he had a high estimation of Zhang Lie's strength, only to find that he had underestimated him when Zhang Lie attacked at full force.

He expected that he would be able to save the guests at Mt. Yun after launching his strongest attack, but he turned out not to have such a luxury.

The energy that radiated from the collision between the underworld river and golden sun was so intense that half the eastern world would be swallowed up, let alone Mt. Yun.

Li Zongming had no choice but to devote his entire attention and authority to curtailing the shockwaves.

"I've waited for this opportunity for a long time!" The western king, Duan Zisuan, struck. He had been lying in wait to see how the fight would play out.

Now that the king of the east had suffered a serious blow and Zhang Lie was exhausted after what seemed to be a serious expenditure of energy, it was his time to shine.

Duan Zisuan roared as his body morphed into a giant red baboon-like creature that was poised to swallow Zhang Lie whole.

Zhang Lie, however, didn't seem impressed. "Well, I've been waiting for you to show up all this time!"

After learning that his son had been crippled and exploding in rage, how could Duan Zisuan bear to refrain from the fight? It was apparent that he was planning something. Since Zhang Lie had the energy to spare, he had been paying attention to Duan Zisuan throughout the fight.

The Zhang Lie of the past hardly had the ability to survive conflict against a king of the realm, but he had heard of Duan Zisuan's vile and treacherous personality before.

With a slash of Hanguang, Zhang Lie blinded Duan Zisuan, then launched his strongest sword technique at him.

"[Blade of the Heavens: the Sea Swells]!" Energy poured out of him in waves, honing the edge of his blade. The pulses of energy struck the sea like a tsunami, devouring everything within.

The combination of that technique with the sea of genetic energy that Zhang Lie had previously manifested caused the entire sea to explode, extinguishing the golden sun in an instant.

Duan Zisuan howled as he retreated, wounded to the core by just a single attack from Zhang Lie.

"You're not the only one who knows how to launch sneak attacks!" Zhang Lie laughed confidently. His eyes glowed with a rainbow gleam, and the disaster-grade steed that Duan Zisuan rode turned on him immediately. Its eyes likewise shining in the colors of the rainbow, it opened its maw and swallowed up Duan Zisuan whole.

Zhang Lie had long since controlled the king of the west's disaster-grade mount before the fight even began, and the fight between Red Comet and the king's mount had been nothing more than a facade. It had been waiting for a signal from Zhang Lie to give its former owner a lethal blow.

Zhang Lie pointed his sword at Li Zongming. "King of the east, do you insist on continuing to fight?"

With the golden sun annihilated and Li Zongming's energy spent, the outcome of the fight was all but decided.

Li Zongming didn't understand why the king of the west's mount had suddenly turned against him and eaten him whole, but he did know that he wasn't a match for Zhang Lie.

"What do you want?" he asked wearily.

Chapter 722: Li Qianlin Alone

"Nothing but the hand of your daughter!" Zhang Lie replied.

"State your demands directly—at this point, is there really any need for false pretenses?" Li Zongming couldn't believe Zhang Lie's words.

His strength was more than sufficient to kill Li Zongming and claim the worlds of east and west for himself, but this man was claiming, after he had defeated all challengers, that he had done so solely for his daughter?

As a ruler and an ambitious man in his own right, Li Zongming could hardly accept such reasoning. His daughter was certainly a jewel, worth a city or kingdom, but wasn't an entire world too much of a stretch?

There might not be many women whose beauty was on par with Li Qianlin in the world of the east, but there were surely a few—like Dong Mingxing, for example.

Was a woman really worth offending two kings of the realm and their representative countries? If Zhang Lie were a rash and reckless youth, Li Zongming would at least be able to rationalize his behavior, but Zhang Lie was strong enough to beat him and had enough foresight to have controlled the entire fight from beginning to end!

Furthermore, it looked as though he still had a trump card up his sleeve.

Would someone like this really be a rash, reckless youth? At the very least, Li Zongming wouldn't believe it.

Zhang Lie countered, "You want to marry your daughter off to forge a political alliance with the world of the west, don't you? What if I claim the world of the west for myself?"

Li Zongming blinked. "And what do you want after conquering that world? For me to support you to become the king of the realm?"

"Do you think I would need your assistance to become king?"

Li Zongming sighed. "In that case, you intend for my daughter to become the queen of the western world?"

Zhang Lie replied firmly, "As I've claimed, I'm not interested in anything besides Qianqian, let alone the position of the king of the realm. The entire world of the west shall be my bride-dowry. What say you?"

Li Zongming replied, "I want to make sure you understand that the world of the west won't be as easy to take down as you think. What you killed wasn't the king of the west, but rather just one of his clones.

Zhang Lie did know that; the king of the realm of a large world could hardly die so easily. Nevertheless, he repeated himself. "That's not something you have to worry about. Whether or not I can conquer the world of the west is my own affair."

Li Zongming asked once more, still somewhat skeptically, "And for this feat, you only want my daughter in exchange?"

"Qianqian might be nothing to you other than a bargaining chip, but she's a priceless treasure to me."

Li Zongming snorted. "Ridiculous! My daughter is a priceless treasure to me as well."

"In that case, why would you marry her off to such trash?"

This was a question Zhang Lie very much wanted to find out the answer to.

In his past life, although both the eastern and western worlds had attempted to chase down Li Qianlin, the eastern forces were lackluster and lackadaisical, as though Li Zongming wasn't taking the hunt seriously at all.

The reason Zhang Lie chose not to deal Li Zongming any lethal blows was partly because he was Li Qianlin's father, and partly because of his leniency in the past.

This represented that Li Zongming at least had some shred of a conscience.

On the other hand, if Zhang Lie were to kill Li Zongming, his relationship with Li Qianlin would become far more fraught—Li Qianlin and her father were still rather close, and they weren't enemies just yet.

Killing Li Zongming meant that Li Qianlin would treat him like a murderer, an enemy, a nemesis.

Given Li Qianlin's personality, she would never be able to entertain a relationship with Zhang Lie if that were the case.

As a result, if Zhang Lie truly wanted to build a long-lasting relationship with Li Qianlin, he would need Li Zongming's support. That said, if Li Zongming had married off his daughter to such a wastrel simply for power and an alliance with the west, Zhang Lie would surely give him a beating before deposing him from kingship.

Li Zongming countered, "Who else but the son of the western king would be qualified for my precious daughter?"

Zhang Lie: ...

"...did you ever make any attempts to learn about that son's personality?"

Li Zongling sniffed. "Do you treat me as a fool? I wouldn't just hand my daughter off to any man! I've met Duan Gen quite a few times, and he's both handsome and talented—"

Li Zongming peered at Zhang Lie and coughed. "Well, relatively talented, as all things go."

Compared to Zhang Lie, that western prince was nothing more than trash. Zhang Lie and Duan Gen were so different in strength that they were simply incomparable.

Zhang Lie felt as though he had come to a sudden realization. Li Zongming did love his daughter, and he wanted to give her the best of everything. However, "best" didn't take his daughter's thoughts into account. Perhaps this would have been a viable strategy while she was small, but it became more and more problematic as she grew older.

Li Zongming folded his arms. "I only agreed to the wedding after significant investment on western king's part."

Li Qianlin was unable to hold her words any longer. "Father, you were grossly mistaken! Duan Gen's a bastard—he pretends to be the perfect man in front of you and the king of the west, but he's the vilest person I know! Did you know that he was the one who killed Tao?"

Li Zongming snorted in disbelief. "And whose nonsense did you listen to this time? How could I be mistaken?"

Li Qianlin gaped. Her face flushed red. "You were mistaken, and not only that, he almost—"

Zhang Lie covered up Li Qianlin's mouth.

"I'll be bringing her with me so both of you can cool off. We'll return once I claim the western world!"

"Hold it! Leave my daughter behind!" Li Zongming shouted.

Zhang Lie retorted, "After our marriage vows, Qianqian belongs to me—she's a member of the Zhang family! To be quite honest, I wouldn't feel comfortable leaving her with you, given the history of your past decisions."

He vanished with Li Qianlin in a bolt of light, and the wounded Li Zongming was hardly in any shape to give chase.

The lifeforms that had participated in the blockade on Mt. Yun also slowly retreated. One of the king's guards stepped forward and asked, "Your majesty, will you really allow that man to leave with the princess?"

"What, you want to chase after him?"

The guard immediately lowered his head, bowing and clamping his mouth shut.

Another guard asked, "Your majesty, what should we do with the western king's son?"

Li Zongming waved a hand airily. "Wrap him up and send him back to the world of the west!"

He wasn't certain that Zhang Lie would succeed in his task, so it would be unwise to completely alienate the king of the west.

However, if Zhang Lie were being truthful, the western world would end up facing a tumultuous period ahead, and the king of the west's anger would be completely concentrated on Zhang Lie rather than on the king of the east.

#### Chapter 723: Shaking Both Worlds

"Well, I suppose I'll let the two of them duke it out for now..."

Li Zongming made up his mind, waved to Dong Mingxing, and vanished from the spot.

In the western king's palace, the king of the west, seated on his draconic throne, suddenly opened his eyes and spat out a mouthful of blood. In rage, he roared, "You wretched couple! I'll tear both your corpses to pieces!"

Thunder and lightning crackled over the entire western sky.

To be frank, Zhang Lie's sudden appearance and disruption of the wedding led to no smaller a ruckus than when he had revealed the existence of disaster gene fragments and disaster-grade lifeforms.

Both in the third realm and in the real world, the news made headlines, but Zhang Lie cared not for such trivial affairs. He returned to the accommodations that the Jinghun had set up for him in the world of the east.

Zhang Lie had commanded Ren Kunjing to lead him to the Jinghun representatives present in the world before he controlled them all with his disaster-grade soulshard.

On the surface, it seemed as though Zhang Lie were cooperating with the Jinghun, but in truth, Zhang Lie was controlling them all. Whenever he encountered a Jinghun not under his control, he would use his soulshard on them.

As though she were protecting herself, Li Qianlin folded her arms across her chest. "Just what are you trying to do?"

Zhang Lie rolled his eyes. "What do you think I'm trying to do?"

Li Qianlin replied, "I understand your intentions now! You want to gift the world of the west to my father, then formally marry me so that you can control both the worlds of east and west!"

Zhang Lie stilled.

Li Qianlin, glancing at his face, smiled. "Haha, I've guessed right, haven't I?"

Zhang Lie looked at her with a grimace. "Just who do you think I am? That's what your father assumed, too—but not everyone wants to be the king of the realm, and I'm hardly interested. I'm here for you!"

Li Qianlin snorted. "For me? Do you really think me such a naive maiden? We've never met before. How could you stand to offend two kings of the realm for me? Should I consider you a hero, then? I hardly believe that you would be so infatuated with my beauty!"

Zhang Lie knew that Li Qianlin didn't have any of her memories from her past life, and he wasn't mad at her. He reached out a finger and tugged on Li Qianlin's lower jaw. "I fell in love with you at first sight. From then on, I was certain that you would become my woman, and only my woman!"

Zhang Lie's domineering aura caused Li Qianlin to flush. Despite her misgivings, she was charmed. Li Qianlin did feel a certain sense of liking for this mysterious man who had appeared in front of her, not to mention how he had saved her from a traumatic life.

Perhaps this truly was love at first sight?

"Really?" Li Qianlin asked.

Zhang Lie continued, "At that time, I was hardly deserving of you, so I worked harder and harder to become a man who would be your equal. When I finally grew strong, strong enough that I was willing to try for your hand in marriage, I learned that you were already betrothed.

"That was a tremendous blow to me, as though my heart had been scooped out of my chest. Despite all that, as long as you were happy, I would have left you be. I snuck into the wedding to see if the groom was a man worthy of you, only to find that he was nothing but trash. As a result, I had no choice but to take you away, even if I had to rouse the ire of two kings of the realm."

Li Qianlin's eyes gleamed. That was a romantic story, indeed—as long as it were true. Wary, she turned her head. "That's a nice story, but how can I be sure of its authenticity?"

This was a story worthy of a daydream, but Li Qianlin couldn't afford to be so naive. As the daughter of the king, she rationally and logically couldn't believe that there would be a man who was willing to go against the entire world for her.

Zhang Lie reached out to Li Qianlin's petite, delicate hand and placed it on his chest. "Touch my scorching heart and sense the truth it reveals."

Zhang Lie did, surprisingly, have some experience at picking up women. After missing out on Li Qianlin in his past life, he had worked quite hard at developing such skills.

Li Qianlin flushed red and lowered her head, but Zhang Lie tilted her head upwards so that their gazes met.

As Li Qianlin's eyes dilated, Zhang Lie leaned closer and closer—before he was interrupted by a voice from outside. "Zhang Lie, you're back!"

It was Ren Kunjing.

Li Qianlin suddenly came to her senses and pushed Zhang Lie aside.

"Ren, Kun, Jing!" Zhang Lie roared, rushing out of the door and punching Ren Kunjing straight through two or three houses before he came to a halt, his body slumping against a wall.

He fell to the ground in an abused heap of crystal. "What did I do wrong, Zhang Lie?"

Zhang Lie brandished his fists and cracked his knuckles. "Nothing. Did I say that you did something wrong? I'm just practicing my punches. You don't mind, do you?"

Even before Ren Kunjing could speak, Zhang Lie had already begun to punch him. His arms blurred, moving so quickly all Ren Kunjing saw was a blur of shadow.

By the time he finished venting his anger, Ren Kunjing's body had become a patchwork of cracked and shattered crystal.

When Zhang Lie stomped away, some of the Jinghun timidly crept forward to tend to Ren Kunjing's injuries.

Subsequently, Zhang Lie commanded, "We head for the world of the west!"

He, Li Qianlin, and the Jinghun gathered by the wormhole between east and west.

Because both worlds were large worlds, the connecting wormhole was also abnormally wide, and there was a very high chance of spatial rifts being formed. Traveling between the worlds of east and west thus required a wormhole shuttle.

Fortunately, Zhang Lie had obtained a shuttle from the scalemen world, and he didn't need to purchase one of his own. Otherwise, given how exorbitant these shuttles were, Zhang Lie and the Jinghun would have had a big headache.

By the wormhole, everyone was talking about what had happened between Zhang Lie and Li Qianlin, as though they were the protagonists of the entire world.

"You didn't see it, did you? During the wedding, the daughter of the eastern king looked like a fairy descending from the heavens. Just as the marriage was about to take place, a bolt of lightning shot down from the skies, taking on the form of a man.

"The man cried out passionately, 'I've always loved you, forever and ever!' The eastern king's daughter, her eyes tearing up, retorted, 'In that case, why did you get together with her?!' With bloodshot eyes, the man replied, 'It's all a misunderstanding! I loved you, and I wanted to see you happy—but I'm far too weak to give you any such happiness.'

"The eastern princess pulled up her gown and leapt down from the stage on crystal heels. She hugged the man tightly and began to cry. 'I've never found more happiness from anyone but you.'

"The western prince inclined his head to the skies and laughed in hurt and bitter betrayal. 'Ha! Ha! I gave you everything you ever wanted, everything you will ever want—but you're still going to leave with him?'

"The eastern princess hugged the man tightly as she replied, 'I'm sorry. You are a good man, and there are far better women than me.'

"The western prince begged, 'I can give you anything, even my heart! Please, don't desert me!'

"The eastern princess replied, shaking her head, 'I will only love one man in my entire life: him.'"

The surprising reveal that Zhang Lie had dreamt up had somehow become a love triangle on the level of a soap opera.

The entire world of the east was abuzz at the fiasco that the wedding had become.

In the world of the west, it was treated like a ludicrous joke.

Many famous people regretted that they had not been in attendance. Because no one truly understood what had happened, the rumors that ended up spreading to the public were filled with all sorts of make-believe.

In its retelling, the story had gained all sorts of disparate versions—a jilted boyfriend, a former girlfriend, a rival of the western prince, reincarnation... Some enterprising fellows had even turned

the entire debacle into a romantic musical that was already appearing on stages around the world—one of which was right beside them.

A man and a woman stood on stage, one in a white gown, the other in a rainbow-colored outfit.

The male actor shouted, "You're heartless, unreasonable, and cruel!"

The female actor retorted, "And are you not heartless, unreasonable, or cruel yourself?!"

Zhang Lie: ???

The man: "How am I heartless, unreasonable, or cruel?!"

The woman: "When have you ever not been heartless, unreasonable, or cruel?!"

The man: "No matter how heartless, unreasonable, or cruel I am, I'm no more so than you!"

The woman: "Me?! No, you're the most heartless, unreasonable, and cruel person I've ever met!"

Zhang Lie: ...

Beside him, however, Li Qianlin seemed very interested in the performance, and she even laughed out loud.

Chapter 724: Topsy-Turvy

Even in their wildest dreams, the actors surely couldn't have guessed that those figures they were acting out were standing right there in the audience, watching them raptly.

Several of the Jinghun present clapped and shouted, "Bravo! Bravo!"

It was meant to be a romantic comedy, but the Jinghun acted as though they were watching a thriller instead. The Jinghun felt that this was high praise: their comrades' antics had been so influential that there was even a play about it.

Zhang Lie would have been perfectly happy to applaud if someone else had done this instead of him, but he couldn't help frown upon watching this ersatz performance.

The two actors on stage were acting out the scene of Zhang Lie and Li Qianlin's confrontation on stage during the wedding, but Zhang Lie found this reenactment farcical. If they really were to face off against each other in the wedding, they would have been struck down by the two kings of the realm.

However, the captive audience didn't see any issue with this reenactment. To them, as long as there was sufficient drama involved, any logical inconsistencies could be smoothed out. [1]

Given how the actors on stage were dragging out the play, they could divide a single wedding into thirty-six episodes, and they would be able to enact all thirty-six episodes if Zhang Lie and Li Qianlin remained in the headlines.

Most importantly, there were countless such retellings of the wedding floating around. There were several popular variants among these.

The past boyfriend: Zhang Lie was Li Qianlin's past boyfriend, but the king of the east forcefully separated them because of his lack of strength. In rage, Zhang Lie was motivated to grow stronger than he ever had been before. When he learned that Li Qianlin was getting married, he rushed over to crash the wedding.

The past girlfriend: this version arose because much of the audience, not having attended the wedding personally, was unaware of whether Zhang Lie was male or female, and treated him as female. Interestingly enough, many favored this version above the others.

This supposed 'Zhang Lie' was Duan Gen's past girlfriend, but they broke up because of their differences in status or because of Zhang Lie's abrasive personality. Upon hearing that Duan Gen was getting married to Li Qianlin, 'Zhang Lie' crashed the wedding, crippled Duan Gen, and snatched away the bride, in order that no one would have what she, Zhang Lie, couldn't possess.

The elopement: Zhang Lie and Li Qianlin were in love, but the king of the east separated them by force. The day of the wedding, Zhang Lie contracted with an external party to escape with Li Qianlin.

In this variation, the reason that Zhang Lie and Li Qianlin were able to escape weren't because of their own strength, but rather that of the mysterious party. This external party was unwilling to see the worlds of east and west allying with each other; this version suggested a grand conspiracy at play.

Revenge: this was an even more ludicrous version of events. Allegedly, the king of the west had destroyed Zhang Lie's entire clan, leaving him the only survivor.

Zhang Lie cultivated for many long years hoping for a chance to take revenge. He wanted the western king's line to perish, and for the western king's reputation to diminish in the public eye. During the wedding, he snuck into the ceremony and struck at an opportune moment, crippling Duan Gen and snatching away the bride.

Reincarnation: Zhang Lie couldn't stand this version, which was far too fantastical for his taste—something along the lines of Zhang Lie and Li Qianlin being fated to be together in three separate reincarnations.

Generational feud: the king of the west snatched away Zhang Lie's woman in the past, and Zhang Lie now snatched away his son's woman in the present.

Generational feud, redux: the king of the east snatched away Zhang Lie's woman, and Zhang Lie now snatched away his daughter.

After the performance, Zhang Lie tipped the actors—he wasn't particularly enthused by the performance, or at all, but Li Qianlin liked it very much.

Enjoying the results of someone else's hard work certainly was worth some money; it would be immoral not to pay. Zhang Lie would hardly do something so unethical, at least not in sight of Li Qianlin...

Suddenly, Zhang Lie discovered that Li Qianlin had gone missing. He searched for her and found her in front of a noticeboard.

Li Qianlin pointed at two of the notices and shouted, "Zhang Lie, look! There are bounties on us now!"

Zhang Lie rolled his eyes at her. "What's exciting about that?"

"Well, no one has ever issued a bounty on me before. Of course I'm excited!"

She walked up to inspect the drawings carefully before clucking her tongue in annoyance. "Am I that ugly? Who drew these notices?!"

"That's how your father thinks of you, of course!"

"Liar!" Li Qianlin retorted.

"Don't you want to be drawn in an ugly fashion? Would you rather have the whole world search for your exact likeness?"

Li Qianlin pursed her lips. "Aren't you a hero? With you around, what do I have to fear?"

Zhang Lie had to explain, "The reason you're drawn in such an inaccurate fashion is because your father doesn't really want to chase you down."

Li Qianlin frowned. "Can't he just not issue these bounties, then?"

Zhang Lie shrugged. "He has to at least put in the illusion of effort to maintain cordial relations with the west, after all."

This sort of thing had happened in Zhang Lie's past life, but the context was different. In his past life, the king of the realm didn't want to chase Li Qianlin down. In this one, he thought the chase would be meaningless, a waste of time and effort. If even the king of the east were unable to stop Zhang Lie, how would anyone else be able to succeed?

Zhang Lie appreciated his own portrait. In his past life, Li Qianlin was the only one who had a bounty issued on her, not him.

"It looks a little like modern art..." Zhang Lie's drawing looked like that of a monster, with eyes, ears, mouth, and nose all out of alignment. When he turned to Li Qianlin, however, his thoughts about the perceived inaccuracies of his drawing vanished.

Li Qianlin's portrait looked like that of a different person entirely, fat and fuzzy with hair.

"No, this won't do! I have to talk to my father about this!" In anger, Li Qianlin reached out to tear the bounty from the noticeboard, but Zhang Lie stopped her in time.

In this life, Li Qianlin didn't have to experience a harrowing chase before meeting with Zhang Lie, and her personality was somewhat different from before.

Or rather, this was Li Qianlin's original personality, and her escape and subsequent maturity had changed her for the better. That change was what ultimately got Zhang Lie interested in her...

Chapter 725: Comprehensive Plan

Regardless of what Li Qianlin were to become, however, Zhang Lie's feelings for her wouldn't change. He truly did love her.

"Qianqian—and you bastard! I've finally found you both!" As the two of them were teasing each other about whose depiction was uglier, a female voice came from behind.

Zhang Lie and Li Qianlin turned to the voice in shock.

"You?" Zhang Lie glanced at the speaker skeptically.

"Ah, Xingxing!" Upon seeing the speaker, Li Qianlin rushed forward and hugged her friend tightly.

Dong Mingxing was wearing sunglasses large enough to cover up half her face, a scarf around her neck, and a wide-brimmed hat, but even so, Li Qianlin recognized her immediately. She asked joyfully, "How did you find us?"

Dong Mingxing rolled her eyes. "I heard the king of the east state that some brash fool wanted to attack the world of the west, in which case there's no way to avoid passing by this wormhole. I waited here—and lo and behold, here you are."

Zhang Lie glanced all around him.

Dong Mingxing sighed. "Don't worry, I came alone. Anyway, how would someone like you, who dared to spirit away the princess of the east and bride to the west during her very wedding, even fear any pursuers?"

Zhang Lie shook his head. "I don't fear them. I just wanted to see how many of them there were. We're leaving for the west soon, so I have to deal with them quickly."

Dong Mingxing couldn't help but be inwardly relieved that she had truly come alone. From the expression this person was making, he didn't seem to be joking.

His face was cool and unperturbed, his tone calm, as though he were simply asking what they would have for dinner that night.

Dong Mingxing was truly scared now: from her encounters and experiences with him, she knew that he had to be an experienced killer.

Li Qianlin asked, "Xingxing, what are you doing here? Could you be worried about me?"

Dong Mingxing reached out for Li Qianlin's shoulders and slowly pushed her an arm's width away. "I came to ask you just what's going on."

"What do you mean?"

Dong Mingxing frowned at her. "You told me you were going to get married, and then you made such a big fuss during the wedding! You ran away and eloped with this man—just what's going on, Qianqian? Why didn't you tell me that you were going to do any of this? I thought we were the closest of friends!"

Li Qianlin's eyes widened. "Ah, you wanted to conspire with me? Me too—we truly think alike!"

"Is that all you're going to say to me?!" Dong Mingxing rapped Li Qianlin hard on her head.

She put her hands on her hips. "Don't you have anything more important?"

Li Qianlin lowered her head. "I'm sorry, Xingxing."

Dong Mingxing sighed again. "What will I do with you? Well, we can worry about that later. Who's this wastrel of a man?"

Li Qianlin shook her head. "I didn't know him before the wedding."

Dong Mingxing tugged on Li Qianlin's earlobe as she exclaimed, "You don't know him?! If you didn't know him, why would he snatch you away from the wedding—and such an important one, at that? If you didn't know him, why would he declare war on two worlds just for you?"

Li Qianlin groused, "Actually, I'd like to understand why, myself. He told me he fell in love with me at first sight."

Ren Kunjing widened his eyes. "Love at first sight?"

The Jinghun, all of whom were controlled by Zhang Lie, would do as he instructed without any reservations whatsoever. However, they still retained their original intelligence. Upon hearing of this "love at first sight", Ren Kunjing and the other Jinghun glanced askance at Zhang Lie.

They had been with Zhang Lie all this time, and they knew very well that Zhang Lie had never had a chance to meet with Li Qianlin. To their knowledge, the wedding was the first time the two of them had met.

Zhang Lie introduced himself, "Hello, you're Dong Mingxing, aren't you? I'm Zhang Lie, an alien from the Milky Way. As you heard, I was enraptured by Qianqian's beauty at first glance."

Dong Mingxing rubbed her palms. "Are those your dying words, then?"

Those sounded exactly like the words of a Casanova...

Li Qianlin sighed. "Xingxing, you're as brutish as ever!"

She had always been this way—only when there were problems her fists couldn't solve did she turn to her mind.

Dong Mingxing rolled her eyes. "Who do you think I'm trying to protect, here?!"

"But, Xingxing, can you really beat him?"

Dong Mingxing frowned. Indeed, this fellow was able to defeat even the king of the east, who had managed to escape from the wedding with Li Qianlin in tow...

In order for them to chat more comfortably, Zhang Lie brought them all to a coffeeshop.

Dong Mingxing took a sip of coffee and questioned, "This is how you tricked my darling Qianqian to be with you?"

Dong Mingxing looked at Li Qianlin as though she were an idiot.

Li Qianlin grumbled, "I'm not with him!"

Dong Mingxing reiterated, "This is how you tricked my darling Qianqian to be with you?"

"I told you, I'm not with him!"

Dong Mingxing turned to her with a scowl. "Not yet—but I can see you will be!"

"That's because we can't separate from each other..."

Dong Mingxing was speechless. "Oh? I don't see any restraints on you two!"

"If I were to return to my father, I'd be forced to marry a bastard. Xingxing, listen to me, do you know what Duan Gen did to Tao?"

Li Qianlin told her all that she had found out about him.

Dong Mingxing sat upright, her beauty an icy mask. "I knew that that bastard was trashy, but not to this extent... I did tell you to reconsider marrying him, didn't I?"

Li Qianqian spread her hands. "I'm the princess of the east, and my life has never been mine to control. I live with countless privileges and resources, and my duty to the world is likewise commensurate. I could hardly abuse my station and neglect my responsibilities..."

Dong Mingxing frowned. "So, how did this responsible princess end up eloping with a stranger?"

"I was kidnapped!"

"In that case, Mr. Kidnapper, what's so good about this willful princess? Why not kidnap me? I'm larger than this princess over here, you see."

Dong Mingxing cupped her breasts to demonstrate their superior size.

Zhang Lie sipped his coffee and smirked. "Don't make jokes like these if you can't afford the consequences."

Dong Mingxing changed the topic. "Do you really intend to invade the western world with just these forces?"

Zhang Lie replied coolly, "Manpower is no concern. I have plenty of means of acquiring more. Please don't worry, Miss Dong. Qianqian's my woman, and I wouldn't endanger her in any way. Any enemy would have to climb over my corpse first."

Dong Mingxing stared at Zhang Lie appraisingly. "You really are serious, aren't you? But I do have to warn you—the king of the west won't be a trivial foe."

Zhang Lie smiled. "No king of the realm would be. But I've made my preparations, and I'm not worried."

## Chapter 726: Completely Crippled

Dong Mingxing's face was serious as she confirmed, "You've finalized all your preparations? Beware—his strength might pale in comparison to the king of the east, but the king of the west has had a long tenure in the western world, weathering all sorts of conflicts and upheavals."

"Thank you for your concern, Miss Dong."

"Where are your preparations, at any rate? I don't see anything!"

Zhang Lie countered, "What's there to prepare for? It's not anything major—preparing for nothing is the same as preparing for everything! If I want to be with Qianqian, I have to destroy the world of the west—I don't want to deal with flies buzzing left and right around me otherwise. Only by exterminating their lair once and for all will I get rid of them for good. As for my preparations, I'll just have to sweep through whoever comes at me."

Dong Mingxing laughed. "A lair of flies? Be careful that you don't find a lair of dragons, instead—don't be swallowed up whole!"

Zhang Lie was unruffled. "Dragons and flies are no different to me."

Li Qianlin watched as Zhang Lie and her best friend argued with each other.

"Make a more comprehensive plan," Dong Mingxing suggested.

"There's nothing to plan. I'll deal with whatever comes my way when it happens!"

Dong Mingxing shrugged. "It looks like you don't trust me, do you?"

From her perspective, someone who was so bold as to claim that they would take down the world of the west had to be entirely prepared. Surely no one would head there without any preparation like a fool?

Zhang Lie countered, "Indeed, even if I had a comprehensive plan, I wouldn't reveal it to you, would I, Miss Dong?"

Dong Mingxing clapped her hands together. "Very well, that's settled. I'll head to the western world with you guys!"

Li Qianlin's eyes widened. "You? Why?"

Dong Mingxing rolled her eyes at her. "I'm worried that you'll be kidnapped, of course!"

"I've already been kidnapped..."

Zhang Lie nodded. "Very well. With a skilled fighter like Miss Dong around, I can be much more relaxed. I was worried that I wouldn't be able to protect Qianqian in the heat of battle, but your presence will solve that problem neatly."

"Don't you have your men, too?" Dong Mingxing asked.

Zhang Lie shrugged. "None of them would be as thoughtful as you, Miss Dong."

"Hold it!" Li Qianlin objected. "No, I can't bring Xingxing into this just for me!"

Dong Mingxing patted Li Qianlin on the head. "You didn't drag me in—I chose to participate of my own accord."

"But it'll be dangerous!"

Dong Mingxing rolled her eyes. "You don't fear the danger—why should I?"

"But I don't want to drag you into this!"

Dong Mingxing smiled. "Are you warning me not to steal your man?"

Li Qianlin's face flushed red. "He, that kidnapper isn't my man!"

Dong Mingxing's smile widened. "I don't think I mentioned who your man was, did I?"

Li Qianlin's cheeks turned as red as an apple, and you could almost see the steam wafting out of her head.

Dong Mingxing began to laugh. Zhang Lie finally said, "It's time for us to set off. We can't leave the western king to his own devices for too long."

By then, the king of the east had sent Duan Gen back home. He roared and raged, crushing everything in his room to pieces. His shrill voice penetrated the walls of his estate. Zhang Lie's genetic energy, notably and frighteningly corrosive, had wrecked his body irrecoverably.

"Scram, all of you! I'm not a cripple, I'm the son of the western king! You're all pieces of trash, doctors who don't live up to your reputation! If you can't even heal my injuries, what good are you?!"

Servants and physicians alike were hounded out of his rooms. When they saw the king of the west outside, they knelt down by the floor, trembling and not daring to raise their heads.

Duan Zisuan was standing right outside and calmly watching his enraged, crazed son. Only when his son had slumped to the ground, gasping for breath, did Duan Zisuan walk in and ask, "Are you done making a fuss?"

Duan Gen struck a ghastly figure. The dashing Suanni he had been during the wedding was no more. His eyes were now empty sockets, one of his arms had been sliced away, and one leg wrenched off. Duan Gen was left with one leg, one arm, and no eyes.

Duan Gen, once the prince of the west, the top cultivator after the two kings of the realm—he was now a complete cripple.

Duan Zisuan's face turned ugly. How had a joyous wedding ended up like this? Not only had he lost his reputation, his son had even been turned into... this.

Duan Gen crawled toward his father on one arm and one leg, then clutched onto the hem of his robes tightly.

"Father, as the king of the realm, you must know how to save me! I don't want to become a cripple, and I don't want to lose my masculinity! You don't want your line to end with me, either, do you?"

Duan Zisuan turned to the physicians. "How is the prince?"

One of the imperial physicians stepped forward. "Your majesty, his highness was gravely wounded by a villain. He lost an arm, a leg, and his genitals. Furthermore, his anus was ruptured, and he'll have a hard time controlling his ability to defecate and urinate in the future."

As the physician gave his report, everyone began to smell a truly vile odor—Duan Gen was, as stated, simultaneously defecating and urinating uncontrollably. Blood seeped into his stool.

Everyone knew how terrible Duan Gen looked, but no one laughed at him. They all fell silent.

Duan Zisuan broke the heavy silence. "Master, you're the most famous physician of the west. Are you unable to help my son?"

The old man kneeling on the floor began to tremble. "Your majesty, I'm afraid I'm incapable of doing anything. The prince's body is being ravaged by an unusual energy, one so corrosive that I was barely able to protect his life by amputating his lost limbs. However, that energy has seeped deep into his bones, and it can't be removed by ordinary means.

"Take his highness's eyes for example. Even if we were to excise the corroded flesh and bone around his eye sockets, that energy would still remain, devouring his highness's wounds each and every second."

In other words, Duan Gen had only two futures: one in which he was unable to bear the constant torment and killed himself, and one in which he was unable to bear that torment and went crazy as a result.

Duan Zisuan clenched his fists tightly. The lines of Zhang Lie's face were engraved in his mind; his face flushed red as he considered Zhang Lie anew.

No amount of torture he inflicted on that wretched couple would be able to quench his anger.

The physician shook his head again. "I apologize, your majesty. I would be able to do something against poison, but not this mysterious energy. I regret that I am no expert like you."

"And if I were to assist you?"

The physician pondered the problem for quite some time. "Your majesty, with your strength and all sorts of rare and precious herbs, I might be able to induce the prince's limbs to grow back, but his eyes and genitals were clearly targeted. Even if they were restored, they would never fully function again."

Duan Zisuan pleaded, "Master, I only have this one son!"

"Your majesty, as a father myself, I understand your feelings wholeheartedly. However, I don't believe that anyone else in this world save the culprit behind his highness's injuries would be able to save his life."

Chapter 727: The Alien Races Gather

"Damned fool! If you can't even save my son, what good are you?!" Duan Zisuan seethed at the uselessness of this royal physician. With a wave of his hand, the physician's head exploded, scattering blood and brain fluid on the closest attendants. Their faces were filled with horror and dread, but they didn't dare scream lest they become the next target.

Duan Zisuan's attitude had shifted faster than one could flip a book—and in a single second, he sentenced a physician, the top physician of the world, who had saved countless people within it, to death.

He roared in outrage. Thunder and lightning crackled through the sky as the guards and attendants quailed.

Just then, an imperial guard rushed toward the king of the realm. "Your majesty, we have a problem! A large group of enemies has emerged from the wormhole from the east to the west, and we suspect that they're aliens from the Milky Way! They've come with massive numbers of third- and fourth-level beasts under their control, and they're attacking our world with the intention of capturing your head!"

Duan Zisuan recalled just what had happened during the wedding, and Zhang Lie's face flitted through his head.

"Are you finally here, then?" Duan Zisuan gritted his teeth. "I was just about to seek you out for revenge—perfect timing."

Duan Gen called out from the floor, "Father, you have to take revenge for me! Tear that fellow into shreds—cut off his dick and stuff it up his ass! No, even that won't be enough. Dig out his eyeballs

and have a hundred men rape him. Stuff his dick up his nostrils—pour alcohol into his ass, then light it up and watch him burn!"

The moment the conversation shifted to torture, Duan Gen seemed to gain a spark in his eyes. His words and tone were malicious and vile; the guards and attendants kneeling on the floor shivered upon hearing the conversation.

They were afraid that they, too, would become Duan Gen's targets. Such torture would be a fate worse than death.

Duan Gen gritted his teeth. "And we can't forget about that Li Qianlin, either. Before digging out the man's eyes, I'll have him witness Li Qianlin being raped by a hundred men—no, I'll find a hundred hounds in heat, then gather an audience from the worlds of east and west. I'll trap her in a cage and loose the hounds at her..."

Duan Gen began to laugh loudly. He grew strangely excited just thinking about such thoughts of revenge, so much so that he began to laugh wildly.

Duan Zisuan caressed his son's head lovingly. "Very well. I'll capture that vile, treacherous couple. There are still a few guards and attendants here. You might have lost your eyes, but if you'll feel more comfortable hearing the sounds of torture..."

"Thank you, Father!"

The kneeling guards and attendants immediately pleaded for mercy. "Please, your majesty, please spare us! We've done nothing wrong..."

Duan Zisuan departed as though he hadn't heard anything, his eyes glinting with frost.

"Is this the western world, then?" Zhang Lie and a group of Jinghun departed from the shuttle and stepped into the world of the west.

The Jinghun had informed Zhang Lie where the wormhole leading to the western world was—the Jinghun had eyes on almost each and every planet in the third realm.

The moment they stepped into the world, they saw a group of alien races waiting for them: the Tianxin, the black eagles, the Poxian, the Jinghun, the starbeasts, the Jindao, the winged—a diverse group.

Zhang Lie was surprised that this group of aliens included even those among the four prime races, like the winged and the nightdemons.

"Can you explain to me what's going on?" Zhang Lie turned and asked the nearest Jinghun.

The time and location of the meeting had been arranged by the Jinghun, and so had this welcoming committee.

Since the Jinghun were under the control of Zhang Lie's disaster-grade soulshard, they should have been incapable of harming him, but there was always the possibility that someone among the Jinghun had been able to break free of that mental compulsion.

After all, there was such a diversity in soulshards that Zhang Lie wouldn't be surprised if there were one that could defend against his own.

Zhang Lie was as calm as ever as he surveyed the crowd. There were over a hundred races present, most among the hundred strongest races of the galaxy, and each brought a few dozen or even a few hundred representatives with them.

Behind these aliens were large quantities of genetic lifeforms, those that had survived the initial assault on Mt. Yun.

"What are you planning to do with so many people around?" Zhang Lie asked.

He wasn't frightened; numbers would do anything against him with his mistmeld clam soulshard.

He recalled being very surprised when the Jinghun had informed him that there would be no need to prepare a new batch of lifeforms after that fight. According to the original plan, those lifeforms would be ceded to the alien races to compel them not to side with the king of the east during the assault.

Zhang Lie expected that the Jinghun still had a batch of lifeforms in reserve, but now, it was apparent that they had somehow managed to reclaim control over the original genetic lifeforms. It looked as though they had carried out another transaction with the aliens instead.

Xing Ying rolled his eyes. "We're here to help you."

Ren Kunjing explained, "Once everyone learned that you were the mastermind behind crashing the wedding, they flocked to participate."

The nightdemons called out, "Champion of mankind, you should have let us know in advance that you were going to be invading the western world!"

Zhang Lie was a little embarrassed.

The western world was a large one, and it had a wealth of resources. Anyone who participated would be able to obtain quite a significant share.

Ren Kunjing apologized. "I should have let you know, Zhang Lie, but I wanted to give you a surprise given that they're all here bearing good intentions."

Xing Ying added, "The four prime races have always been your greatest allies, Zhang Lie! Don't be a stranger when you're planning something so exciting."

The winged: "We're only able to send this small group of people on short notice, but there'll be even more here shortly."

This sort of situation was tantamount to doing a favor for Zhang Lie. When the alien races learned of this affair, they immediately sent a delegation to the western world—it was evident that they would obtain a fair share of rewards following Zhang Lie, given what had happened in the second realm.

Zhang Lie had constructed a kingdom of his own, the kingdom of Limit, which accepted all races within it.

This, of course, included the races of the Milky Way. The four prime races had been treated very well, almost on par with the founding races of Limit, and were therefore able to obtain large tracts of land within the second realm—perhaps a tenth of the total land that Limit possessed.

The benefit that the races derived from this land was so great that the other races were immediately jealous.

After that incident, when these other races learned that Zhang Lie was about to do something on a similar scale, they immediately rushed over. The alien races guessed that crashing the wedding was just the prelude—that what Zhang Lie really wanted to do was build a second kingdom of Limit.

If he really were to do so, they could be part of the founding races of the kingdom in the third realm, especially the four prime races! They had obtained huge rewards in the second realm, including massive tracts of land. They had already owned large quantities of land in the first realm, and if they were to obtain some more in the third as well, they would be able to develop a new set of forces stably ascending from the first realm to the third.

What Zhang Lie was doing now was converting the indigenous peoples' lands into a cradle for the alien races' warriors, and it would be foolish not to participate. This would be a history-defining moment in the third realm!

#### Chapter 728: Conquering the West

Zhang Lie accepted the alien races' help with grace. "Supporting forces? Very well—I accept your help. However, all of you have to listen to my command at all times, or I won't be responsible for your deaths!"

"Of course!" Warlord Xing Ying replied, pumping a fist in the air. "Anyone who disobeys you will have to get through me, first."

"Very good. In that case, let's set off."

Regardless of whether or not there were any dissenters in their midst, Zhang Lie had absolute strength and his mistmeld clam soulshard—there would be nothing to fear from these aliens.

Dong Mingxing asked, "Is this part of the plan you concocted?"

Li Qianlin cried out in surprise, "To think you alien races were all working in cahoots!"

Xing Ying bowed. "Your highness, we've gathered in the champion of mankind's, Zhang Lie's, name."

Everyone was curious about the identity of this indigenous princess that Zhang Lie had captured.

"Oh? It looks like this demon king is quite famous in the Milky Way..."

Xing Ying nodded. "It would be difficult to find someone who hasn't heard of Zhang Lie where we're from."

"Can you tell me more?" Li Qianlin asked curiously.

Zhang Lie broke their conversation off. "I have a question for you all."

Xing Ying's eyes flashed. "What's the matter, Zhang Lie?"

Zhang Lie took out the tattered scraps of a map that he had been collecting. "Have you seen the likes of these before?"

Xing Ying fell deep in thought. "I feel like I may have, but I can't be certain. I believe some among the clan had started collecting these scraps. I'll make a few inquiries on your behalf when I return."

One of the nightdemons called out, "We've seen these scraps a few times! No one knows their purpose, but these scraps are indestructible."

The winged: "Some of us have tried to search for these scraps hoping to make armor out of them, but we found the search surprisingly difficult. Even the winged haven't managed to collect more than a few pieces, far from enough to make armor out of."

The other races all gathered around, quite a few of whom mentioned that they had seen such a few scraps before. Those representatives didn't realize that a rainbow gleam filled their eyes as Zhang Lie caught their attention.

"See if you can retrieve them. I'm very interested in such scraps, and I'm willing to exchange them for alcohol that, when imbibed, will generate superior gene fragments."

He didn't intend to purchase them for too high a price, or that would reveal his desire for them and the true worth of these scraps. If that were to happen, there would surely be some unscrupulous merchants hoping to rip Zhang Lie off.

Xing Ying patted his chest. "There's no need for anything in trade. The starbeasts will fully support your plans, champion of mankind!"

The nightdemon representatives added, "These scraps aren't worth anything to us, either. We'll send over whatever we have."

The other representatives agreed.

Li Qianlin glanced at the scraps curiously. "I believe my father has a few of those lying around, too."

Zhang Lie was quite surprised. His intention had been to obtain these scraps from the alien races, but he had overlooked the indigenous peoples as well.

Li Qianlin continued, "I've seen my father try to inspect their origin, but he never succeeded."

Only a rare few knew of the true use of these scraps; Zhang Lie would have to try to get them from the eastern king at some point.

The invasion quickly began in earnest.

Zhang Lie's strategy was simple: superior- and peak-grade lifeforms would stampede through contested territory, Zhang Lie would control whoever he encountered with his mistmeld clam soulshard, and the races of the Milky Way would take down any stragglers.

They advanced at such a breakneck speed that Li Qianlin and Dong Mingxing were shocked. To think that the people of the western world would be so helpless in front of Zhang Lie!

If Zhang Lie were to attack the eastern world, they doubted it would fare much better. With Red Comet and the disaster-grade lifeform that Zhang Lie had compelled away from the king of the west, no army could stop his advance.

However, Zhang Lie knew very well that it didn't matter just how many cities he took down. He would need to deal with the western king once and for all.

In fact, he had barely touched the cities and towns that he had conquered, knowing that the only ones who lived there were ordinary people unrelated to his goal.

Zhang Lie knew that the western king surely wouldn't hide from him. This was one of the reasons the races of the Milky Way were willing to throw in their support—not only did Zhang Lie possess the strength needed to kill the king, he had even successfully roused the king's anger by crippling his son and stealing his son's bride. The king of the west bore Zhang Lie a crippling grudge, and only one of them would be alive by the end of the conflict.

As Zhang Lie expected, the king of the west himself showed up to oppose him. He quickly gathered his elites and made his way over to where Zhang Lie was situated, with a massive force so large that he had to have been cultivating it for years.

With the king of the west were all manner of superior- and peak-grade lifeforms, the strongest of the forces the king could marshal.

Thunder and lightning crackled through the skies. The king of the west, Duan Zisuan, stood in the midst of all that lightning. He shouted, "Knave, step forward and face your death!"

Zhang Lie soared into the air and stood opposite the king of the realm. "Duan Zisuan, have you finally decided to face me in battle?"

Duan Zisuan's actual body was far larger than those of his clones. His clones were only two meters tall, whereas his true body was five meters tall. His claws were sharp and long, and he bared his ferocious teeth. His mane waved in the stormy air, his eyes were filled with bloodlust, and the air of a tyrant exuded from his every pore. He felt like the master of the world.

Duan Zisuan called out, "Surrender with your subordinates. Come to the palace with me and treat my son's wounds, and I can give you a fast death."

Zhang Lie's lips curled up. "If you surrender to me now, I'll give you a fast death as well."

Duan Zisuan narrowed his eyes. "You'll turn down my offer, then?"

Zhang Lie snorted. "We haven't started fighting, have we? Who can say who the victor will be?"

Duan Zisuan morphed into a bolt of lightning and shot toward Zhang Lie.

He was far faster than his clone, and if his true body had been present during the conflict with the king of the east, he might really have been able to cause Zhang Lie some damage, but Zhang Lie was perfectly capable of dealing with the western king alone without any distractions around. Duan Zisuan's sharp claws glinted with lightning. "I'll be claiming your head!"

"No one alive has that power!" Zhang Lie retaliated with a fist.

As lightning crackled through the sky, water-attuned genetic energy distorted the space around Zhang Lie and exploded in mid-air, dissolving Duan Zisuan's claw attack. Zhang Lie charged up another punch with his other fist.

Ripples of air formed around Zhang Lie's arm, growing more and more intense as Zhang Lie combined spatial force with his water-attuned genetic energy. Whatever lightning Duan Zisuan sent his way was easily countered by the warped space around Zhang Lie...

## Chapter 729: Against the King of the West

Zhang Lie's aura rose rapidly as the swirling water-attuned genetic energy and spatial force condensed and compressed around his arms, sucking in the nearby space. A whirlwind spun into existence around them, scattering the troops and mounts that the king of the west had gathered.

As Zhang Lie punched forward, that energy erupted in a flood in mid-air, twisting the entire world and shattering any semblance of natural law. The howling winds, like uncaged beasts, destroyed everything in sight— and this was just one blow from Zhang Lie.

One blow was sufficient to direct the course of the entire battle.

Before Zhang Lie lay patches of destruction, as though an apocalypse had just struck the world. Large swathes of superior- and peak-grade lifeforms had been sucked up into the whirlwind and through the air.

The troops of the western world were unable to imagine an alien who could wreak such destruction. Even the aftermath of his blows weren't something they could withstand.

The weaker among them were struck by the ripples of force until they vomited out blood, and even the stronger ones wouldn't be able to stand being sucked into the whirlwind. Even the aliens supporting Zhang Lie were shocked by the impact.

They had witnessed his punch once before, but whenever they did so, they grew more and more frightened.

Zhang Lie's fist was enough to cause an apocalypse all by himself.

Fortunately, given their prior experience, all the aliens had retreated in time, leaving only a few idiots behind who were sucked into the whirlwind. Even the aftermath of the attack was no joke.

Xing Ying stared openmouthed at Zhang Lie. He, who was considered among the upper echelon of warlords, was still nothing compared to Zhang Lie.

He was certain that Zhang Lie's punch would be able to kill over ninety percent of the known warlords, and even the top ten on the ranking might be incapable of defending against such a blow unscathed.

"And he's still 90th on the rankings? It's an insult to us all..."

If Zhang Lie really were 90th with this strength, any warlord above him had to be incomparable ashamed of themselves.

Lightning split the whirlwind. Duan Zisuan emerged from the attack standing. "Is this your full strength? Just this?"

Despite Duan Zisuan's words, the blood trickling out of his mouth was testament to the power behind Zhang Lie's fists.

Duan Zisuan's entire body crackled with lightning as he shot toward Zhang Lie again. His claws were like those of an eagle, and the entire sky seemed to be filled with sharp bolts.

An attack stronger than roaring winds or howling storms approached Zhang Lie. The afterimages of the western king's claws overlapped, compounding the strength of the attack, and he seemed to have the ability of drawing more lightning from the heavens to aid himself.

Xing Ying's face turned pale-white. Despite being one of the top warlords, he was feeling a sense of fear upon watching Zhang Lie and the king of the west fight.

Duan Zisuan's claws were stronger and faster than any attack he possessed, and he doubted he could last any longer than a second against him.

After all, this was the strength of a king of the realm of a large world. Even he would be rendered useless in light of this attack, but Zhang Lie seemed capable of bearing its brunt easily.

Zhang Lie's fists rippled with energy. Streams of water revolved more and more quickly around his wrist, augmented by spatial force and the power of [Mirrored Refraction].

Zhang Lie pummeled the king so quickly his fists left afterimages behind, each of which seemed to refract light. Hundreds and thousands of these afterimages seemed to attack at once, preventing the western king's lightning from surrounding Zhang Lie.

The two combatants clashed in mid-air, releasing so much energy the environment was vanishing bit by bit.

Mirrored light struck like a scythe; lightning like a spear. All the remaining forces, be they supporters of the king of the west or the aliens coming to Zhang Lie's aid, stopped fighting and retreated far, far away.

The battle was like a disaster descending on the world. Just mere proximity alone would cause damage; the two combatants' level of strength was in a different dimension entirely.

"[Syzygy]!" A wheel of black sun appeared behind Zhang Lie's back, and blood-red moonlight by his feet. Zhang Lie's attacks grew stronger and stronger, and rays of light emanated from him in bursts.

As the fight proceeded, Duan Zisuan found his combat ability decreasing more and more, as though his body was being corroded away. His rich combat experience allowed him to identify the problem near-immediately: the domain of moonlight spreading from Zhang Lie.

Just as Duan Zisuan tried to retreat to escape from Zhang Lie's domain, Zhang Lie struck. His fist caused a geyser of water to erupt, shattering space around him. "[Fists of the Silent Sea: Quake]!"

Duan Zisuan blocked the attack with his claws, forming a storm shield. Zhang Lie's punch struck the shield and caused it to explode, sending Duan Zisuan flying out into the distance.

Duan Zisuan barely stabilized himself in mid-air, then used his authority to control the lightning crackling through the skies.

"I invoke the authority of the king of the realm to inflict divine punishment!"

A pillar of lightning fell from the sky, turning everything white for a split second.

"[Fists of the Silent Sea: Soar]!" Zhang Lie feared nothing. He responded with another technique, one with such strength it made the very air warp.

The fist tore the pillar of blinding lightning apart even as Duan Zisuan invoked another such blow with his authority. This pillar was even thicker than the last—but this time, the lightning struck Duan Zisuan himself, rather than Zhang Lie.

The spectators watching the battle from below gasped.

Xing Ying shouted, "The king of the realm missed?!"

How could Duan Zisuan miss such an attack? He had done so intentionally, sending the energy of lightning through his claws, then brandishing his claws at Zhang Lie. The shadow of two gigantic claws which tore the surrounding space apart covered the spectators.

As Duan Zisuan swept downward with his claws, two runic tablets landed around him.

"[Rune: Control]!" Black ripples emanated from the two gravity-altering tablets, forming a localized region of distorted gravity. They began to resonate as one, sending ripples that melded with the sky and caused Duan Zisuan to stumble. He immediately rectified the natural flow of gravity using his power as the king of the realm.

However, he was shocked to no end. To Zhang Lie, the runes engraved on the runic tablets were ancient, incomprehensible script, but to him, the runes formed an embodiment of natural law.

#### Chapter 730: A Prolonged Assault

Duan Zisuan found it impossible to believe that Zhang Lie had accomplished such a feat.

As the king of the realm of a large world, he had tried the same thing countless times, hoping to infuse his weapons with the strength of natural law, but he had never succeeded.

Even so, the runes that appeared on the two tablets were clearly manifestations of natural law.

How much skill, how much effort, how much wisdom was required to achieve such a lofty goal? Duan Zisuan could only chalk it off as power from a higher realm.

While Duan Zisuan was recovering from his astonishment, Zhang Lie had already rushed forward, the blade Guicang in his hand.

Duan Zisuan howled, discharging the power of lightning from his body. The hair all over his body stood straight up. The lightning shot out of his mouth like a railgun, striking Zhang Lie's blade and nullifying his attack.

"[Fists of the Silent Sea: Fade]!" Zhang Lie summoned a serpent, thousands of meters long, with a massive infusion of genetic energy, one whose body was so long its head was up in the clouds. It leapt toward Duan Zisuan, who invoked the authority of the realm for a third time, strengthening the lightning that crackled around him. Lightning crashed down around him, and Duan Zisuan melded into the field of lightning.

The serpent cried out as its humongous body was struck all over. It dissipated before it could even launch its first attack.

"[The Boundless Blade: Yawning Wave]!" With incredible speed, Zhang Lie avoided the lightning array, Guicang in his hand.

The sword slashes he launched were plain and ordinary. There was nothing flashy about them, nothing that would prompt closer investigation—just thin slices, given form by Zhang Lie's genetic energy, but the king of the west reared back in shock.

His mane grew rigid as he shouted, "Three thousand bolts of lightning, three thousand peals of thunder!"

Zhang Lie didn't know whether that was part of the king of the realm's authority or his personal strength, or perhaps a mix of both.

Three thousand bolts of lightning shot toward Zhang Lie like arrows loosed from a bow, criss-crossing in mid-air and forming a huge flood of lightning all aimed at just one target.

Zhang Lie cut apart the bolts of lightning with Guicang, radiant energy bursting forth from his body and erupting amidst the clouds.

The dark clouds above Zhang Lie began to dissipate, revealing a patch of blue sky. As the sunlight struck Zhang Lie, it reflected off of sparkling golden armor.

It felt as if there were nothing else in the world save for him and his opponent.

"[The Boundless Blade: the River Lethe]!" Zhang Lie struck once more. An underworld river materialized in the sky, one so vast the entire world could see it. Everything turned cold—not just from their senses alone.

The spectators puffed out clouds of white air. The temperature had dropped to sub-zero values, and they huddled around each other as a strong wind buffeted them. A layer of frost had begun creeping up their feet. Bloody flakes of snow fell from the sky; it felt as though a gate to the underworld had suddenly opened.

The entire world of the west could see the underworld river in the sky. Hundreds of thousands of ghastly lifeforms seemed to float in and out of sight, rushing out into the river that stained the skies black.

Duan Zisuan retreated quickly as the river rushed toward him in a torrent, and the ghastly creatures swiped their claws at him.

Duan Zisuan fled into the clouds and used his authority to summon peals of thunder that reverberated through the river. The river shook, but it resisted the attack and remained in the air, undispellable.

The remaining thunder surrounded Duan Zisuan, bolstering his strength.

A bolt of lightning struck him then. He absorbed that energy fully and descended like a god of lightning from the heavens. As he swiped forward, his claws discharged lightning that criss-crossed in mid-air and formed a shield against the river's might.

The next moment, he vanished from the spot. He made use of his authority over space to teleport right behind Zhang Lie in a peal of thunder. As his claws descended, the entire world felt as though it was about to be slashed apart.

Zhang Lie dissolved into a mirage as he allowed himself to be carried along the current, escaping the claws. As he did so, he launched a huge slash at Duan Zisuan, who invoked the world's authority to teleport right behind Zhang Lie and slash forward with his claws.

Zhang Lie, activating his dragonwolf and blood ant soulshards, transformed into a bloody dragonwolf. A wave of his sword sent a flurry of blades into the air, countering Duan Zisuan's claws of lightning without backing down.

Peals of thunder could be heard all around them as Zhang Lie continued swinging his sword, his slashes as numerous as raindrops in the sky. The ground cracked to pieces, then disintegrated.

In close combat, Duan Zisuan found his energy being sapped away once more. He knew he had to end the battle immediately, but he couldn't find an opportunity to retaliate. Zhang Lie's attacks were dense and innumerable.

Duan Zisuan howled. Despite the potential for injuries, he knew he had no choice but to charge forward, lest Zhang Lie drain all his energy beforehand.

However, Zhang Lie was easily able to predict his actions.

"[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 combatants' speed had been evenly matched, but now, Duan Zisuan's claws suddenly seemed far slower than before. Zhang Lie took the upper hand, slashing through Duan Zisuan's defenses.

Duan Zisuan howled, discharging the power of lightning from his body. The hair all over his body stood straight up. The lightning shot out of his mouth like a railgun. Zhang Lie turned his attack into defense, clenching his fists tightly as he did so.

"[Fists of the Silent Sea: Fade]!" A dragon of blood howled as it emerged from Zhang Lie's fists, dispelling the dark clouds that loomed over his head.

Duan Zisuan's claws, crackling with lightning, struck the dragon. However, the dragon blocked those blows with its sturdy body and was just about to strike him physically when Duan Zisuan howled again. The lightning energy that emanated from his body morphed into a suit of armor that protected him from the blood dragon's assault.

The chestpiece caved in, but the lightning that emerged from the armor annihilated the dragon. The armor greatly increased Duan Zisuan's strength and speed, and he zipped toward Zhang Lie again in a bolt of lightning...