

## U. Warlord 731

Chapter 731: A Prolonged Burn

"[Shadow and Light]!" Zhang Lie's sword, imbued with the power of time, slashed forward faster than his body could react.

The attack arrived in front of Duan Zisuan even before he could release his own attack. Duan Zisuan was beyond shocked that Zhang Lie was able to marshal the power of time, the most abstruse of all natural laws.

Even a king of the realm of a large world wouldn't necessarily be able to control that world's time, but Zhang Lie, who possessed no external authority of his own, was able to modify the flow of time with just his own power. He could control gravity, space, and even time—just who between the two of them was the true king of the realm?!

As the tip of the sword landed against Duan Zisuan's lightning armor, it burst apart. Duan Zisuan stumbled back.

"[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's eyes widened, and she remarked again, "This fellow is truly a demon king..."

As pitch-black genetic energy covered the skies, the aliens of the Milky Way all began to panic. Even they had never seen such frightening, boundless energy, which portended disaster even before his technique landed.

The superior- and peak-grade lifeforms knelt in obeisance to the ruler of such might; the weakest among them were forced to succumb by the very might of the force alone.

The rocks that flew into the sky shattered into pebbles before they could approach Zhang Lie.

The genetic energy's sheer presence alone was wreaking all sorts of havoc on the world.

From the surface of the sea of genetic energy, waves charged forward, 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, as though dragons were 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.

An apocalypse drew near.

The waves grew more and more agitated, as though they were competing with the wind for attention. As Zhang Lie swung his sword, the roaring waves all morphed into black dragons. The sea had morphed into a boundless battlefield. The sea breeze was as a horn to action, and the waves, thousands of courageous soldiers heeding its call.

Duan Zisuan fled into the clouds and used his authority to summon countless strikes of lightning.

He chose not to use his authority as the king of the realm to control gravity and space in hopes of constraining Zhang Lie. He knew very well from experience that, on fights of this level, the debilitating impact such control over natural law could have on the rest of his power. Better for him to summon lightning and play to his strengths.

The lightning formed a waterfall that poured over his body.

Duan Zisuan clasped his hands together, then drew his fingers apart. Lightning crackled between them, and the full force of the lightning he had summoned with his authority as king danced in his palms.

In an extravagant, blinding flash, a bolt of lightning in the form of a dragon shot toward Zhang Lie.

Zhang Lie's sea of genetic energy exploded. The scorching white flash struck the sea and annihilated the apparitions within, but that lightning grew progressively weaker as it passed through the sea's manifold defenses. By the time it reached Zhang Lie, there was only a pitiful bit of light left, which easily dissipated with a swing of Zhang Lie's sword.

The dragon of lightning was unable to destroy Zhang Lie's sea, and now, it was time for Zhang Lie's counterattack.

Against the overwhelming pitch-black sea, the darkness that threatened to engulf the skies, even the most stubborn enemy might be tempted to retreat.

"I've almost forgotten how to fight," Duan Zisuan marveled to himself. His blood-red body began to glow with light like a furnace, and steam poured out of his pores. He seemed to have truly become engrossed in the fight.

"Ever since becoming the king of the realm, my life has grown far more relaxed. In my world, no one dares to disobey my command, and I've not had to participate in battles of life and death. And with decades, centuries of such stagnation, I've grown paralyzed. I began to incorporate the authority of the king into my fundamental fighting style, using the lightning I control to crush any opponents I encounter.

"It's been far too long since I fought against a strong foe, and even my battles with the king of the east only go so far. Using my strength and authority as the king wasn't a bad choice, but I've almost forgotten my original style—to burn, burn with my blood and body on the line!"

Duan Zisuan morphed into a bundle of flames. His strength seemed to grow tremendously, and the pressure he exuded became more acute. His eyes flashed like those of an apex predator. "It's been far too long since I felt my blood boil."

Flames sparked from Duan Zisuan's claws, but the light it gave off seemed paltry compared to the expanse of the sea. He didn't believe that those flames would be able to damage the sea, but he did want to test his original techniques to see how they fared.

Duan Zisuan swiped forward with his claws, forming a hurricane of flame, so hot it melted the boulders that studded the ground. The hurricane clashed against the sea directly in a splash of red on black.

The two combatants faced off once more, and the fiery hurricane blocked the advance of the pitch-black sea like a shield.

The hurricane burst apart into a cordon of flame. Half the sky turned black, and the other half was red. Neither combatant allowed their genetic energy to dissipate.

The surface of the sea frothed with angry waves, like dragons emerging with the tide. Just above the horizon was a luminous, glowing sun, whose rays shone red as they pierced through the clouds, making the sky look as though it were burning up.

The sea turned turbulent. Under the red light, gigantic waves crashed down beneath the sun. At peak strength, the sea would have been able to absorb the entirety of Duan Zisuan's attack, but it had been weakened by the lightning dragon that Duan Zisuan shot its way...

#### Chapter 732: His Life at Stake

The aliens of the Milky Way and the western elites were both extraordinarily relieved that they had been far enough away from the two combatants to not be caught in the aftermath of their fight.

"Oh? You're not too bad!" Zhang Lie stood atop a wave on the netherworld sea, a blood-colored whirlwind revolving around his sword.

"[The Boundless Blade: Dragon's Wrath]!" A blood-red dragon emerged from the sword, revolved around Zhang Lie, then soared toward Duan Zisuan and tore apart the defense afforded by his firestorm.

Duan Zisuan extended his claws and blocked the dragon's advance. His lightning armor fizzled and began to tear, and countless wounds appeared on his claws. Blood and flesh scattered in the air, where they lit up as though a thousand flames surrounded him.

Duan Zisuan swiped forward with his claws, sending a renewed firestorm spreading out around the dragon like a twister. After trapping the dragon, he easily shredded the outer layer of energy surrounding the dragon, but the backlash from doing so caused him to spit out fresh blood from his mouth. He was sent reeling backwards, crashing down toward the ground like a meteor.

Duan Zisuan had forced Zhang Lie to use an advanced technique against him, but that didn't make him stronger than Li Zongming.

In truth, Li Zongming was the stronger of the two kings, but Li Zongming hadn't been fighting Zhang Lie to the death.

Both combatants were holding back then; if Li Zongming truly did intend to prevent Zhang Lie from abducting his daughter, Zhang Lie wouldn't have gotten away so easily.

Of course, the only reason Zhang Lie dared to abduct Li Qianlin was because he was confident he could escape even if the two kings did their best to stop him.

Duan Zisuan's defense had dramatically weakened Zhang Lie's attack, which wasn't able to finish Duan Zisuan off. It wasn't that easy to kill a king of the realm of a large world, after all.

Red flames flared where Duan Zisuan had landed. He stood within the flames like a demon king being resurrected.

"It's time to end it—[First Form: Parting the River]!" Gleaming light honed the edge of Zhang Lie's sword, and a beam of sword energy rose into the air. Waves of sword aura poured from Zhang Lie.

The bright sword energy rushed toward the sky before falling back down like brilliant rays of sunlight, dissipating the darkness in a wave of energy so intense that it could be seen all over the western world.

The thunderclouds in the sky burst apart.

Duan Zisuan rose into the air, his claws burning with heat. Red light burst from his palms and formed what seemed to be a gigantic sun. The heat was so intense that it baked the air. Even from a distance, the aliens of the Milky Way and warriors of the west could feel the change in the atmosphere.

The sun was so large that it dwarfed even Duan Zisuan himself.

Undeterred, Zhang Lie launched an attack toward Duan Zisuan, a sword slash so strong that it tore the ground apart even before it landed. The sun was split in two, and it burst with heat so dramatic that the entire sky turned red as though it had been lit aflame.

Amidst this maelstrom of heat, Duan Zisuan caught the slash of energy with his two claws, crackling with lightning and fire. The energy dissipated as twin pillars of lightning and flame rose into the air.

With the blade Hanguang, Zhang Lie split both pillars in two.

Duan Zisuan howled. The red aura around him flared, and his last reserves of lightning burst forth from his body. His mane puffed out as the combination of fire and lightning pierced the air with heat more extreme than what had appeared in the battle thus far.

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

Zhang Lie bisected even this pillar of impossible energy, tearing apart the elemental landscape and revealing the pale blue skies that had been hidden from sight all this time.

Duan Zisuan, wrapped in lightning and fire, invoked his authority once more to summon a thick pillar of lightning at Zhang Lie's location, which he blocked with his twin blades.

The lightning revolved in mid-air, forming a waterfall that poured over Duan Zisuan's body, causing it to radiate visibly. His claws, sharp and crackling, seemed as though they could tear through anything.

"[Rune: Resonate]!" Zhang Lie sent all four runic tablets down on him. They began to resonate as one, sending ripples that melded with the sky and forming an absolute domain over all things within.

Duan Zisuan's body suddenly slowed down, and the lightning and fire petered out. This was Zhang Lie's chance to counterattack. He sprung forward, blocking any bursts of energy with his blades.

Duan Zisuan suddenly noticed something amiss. From his perspective, Zhang Lie had suddenly sped up countless times, and his blades, whirling like the wind, easily cut apart his elemental phenomena.

He quickly realized that the four runic tablets were to blame for warping natural law around him. He thought that the two tablets controlling gravity were shocking enough, but for all four to be able to control space and time as well...

"As expected of the product of a higher realm..."

Duan Zisuan wasn't wrong; the origins of the manual from which Zhang Lie had learned his framework might well be from a higher realm.

With a moment's thought from Duan Zisuan, the array of runic tablets broke apart, but by then, Zhang Lie was already right in front of him. "[Second Form: Piercing the Soul]!"

He infused spiritual energy into his blade, and the blade gleamed more and more brightly as he charged up his technique.

The silvery-white glow illuminated the entire space.

Lightning and fire condensed around Duan Zisuan's claws as he tried to block Zhang Lie's blow, but the sword strike passed through his claws as though they were non-existent. It cut through his claws, through his body—and directly struck his soul.

Duan Zisuan howled in pain. The injury was far more serious than anything Zhang Lie had inflicted to date.

Unbidden, fire and lightning burst from him, but Zhang Lie didn't step back. He bore the brunt of Duan Zisuan's counterattack as he launched his own blow. "[Time's Passing]!"

Duan Zisuan's claws easily blocked this attack, but even so, his claws suddenly shuddered. Like plants that had become desiccated, his claws were quickly aging and chipping away. The power of time corroded his body, and huge patches of fur fell to the ground. Duan Zisuan's eyes widened in shock; he had the temptation to cut off his arm.

Fortunately, Zhang Lie's command over time was still weak, and Duan Zisuan himself was far from death...

### Chapter 733: Self-Immolation

Duan Zisuan was shocked by Zhang Lie's mastery of time, and the incredible number of strange techniques he had with it as the theme. In addition to [Shadow and Light], Zhang Lie possessed the four runic tablets from his dragonturtle transformation, along with [Time's Passing].

Zhang Lie had made truly notable advances in his understanding of time.

He held his blades crossed against each other. They gave off blinding light.

"[Blades, Extinguish]!" From the surface of his spiritual sea came waves charging forward, sounding like peals of thunder, like stampeding hooves.

A sea of spiritual and genetic energy materialized before Zhang Lie. The waves roared through the sea like galloping steeds, like thundering dragons. The surface of the sea frothed with angry waves, like dragons emerging with the tide. Spiritual energy condensed into shining waves. Like a tsunami, the waves filled the entire pocket dimension.

Not backing down, Duan Zisuan clasped his hands together, his wrists aligned and his fingers spread out. Red flames burst forth from his palms, forming the shape of a Suanni. A waterfall of lightning rained down on him.

As fire and lightning coiled around him, Duan Zisuan's strength rose to its peak. The entire world seemed to be shaking and trembling at the very idea of his attack.

Massive quantities of lightning- and fire-attuned genetic energy poured into Duan Zisuan, and even the aliens of the Milky Way watching from afar widened their eyes.

They had almost grown numb to the increasing levels of strength they had been witnessing during this fight—but this was so far beyond the norm that they grew worried once more.

Any of the two combatants' blows could have annihilated them easily, but this attack seemed as though it would go beyond simple annihilation.

As Duan Zisuan howled, the lightning and fire fused together into a dual-element dragon, which shot out toward Zhang Lie.

Zhang Lie's spiritual sea formed a bulwark against the dragon, causing a massive explosion in mid-air as brilliant white light, lightning, and flames rained down from the sky.

The aliens of the Milky Way and western elites retreated to avoid the bombardment.

The fight between Zhang Lie and the king of the west was only growing more and more serious; huge tracts of land around them would be caught in the aftermath.

Despite the explosion, neither Zhang Lie nor Duan Zisuan stopped their fight. This would be a battle to the death.

The two combatants exchanged blows in mid-air, lighting the skies up in red and gold and white.

Streaks of lightning flashed. Brilliant white light flared across the sky, dotted with darkness from Zhang Lie's water-attuned genetic energy. The two combatants faced off, sword energy shrouding Zhang Lie, and lightning and fire revolving around Duan Zisuan.

"[Blades, Reverberate]!" A blood dragon materialized around Zhang Lie. Energy poured out of him in waves, honing the edge of his blade. The pulses of energy struck the realm like a tsunami, devouring everything within.

The twin blades Guicang and Hanguang emitted a fearsome aura, shining as brightly as the sun and moon.

The blade Hanguang morphed into a black dragon, and the blade Guicang into a blood dragon. The two dragons, coiling together as one, shot out toward Duan Zisuan like a hurricane, carrying the waves of Zhang Lie's spiritual sea with them. Tremendous suction, like that from a black hole, sucked up everything around the two combatants—clods of earth and stone, which were instantly annihilated in the hurricane's center.

As the hurricane grew larger and larger, the entire battlefield turned dark. Even the spectators found themselves having to hold hands in order to avoid being sucked through the air.

Not to be outdone, Duan Zisuan unleashed his ultimate attack: claws of thunder and flame, forming dual suns in the sky. A purple sun of lightning and red sun of fire overlapped each other high above the two combatants and merged into a purplish-red sun that burned so brightly, so dazzlingly, that none were able to look up at it but all could feel its heat.

Scorching heat washed over the world, and everything in sight seemed to distort. The spectators began to sweat furiously.

Zhang Lie's attack clashed with Duan Zisuan, sending another burst of explosions through the air. The entire sky turned white—not just on the battlefield, but over the entire world.

The next moment, all that vanished—swallowed up by Zhang Lie's black and blood dragons.

Even after swallowing up the purplish-red sun, the dragon duo didn't seem satisfied. They continued flying onward to Duan Zisuan, who howled as he discharged lightning at full capacity. His electrified fur glowed red as he consolidated his strength within his body, which ballooned in size.

The next moment, his body blurred as he swiped at the hurricane with his lightning- and fire-filled claws.

Duan Zisuan could feel his strength being sapped away the closer he got, and his claws turned bloody from just a moment's contact. Regardless, he gritted his teeth and bore with the pain. Even as the hurricane sucked away his strength, he ripped it apart with his two claws.

Black genetic energy exploded from its midst, sending even the spectators far away reeling from the impact. The twin black and blood dragons emerged in view once again.

Duan Zisuan, whose strength had reached a new peak beyond what he knew was possible, batted both dragons away with nothing but his claws.

#### Chapter 734: Sword Splitting the Sky

The spectators' eyes widened—Duan Zisuan seemed as though he had suddenly split in two, but it was only a trick of the light that occurred because of how fast Duan Zisuan was moving!

Zhang Lie laughed. "Shall we keep fighting, old man?"

Duan Zisuan's body was growing bruised and battered, and more and more wounds had appeared on it. He had received quite a few crippling blows. Forcefully shredding apart the hurricane had caused serious injuries to his claws, which were so bloody parts of his bones could be seen.

Zhang Lie continued, "Just how much combat strength do you even have left?"

"It looks as though I'll have to use my trump card," Duan Zisuan acknowledged.

Light flashed from his body as he began to transform. His mane turned into pale blue flame, his body likewise went from red to pale blue, and dragon scales appeared over his claws.

Duan Zisuan's sudden transformation was, nevertheless, wholly familiar to Zhang Lie.

This was the favorite trick that the aliens of the Milky Way employed—soulshards.

The king of the east had soulshards of his own; it stood to reason that so too would the king of the west.

Pale blue fire burned over the wounds on Duan Zisuan's claws. He looked the spitting image of a lion from hell. With the authority afforded the king of the realm, Duan Zisuan summoned lightning and imbued spatial aura into it, turning it from purple to black. The black streaks of lightning cut across the air like void, more frightening than any physical attack.

This void lightning was something that Duan Zisuan had produced only by appealing to his authority as the king of the realm, which he surely could not have generated otherwise.

The authority of the king was a massive boon, and different people could use this boon in very different ways. Whether or not a king of the realm was weak depended not only on their own strength, but also their mastery over their authority.

Duan Zisuan's pale blue flames and void lightning were far stronger weapons than his lightning, fire, or twin claws.

Upon seeing Duan Zisuan's transformation, the spectators uniformly thought that victory had been decided.

After that transformation, even an ordinary civilian would be able to sense the power billowing from Duan Zisuan. If he had been a tall mountain, he was now a planet.

Duan Zisuan laughed coldly, "Everyone thinks that the world of the west was suppressed by the east because of Li Zongming's unparalleled strength, but in truth, he's no stronger than I am. At least in terms of martial force, I'm absolutely confident that he's no match for me."

After all, Duan Zisuan and Li Zongming had never faced each other in direct battle. If they really were to start fighting, at least one of their worlds would be destroyed entirely, and the two kings had stopped their fights before they ever got to that extent.

Zhang Lie seemed rather surprised. "Oh? An interesting trump card, indeed."

"And now, it's time for you to die!" Duan Zisuan swiped his claws. Though he was far away from Zhang Lie, the void lightning and pale-blue flames tore apart space and flew toward Zhang Lie in the blink of an eye. The ability of the lightning to move directly through the void was what made it so overwhelmingly strong.

Even so, the attack that Duan Zisuan thought would surely end Zhang Lie was easily blocked.

Golden scales like armor appeared over Zhang Lie's arms. He murmured, "Surely you don't think you're the only one with a trump card?"

Golden radiance filled the sky. Its source was the golden scales that had densely covered Zhang Lie's skin, and deer's antlers sprouted from his head. Golden flames burned all around him, releasing a holy aura. The black sun to his back and bloody moon beneath his feet made him look like a god that had descended from the heavens.

Even the ground seemed to be dusted with a layer of gold.

The golden light was so bright and reflective that the spectators all had to cover their eyes. Zhang Lie had transformed into a de facto golden sun.

Duan Zisuan didn't expect that Zhang Lie would also possess a trump card of his own. This was the first time in the fight that he truly felt fear, even before Zhang Lie launched any of his own upgraded attacks.

Even being armed with void lightning and his pale-blue flames brought Duan Zisuan little comfort. He had never felt fear since becoming the king of the realm—not until now.

Dispelling his thoughts forcefully, Duan Zisuan struck. Void lightning criss-crossed in the air, forming countless serpents—but they were all vanquished with a straightforward slash from Zhang Lie's sword.

Duan Zisuan could hardly believe his eyes. He swiped forward with his claws, summoning even more lightning serpents, imbued with his pale-blue flames—but Zhang Lie easily dodged all their attacks, sauntering through the air as though he were doing nothing more taxing than taking a stroll through his backyard.

Duan Zisuan howled in outrage. The pale-blue flames surrounding him began to blaze, and the void lightning smashed into the flames and formed huge pillars of fire. The ground beneath him cracked where the pillars blazed.

Against the pillars of fire, however, Zhang Lie was unperturbed. He unsheathed Guicang, and golden light spilled out from the blade.

"[Ninesoul Dragonblade—Third Form: Separating Earth and Sky]!"

White light split the sea and the sky, cutting apart the horizon. The skies split; the black- and white-colored energy that went into the slash erupted like a volcano. White energy drifted toward the skies, and black energy caused the sea to quake.

The whole world quaked.

A patch of void and chaos expanded where the horizon had been, tearing apart the world of the west.

Duan Zisuan sensed his control over the void lightning being stripped from him—as though the lightning were leashed, and now the leash had been cut.

His face grew alarmed. His leash was formed from spatial authority that came from the world itself. "How could there be anyone in this world who can cut through that authority—!"

Duan Zisuan's pale-blue flames all winked out as his body fell from the sky. The slash happened so quickly the spectators could have easily missed it with a blink.

Indeed, they were all stupefied, wondering just what had happened—given their level of strength, none of them had a clue what was going on.

Chapter 735: Inept Rage

Duan Zisuan turned back to look at the... line... in the air that separated heaven and earth.

Zhang Lie's last attack had been too abstruse for even the likes of him to comprehend.

Duan Zisuan was just about to retaliate when he suddenly vomited a mouthful of blood. When he looked down, he discovered that his body, just like heaven and earth, had been bisected in half. He held his body firmly in place with sheer force of will and spite as he tried to retaliate, but Zhang

Lie's blades were faster. He cut him vertically this time, quartering him and sending him falling from the sky.

Zhang Lie's attack lasted only for a few seconds, but that was enough. Sky and ground stitched back together, but Duan Zisuan's body was forever cut apart.

Suddenly, however, Zhang Lie sensed something and struck in that direction with his sword—only to have his slash blocked by a combination of void lightning and pale blue flame.

"Indeed, dealing with you is far more vexing than I expected," a familiar voice called out.

Zhang Lie's eyes widened. Duan Zisuan was standing in front of him, wholly unhurt! Hadn't he killed Duan Zisuan and quartered his body?

Zhang Lie glanced down at where Duan Zisuan's corpse had fallen, only to find the pieces of his body replaced by a cracked soulshard.

A soulshard! "I'll admit you do have quite a few treasures," Zhang Lie murmured.

"I certainly didn't expect you would be able to force me to use my second life. I only have one such soulshard, after all." As the king of the realm of a large world, Duan Zisuan had even managed to tame three disaster-grade lifeforms, a testament to his wealth.

Although Duan Zisuan claimed to have only one such soulshard, he could very well have similar lifesaving talismans.

Zhang Lie was initially very confident in his ability to take down a king of the realm of a large world, but given what Duan Zisuan had already pulled out thus far, he couldn't help but feel that he had chosen a difficult opponent.

Zhang Lie was certainly stronger than even two such kings combined, but their artifacts and trinkets made them far more difficult to deal with. Who knew what other strange soulshards the king of the west possessed to drag out this fight?

Nevertheless, Zhang Lie was confident in his strength. "Regardless of how many such soulshards you have, you'll die today! I'm done with my warm-up. Are you prepared?"

Zhang Lie knew that he had to use his full strength to prevent any more of such mishaps. His eyes glowed with all the colors of the rainbow. His heart beat like a dragon's roar, echoing between earth and sky.

Rainbow-colored genetic energy erupted from Zhang Lie in a pillar, then morphed into a dragon that prowled the clouds.

Zhang Lie's own aura grew even more threatening as he unveiled his true strength, causing Duan Zisuan's body to tremble. The void lightning around him began to flicker, and Duan Zisuan had a hard time reining it in.

He felt a sense of fear and foreboding stronger than he ever had before in his life. He had felt some amount of stress when Zhang Lie unveiled his golden qilin transformation, but this was on another level entirely—a premonition of sudden doom.

Zhang Lie's qilin transformation felt like a simple disparity in strength, nothing more, but this rainbow-colored energy made him feel despair.

Duan Zisuan couldn't believe that there was a strength in this world that could eclipse even his own. He launched an opening volley of a hundred strikes of lightning, each like a sharp, black sword.

An ordinary hunter, like one of the aliens spectating the fight, or even the warlord Xing Ying, would be pierced to death dozens of times over, but against Zhang Lie, Duan Zisuan viewed this as nothing more than a probe.

Zhang Lie watched coolly, a calm smile on his face, even as the aliens and elites from the west gaped at him.

The western elites couldn't help but mock him. "What's wrong with this fellow? Is he shocked stiff by the might of our king?"

"He's a sitting duck! Does he really think he can get away with remaining still in front of the king of the west?"

"He must have figured out that he can't defeat our king—he's decided to commit suicide!"

The aliens of the Milky Way frowned as they analyzed Zhang Lie's actions. "His aura and strength have grown to a level that I can't even imagine. Perhaps he's even stronger than the king of the realm now, but how could an ordinary lifeform possess such strength? He must have had to pay a price that we can't even imagine.

"It's very possible that, in this form, the champion of mankind Zhang Lie might be rendered immobile for some time—or perhaps that he isn't in very good control of this form. In either case, this is a critical flaw, but how else would he be able to defeat the king of the west?"

"This was a truly exciting fight, but it might end in a very boring fashion."

However, both the aliens and the western elites were wrong. The reason Zhang Lie didn't avoid the blow was because it wasn't necessary to.

The void lightning didn't strike Zhang Lie; instead, it swerved away from him and revolved around him almost as though it were a cat seeking to please its master.

As Zhang Lie extended a finger, a small tendril stretched out from the main body of lightning and rubbed against it.

Duan Zisuan glanced at what was occurring before his eyes in shock. Even he, the owner of this void lightning, was unable to 'tame' it as well as Zhang Lie had—and not only that, it was his lightning, his property, his craft!

His face pale, Duan Zisuan asked, "How did you do it?!"

"Water is the origin of all things."

"Impossible. Impossible! No one can tame lightning to this extent, not even me!" Duan Zisuan had ascended to kingship in part because of his affinity to lightning, but even he had never seen the like of Zhang Lie.

"This is impossible!" Duan Zisuan could hardly believe his eyes. He swiped forward with his claws, summoning even more lightning serpents, imbued with his pale-blue flames—but, as though Zhang Lie were in another dimension entirely, the attack didn't even scratch him.

In the blink of an eye, Zhang Lie appeared right before him,

causing Duan Zisuan to panic. With the authority of the king of the realm and the void lightning he maintained under tenuous control, he tore space apart and fled.

Sweat dripped down Duan Zisuan's forehead as he panted for breath. Just now, he was certain he was about to die.

In Zhang Lie's eyes were mirrored his own fear. As the king of the realm, how could Duan Zisuan afford to let such fear linger around and control him? No, he had no choice—he had to kill Zhang Lie and dispel this fear.

Duan Zisuan howled, fortified himself with courage, then turned back toward Zhang Lie...

#### Chapter 736: Inversion of Space and Time

Lightning fell from the sky. The waterfall of lightning that coalesced on Duan Zisuan imbued him with the energy of lightning, and his authority as king of the realm, in combination with the lightning and fire he controlled, allowed him to generate more and more void lightning.

Realizing that his authority wouldn't be able to produce void lightning quickly enough, Duan Zisuan gritted his teeth and filled his own body with that spatial energy, transforming himself into a living furnace.

Duan Zisuan was putting his very life on the line. His body cried out in pain; blood seeped out of his mouth and nose. Even a king's body found it difficult to tolerate such a vicious act—but it was doubtlessly the best decision Duan Zisuan could have made.

Against an existence like Zhang Lie, Duan Zisuan had no choice but to gamble on a slight chance at life.

He clasped his hands together, his wrists aligned and his fingers spread out. Red flames burst forth from his palms, forming the shape of a Suanni. Void lightning revolved around him and turned his surroundings to the darkness of space.

The pale blue flames condensed over the void lightning as Duan Zisuan compressed it again and again until it was nothing more than a frightening pinprick of darkness.

Space began to warp around the lightning singularity.

This was the same technique Duan Zisuan had used earlier, but it had been completely overhauled and enhanced by the use of higher-tier ingredients. Before, Duan Zisuan's projectile had been 'mere' compressed lightning and hot flame, but now, he was using void lightning and pale blue flame.

The combination of these two exotic materials would produce far more devastating an attack.

As the projectile shot toward Zhang Lie, heaven and earth shook. An apocalypse descended on the world. The blue flame and black lightning morphed into a gigantic dragon, a dragon of the apocalypse.

Zhang Lie stretched out a finger. The void lightning surrounding him likewise began to revolve and condense atop the finger, forming an orb the size of a thumb, which he then shot out toward Duan Zisuan.

Small though it might be, the orb contained immense energy. It rotated violently as though it were a drill, distorting space and forming a translucent layer of wind all around it. Everything in its path was annihilated, even the apocalyptic dragon that Duan Zisuan had produced.

The moment the orb impacted the dragon, the dragon's entire body exploded.

Bolts of void lightning flew through the air, raining pale blue flame across the land. The void darkness cleared, returning light to the land.

Duan Zisuan couldn't believe his eyes—his strongest attack, with the strongest materials he could generate and control, had lost to a thumb-sized orb of void lightning?!

Duan Zisuan howled. His emotions were in turmoil; without thinking, he reached out and tried to grab the orb of lightning, hoping to divest it of Zhang Lie's control.

Only when his fingers touched that orb did he realize why it possessed so much penetrating power—because this orb of lightning was far denser and rotating far more quickly than anything he could produce.

In other words, no matter how much Duan Zisuan tried to manipulate his lightning, it was essentially a block of wood, whereas Zhang Lie's compression caused the lightning to become an iron nail, one that could easily penetrate the wood given sufficient velocity.

Furthermore, the extreme speed at which the orb rotated was enough to reach the limits of natural law. The orb didn't distort space as it moved; space distorted to make it spin and move even faster.

However, this knowledge came too late for Duan Zisuan. His fingers were obliterated, and the destruction quickly spread throughout his body.

It was too late for him to regret what he had done. With another vengeful howl, Duan Zisuan covered his claws with void lightning and pale blue flame, thinking that he would be able to pry apart that orb with brute force, but its rotational velocity proved too steep a barrier to surmount.

Duan Zisuan pitted his hands against the orb and lost—but with the sacrifice of his hands, he did manage to deflect the orb's motion, sending it whizzing past his shoulder.

Having lost his strength, his vitality, and now both his arms, Duan Zisuan knew that the victor had been all but decided, but he refused to concede.

His son had been crippled, his world invaded. The mastermind stood before him, but he was incapable of doing anything about it! He roared in outrage, in defiance of common sense. Black light exploded from his body, turning himself into twin suns of void lightning and pale blue flame.

Zhang Lie could sense Duan Zisuan's rage as the two suns combined into one, producing an explosion of light so intense that all the spectators were forced to avert their eyes.

Duan Zisuan had used his very soul as fuel for this self-destructing explosion.

"Haha, haha! If nothing else, we'll die together!" With a mad laugh, he launched himself at Zhang Lie.

"It's useless!" Zhang Lie replied calmly, a counterpoint against his madness. He slashed downward with a blade.

"[Ninesoul Dragonblade—Fourth Form: Warping Space and Time]!" Zhang Lie's blade bisected what seemed to be an image of Duan Zisuan's body.

None of the spectators understood what they were seeing.

Duan Zisuan himself felt as though something vital had gone wrong with his body. The two halves of his body slowly slid apart, just like in the image Zhang Lie had cut.

Duan Zisuan's pale-blue flames all winked out as his body fell from the sky, and his self-destructing attack seemed never to have occurred.

Neither the elites of the west nor the aliens of the Milky Way could explain this phenomenon.

They understood that the king of the west was hoping to bring Zhang Lie down with him in a kamikaze attack, but all Zhang Lie did was slash at where Duan Zisuan had been. Somehow, that slash had transferred to Duan Zisuan's actual body.

Even Dong Mingxing, who considered herself adept with the sword, was stupefied...

#### Chapter 737: A Ruined Mind

"[Ninesoul Dragonblade—Fourth Form: Warping Space and Time]!" Put simply, Zhang Lie's technique allowed him to cut space and time—to cut apart his enemy in the past, rather than the present.

As long as Zhang Lie was able to pinpoint his opponent's location in spacetime, he would be able to kill anyone.

Zhang Lie had slashed at where Duan Zisuan was before he fled from Zhang Lie—before he had shot out his final blow.

With the Duan Zisuan from the past dead, his attack likewise vanished into thin air, and there was no chance of self-destruction at all.

In the end, because Duan Zisuan was too slow to react to Zhang Lie's abstruse attack, he was even unable to use any of his life-saving talismans.

Zhang Lie sheathed his blade and slowly descended to the ground.

The skies thundered and turned blood-red—clear proof from the world itself that its king had perished. The king of the west was finally dead.

The aliens of the Milky Way cheered, overjoyed, while the western elites despondently tossed aside their weapons. Since Zhang Lie was able to kill even the king of the realm himself, their resistance would be futile; all they would accomplish was die. As one, the elites chose to drop their weapons and surrender.

A furor descended on the capital with the king's passing. Some of the more daring citizens pillaged from the palace or from the wealthiest of nobles—the entire capital was a mess.

The king of the realm of the scaleman world had perished too, but there, because of the presence of several princes and the Jinghun, who had rapidly restored order, the king's passing had proceeded smoothly.

On the other hand, the world of the west had been invaded, and the king's original successor, Duan Gen, had been crippled. The natural order of things had been turned upside down, and no one could muster up the forces to quell the riot.

Those in the know, who might otherwise have taken control over the world, were wary of Zhang Lie, whom they couldn't defeat. Without anyone in a leadership position stepping forward, the furor in the capital only grew wilder and wilder.

More and more citizens took to the streets and snatched whatever they could.

"Your highness, we have to run! Our enemies are here—everything's over!" In the palace, one of the loyal servants of the Duan clan tried to drag Duan Gen away in hopes of sustaining the royal line and returning to power one day, but Duan Gen only snorted.

"Don't talk nonsense. There's no way Father can lose—not even if my father-in-law were to show up! He'll surely return with the head of his enemy. He promised me that he would make the bastard who shamed me pay a hefty price! Don't forget: my father is the king of the west, a veritable god in this world!"

The servant shook his head. "Your highness, please, I'm not lying to you. The entire world is in an uproar. Thunder crackled through the skies, which changed color between gold and black.

"Subsequently, the entire world was shrouded in darkness, then an eerie blood-red gleam showed up. You may have lost your eyes, your highness, but you surely heard the will of the world mourning for its lost ruler!"

Duan Gen thundered, "Did the enemy send you to corrupt my thoughts? I'll wring your brain off! Don't you know what sort of existence Father is? He's the king of the realm, and there's nothing he can't do in this world! He promised to bring me back the fellow who crippled me so that I could torture him to death myself—he wouldn't lie!"

Duan Gen had, in fact, heard the will of the world's mourning cries, but he resolutely pretended not to have done so, nor to entertain the thought that his father might have died.

The loyal servant huffed. "Your highness, we have to leave immediately, before our enemies arrive! If we don't run away now, everything will be over. You're the only son of his majesty, the only hope for the royal family of the west—you can't die!"

"Indeed, your highness! Times have changed, so you'd better listen to that advice!" a voice boomed from a distance. To the officials of court, this voice would be unfamiliar, but to Duan Gen, it was nightmarish. Even after quite a few days had passed, Duan Gen would dream of this voice every night.

"Aaargh!" Duan Gen twisted his head in the direction of the voice. Though he had lost his eyes, he could keenly feel Zhang Lie's presence. Zhang Lie had walked into the room, he was sure of it.

"Fortunately, I rushed over right after killing your father, and even more fortunately, you're stubborn and foolish. Otherwise, I really might have missed my opportunity to kill you!"

Zhang Lie was sitting by the windowsill, with something in his hands.

Duan Gen fell from his wheelchair onto the ground as he screamed, "What are you doing here?!"

Zhang Lie laughed. "I'm here to find you, my little eunuch! It's been a while. How are you doing?"

Duan Gen rolled and crawled his way to a corner of the room and shouted, "What are you doing here? You shouldn't be here!"

Zhang Lie pursed his lips. "I came over here specifically to see you. Your reaction upsets me, you know?"

The servant, who hadn't met Zhang Lie before, blocked Duan Gen protectively. "Who are you?"

Zhang Lie shrugged. "Old man, this is none of your business. Step outside and let me speak with his highness." As Zhang Lie spoke, his eyes glowed with a rainbow gleam. The servant hurriedly made himself scarce, as did the scant few officials remaining with Duan Gen.

Duan Gen, who had boldly claimed that he would chop off Zhang Lie's head, now turned toward his leaving retainers as though his lifeline was slipping through his fingers. He immediately shouted, "Where are you all going? Come back immediately! Aren't you my father's most loyal subjects?"

Zhang Lie instructed them, "Close the door as you leave."

The men did so.

Zhang Lie smirked. "Now that we're alone, I'm a little nervous. Aren't you?"

Duan Gen cried out in panic, "Don't leave! I'm the last hope of the western world—don't desert me!"

Zhang Lie laughed. "You? You're just a piece of trash."

Duan Gen shrieked. "Guards! Guards, where are my guards?!"

Zhang Lie cut him off. "There's no need to shout. Even if you shout your throat hoarse, no one will appear. The fact that I'm right here in front of you should be sufficient evidence that your father's dead—that his dynasty is over."

Duan Gen shook his head. "No, that can't be! It has to be because the soundproofing in this room is good enough that they can't hear my voice!"

Zhang Lie laughed. "Oh? So what if they can hear you? The capital's a mess. Who still remembers that you exist, I wonder? I'll open the door for you. Shout all you want—I'll let you go if even one person shows up."

With the power of the mistmeld clam soulshard, Zhang Lie had convinced all the guards that nothing was amiss in the prince's quarters.

In truth, however, the enemy of the world was right in there with the prince himself. This was the biggest threat to his life Duan Gen had ever faced.

Zhang Lie's cruel revelation of the truth was like a bucket of cold water over the pampered prince's head; he was clearly intending to crush the prince from a psychological level...

Chapter 738: The Beggar Prince

Duan Gen, terror marring his face, began to shout, "Don't you dare do anything! My father's the king of the west! His eyes are omniscient, and he'll quickly discover that something's wrong here. He'll rush over immediately!"

Zhang Lie smiled. "Indeed, the king of the realm is here."

He dropped something on the ground. It cracked on impact with the floor and split in two.

Duan Gen asked, "What's this?"

"The king of the realm, as you requested—or rather, his head."

Duan Gen shook his head in shock. "No, that can't be. That can't be! My father's the king of the realm, an undefeated existence in the west! He's the god of the west, he's invincible! Even the king of the east wouldn't be able to do anything about him in his home territory. He wouldn't lose, and he surely wouldn't die!"

Zhang Lie sighed. "What a pity. I shouldn't have dug out your eyeballs initially, or you would be able to see your father's head for yourself now."

Duan Gen cried out, "You must be lying! You know that I'm blind, so you've brought someone else's head here to scare me!"

"If you don't believe me, feel free to touch it. I left you an arm and a leg, didn't I? You should be thankful for my pity."

However, Duan Gen didn't dare to reach forward.

Zhang Lie laughed coldly. "What's the matter? Scared?"

Duan Gen was indeed scared. If what lay before him was indeed his father's head—he didn't think he would survive the trauma.

"It took me some time to preserve the integrity of your father's head. After all, when I killed him, I bisected him vertically, even his head. Everything else was alright, but his brain fluid spilled everywhere..."

Duan Gen shook his head, mumbling nonsense to himself to avoid listening to Zhang Lie: "My father's the god of the west, he's invincible! Even the king of the east wouldn't be able to do anything about him in his home territory. He wouldn't lose, and he surely wouldn't die!"

Zhang Lie offered him half the head. "Come now, touch your father's head. It's fresh."

Duan Gen curled up into a ball.

Zhang Lie sneered at Duan Gen, feeling a sense of triumph at his weakened, pitiful state. In his past life, Duan Gen had been a terror to Li Qianlin, and he was repaying that favor now.

Zhang Lie tossed aside the other half of Duan Zisuan's head, then pulled Duan Gen up by his hair.

"I don't have time to play around with you."

Rainbow fog wafted out from Zhang Lie's body as he activated his mistmeld clam soulshard. The fog drifted over to Duan Gen's body.

Duan Gen's voice became quieter and quieter, until he obediently shut up.

"Where's the proof of kingship?" Zhang Lie had returned to the king of the west's palace primarily for this question. He didn't care about Duan Gen's continued existence; Duan Gen was a cripple. However, he did have to acquire the proof of kingship of the western world.

After he slew Duan Zisuan and rummaged through his belongings, he was unable to find that proof.

In general, kings of the realm didn't tend to carry the proof of kingship with them, and the only one who knew where it might be located besides the king himself was the one person he trusted more than any other in the world: his own son, Duan Gen.

If Duan Gen possessed that proof of kingship, he could very well initiate the ceremony to coronate a new king, which would cause even more trouble for Zhang Lie. And if Duan Gen were to take the throne, unpolished, inexperienced, and crippled though he might be, he would still be the king of the realm of a large world, and there was the potential for even more trouble in Zhang Lie's horizon.

Duan Gen didn't even need to initiate such a ceremony; just keeping the proof hidden would be sufficient to foil Zhang Lie's plans. Even if Zhang Lie were to set up a government, the moment someone else became the king of the realm, all the structures of power in the world would be meaningless.

On the other hand, as long as he were to deliver the proof of kingship to Li Zongming's hands, that alone would be sufficient to consider the world of the west 'conquered'. That was how important the proof of kingship was, and the reason he was in Duan Gen's rooms now.

Duan Gen, controlled by the mistmeld clam soulshard, began, "Father hid the proof of kingship in a place no one would ever think to look in."

Indeed, as Zhang Lie had suspected, Duan Zisuan had told his son about where it had been hidden—perhaps to allow his son one last chance at negotiation even if everything were to go awry.

Despite all of Duan Zisuan's plans, he had never anticipated that his son's captor would be equipped with a soulshard with the ability of mental compulsion.

"Where is it located?"

"The mouth of the golden dragon decorating the roof of my father's quarters."

"...there?"

Duan Gen nodded. "Father said that the safest location was the most dangerous, and the most dangerous location was the safest."

Indeed, no one would have guessed that the proof of kingship was located in such an ostentatious location.

Zhang Lie had suspected that it was kept in the royal treasury, just as the scaleman king had done, or in some location only the king of the realm and Duan Gen knew about. This was why the

servants loyal to the Duan had no choice but to bring Duan Gen away, because he was the only remaining person in the world to know where the proof was hidden.

Zhang Lie had even considered the notion that there might be some hidden passageway or special mechanism by which the proof would need to be recovered.

The fact that it was simply hidden in an obscure location made it far easier to recover than he had suspected.

After finding out where the proof of kingship was, the only remaining problem was dealing with Duan Gen himself.

Beheading him felt like letting him off far too easily; Zhang Lie had suffered greatly because of what he had done, and Li Qianlin had even died because of him. Even crippling this bastard himself wasn't enough. He wanted Duan Gen to suffer as he himself had suffered a hundred times, a thousand times over.

"From today onwards, you'll be no prince, just a lowly beggar, one everyone can kick or step on."

Zhang Lie settled on deep hypnosis. From that day onward, Duan Gen, the erstwhile beloved prince of the realm, would experience a complete reversal of fortune...

#### Chapter 739: Overwhelming Victory

After hypnotizing Duan Gen, Zhang Lie headed to the king of the west's quarters.

The king's palace in the world of the west was far larger than that in the scaleman world. There were nine gigantic golden pillars in the structure, with a dragon coiled around each one. The pillars supported a circular dome engraved with intricate illustrations about the history of the world, inlaid with delicate stained glass.

The most eye-catching of the engravings was at the apex of the dome. A golden dragon coiled around the apex, as though it were peeking down from among the clouds, staring at any passersby from a position of authority.

In the golden dragon's mouth was a pearl the size of a watermelon, which shone and glimmered when light struck it. This watermelon-sized pearl clearly wasn't the proof of kingship.

Zhang Lie frowned. With the king of the west dead, it was impossible for Duan Gen to maintain his rationality in the face of his mistmeld clam soulshard. In that case, there had to be some secret hidden in the pearl. Zhang Lie leapt up and retrieved the pearl from the dragon's mouth.

When he held it in his hands, he quickly noticed the problem. He crushed the pearl to powder—and indeed, in its very center was a jade seal glowing with light, the proof of kingship of the west.

This marked the end of his successful invasion of the world.

Zhang Lie then headed toward the imperial treasury. Quite a few imperial guards were already there, having immediately rushed over after the king of the realm's death. They were all attacking the doors to the treasury, knowing very well that within it was the accumulated wealth of the king for an entire lifetime and beyond.

However, the imperial treasury was naturally warded by the strongest protections the king of the realm could bring to bear, and these guards hadn't the slightest chance of succeeding in their objective.

Even in his death, the king of the realm was far stronger than ordinary people could hope to defeat, but these guards' rationality had been wholly taken over by greed and thirst for the treasures that had to lie within.

After all, it would take some time for the invading army to muster, and they would have plenty of time to steal whatever treasures they could carry and run off with them. They would be able to live off those treasures for their entire lives.

These guards didn't notice that the commander of the army was walking toward them, that he was standing basically at their backs. Of course, even if these people noticed Zhang Lie, they ignored him; none of them knew who he was, after all.

"All of you, scram!" his voice rang out, augmented with genetic energy.

The guards turned toward the newcomer with displeasure. Who was so domineering as to think that he could take on them all?

The moment they turned toward Zhang Lie, they were met with his rainbow-colored gaze. Instantly, they fled from the scene.

Of course, there were a few guards who hadn't turned around despite the commotion, who were desperately banging at the doors to the treasury.

Zhang Lie didn't waste his breath. He attacked the recalcitrant guards.

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. Zhang Lie's aura rose rapidly. The water-attuned genetic energy swirling around him condensed around his arm, kneading space as though it were nothing more than paper.

A hurricane spun into existence around him, worsening the devastation of the capital.

Zhang Lie himself seemed to have transformed into a human-sized hurricane. The roofs of the houses nearby were sucked into the air, as were the guards in close proximity. They yelled and screamed, not having been able to run away in time.

All the buildings near the palace were uprooted and sent flying. Pillars of shattered stone and balconies of wood whipped through the air, and even the palace infrastructure became unstable.

Those daring citizens who remained in the capital could see a gigantic black hurricane emerge in the center of the capital, roaring like a frightening beast as it swallowed up everything in sight.

Some who observed the phenomenon suggested that the world itself was raging at its king's death, and others that the king's soul had returned to the capital and was in outrage at the devastation wreaked on the palace.

Zhang Lie waved a hand, clearing aside the rubble and bodies strewn all over. All the guards that had been blocking his way were gone; there was no need for him to do anything more.

He walked up to the doors of the treasury, having learned how to unlock it from Duan Gen by manipulating his genetic energy in a certain manner. The rich scent of treasures and herbs filled his

nostrils—the accumulated wealth of centuries, even millennia. The gleam was so dazzling as to make him avert his eyes.

Even Zhang Lie, who had pilfered more than his fair share of treasuries, was shocked by the wealth. It was outlandishly lavish.

Cataloging the treasures within by himself could very well take him years.

So many treasures and herbs were accumulated within that anyone would have been dumbstruck at the sight. As expected of a large world's treasury—the king of the realm had kept all the best treasures of the world for himself.

Among the herbs was a core ingredient for Potion #5, a surprise acquisition for Zhang Lie.

"Ah, so there really were such fragments here, too..." In addition, Zhang Lie found five pieces of the tattered map within the treasury.

There were so many treasures here that Zhang Lie couldn't help but think of Team Zenith. If his team were here, he wouldn't have to search through all of it himself. However, this was no trouble. He'd take the best treasure, then offer a bit to the aliens of the Milky Way in exchange for their help.

As for Zhang Lie, after he arranged for Red Comet, White, and Whiter to keep guard over the treasury, he went back to his temporary campsite to meet up with Li Qianlin.

Li Qianlin shouted excitedly, "I saw your fight with the king of the west from afar—it was really exciting! The entire world seemed to be devastated by both of your attacks. I almost couldn't believe that you were able to eke out victory in the end..."

Zhang Lie pretended to be upset. "Oh? Were you hoping for me to lose? If that were the case, you'd become a widow, you know?"

Chapter 740: The East, Once Again

"Widow? What do you mean, widow? Who's to say that I would be willing to remain your widow?"

After Zhang Lie and Li Qianlin familiarized themselves with each other, Li Qianlin's mischievous personality began to shine through.

"If you were to die, I'll have my father find me a new partner. How can a princess like me be without a prince?"

Zhang Lie's lips curled up in a smile. "Perhaps it's time to consummate our marriage, then."

Li Qianlin blushed all the way down her neck, and she snapped her mouth shut.

Thinking that he had gone overboard, Zhang Lie changed the topic. "I'm going to go see your father. Will you come with me?"

Li Qianlin frowned. "I don't really want to see him."

"You're still mad?"

Li Qianlin shook her head. "I'm just afraid it'll be awkward. We didn't talk much before this, at any rate."

After the death of Li Qianlin's mother, Li Zongming had become broody and prone to silence. He set his mind to governing the realm, isolating himself from worldly affairs. He had been rather strict

and old-fashioned with his daughter, which was how the wedding with the prince of the west had almost succeeded.

In Zhang Lie's past life, that wedding had caused a disaster, one that might easily have been prevented with proper communication.

"It's exactly why you need to talk with your father more."

Li Qianlin smiled weakly. "What's there to discuss?"

Zhang Lie thought for a moment. "Well, how about this? Even if you don't want to talk to him, you should still go visit. I'll hide your traces—I promise your father won't know."

"My father's the king of the realm!"

"Is that all that impressive? After all, I just killed one such king..."

Li Qianlin:...

"I have a convenient soulshard for you." Zhang Lie pulled out a multifaceted soulshard, one that would hide Li Qianlin's traces. Its effects were much like the venombane scorpion soulshard Zhang Lie had once possessed, but its stealth ability was of such high quality that even a king of the realm wouldn't be able to detect it.

He had obtained it by killing the disaster-grade lifeforms that the king of the west controlled, then absorbing their disaster-grade cores. As a result, his stats had risen once more.

Zhang Lie: a disaster-grade lifeform

Techniques: Rippling Walk (pinnacle), Three-Wave Crescendo (pinnacle), Calm Waters (pinnacle), Fists of the Silent Sea (pinnacle), The Boundless Blade (pinnacle), Eclipse (pinnacle), Syzygy (advanced), Ninesoul Dragonblade (advanced),...

Genes: Basic, 160; Mutated, 150; Superior, 150; Peak, 150; Disaster, 60

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

Zhang Lie was now at a grand total of sixty disaster gene fragments. This, combined with the strong foundations he had developed in previous realms, made him far stronger than even a king of the realm.

He easily tore apart space and transported Li Qianlin back to the world of the east, in search of her father.

After the disastrous wedding, the eastern king's palace had received no small amount of damage, all of which had since been fixed by the king himself. Zhang Lie didn't hide his aura; Li Zongming sensed him almost immediately as he arrived outside the palace.

Li Zongming teleported himself to the entrance to the palace immediately. The two men stared at each other without speaking, until Zhang Lie tossed Duan Zisuan's head and the proof of kingship of the western world to the ground.

Duan Zisuan's head had been wrapped up in a cloth bundle. After it hit the ground, it rolled toward Li Zongming. The cloth bundle unraveled, revealing the head neatly sliced in two.

Li Zongming was startled. He had some understanding of Zhang Lie's strength, having fought with him, and he wasn't surprised that Zhang Lie was able to defeat Duan Zisuan. However, he was deeply impressed by Zhang Lie's speed.

It hadn't even been a month since Zhang Lie proposed to invade the world of the west, and he had already succeeded in what Li Zongming expected to be a time-consuming endeavor.

His target had been the king of the western world, which was considered highly developed even among large worlds.

Given the amount of resources and skill such a king surely possessed, attempting to kill them would be a difficult and foolhardy endeavor.

As the king of the east, Li Zongming knew very well just how many life-saving talismans and tricks such kings possessed. Unless his life were to come to a natural end, or if he didn't want to be king any longer, no one would be able to kill him. If he wanted to hide, no one would be able to find him.

As a result, although it might be possible to defeat a king of the realm, it was far harder to kill one. Such a feat was only possible if Zhang Lie's strength completely overwhelmed the king of the west's; otherwise, the king of the west would have been able to take advantage of even the smallest opening to escape.

A king of the realm who was in hiding, who possessed near-limitless resources in his own world, could hardly be found by his enemies.

Li Zongming was confident that Zhang Lie had the strength to defeat a king, but to also kill that king was much more demanding a request.

To be frank, he had expected that Zhang Lie might take years, even decades, to accomplish such a goal—to defeat the king of the realm, build up his forces, and then finally ferret out the king and kill him once and for all.

Li Zongming was simultaneously shocked and frightened. The fact that Zhang Lie had been able to get rid of the king of the west within a month meant that he could do the same with Li Zongming himself.

He couldn't help asking, "Just how did you do it?"

Zhang Lie shrugged. "With brute force."

This was the worst answer Li Zongming could have received, as well as the one he least wanted to hear. However, it was the answer that Zhang Lie gave: that he had overcome the king of the west on the basis of brute force alone, something so ridiculous it bordered on impossibility.

Li Zongming wouldn't have believed this if not for the incontrovertible proof lying before him—Duan Zisuan's head, and the proof of kingship of the western world. Killing the king and taking the proof of kingship sounded like an easy task, but who could actually manage such an impossible feat?

Li Zongming sighed as he glanced at Duan Zisuan's head.

Duan Zisuan had been sometimes his rival and sometimes his partner. Li Zongming knew how devious and wily the man could be; who could have imagined that this would be his fate?

He had claimed, and Li Zongming had likewise believed, that no one would be able to kill him in the world that was his domain, but there was always someone stronger out there. Even a king of the realm wasn't truly invincible—who knew when you might provoke an existence far stronger than you and be wiped out?

Li Zongming didn't know how he should treat Zhang Lie. After a very long silence, he finally asked, "What are your plans with Qianlin?"

The marriage mark remained on Zhang Lie's forehead, and Li Zongming sighed in relief.

Evidently, he had no intention of annulling his marriage with Li Qianlin. Perhaps his vows were even serious—perhaps he really had done all this not just to receive the resources from the two large worlds.

Li Zongming had once believed that Zhang Lie was doing all this for profit, but after witnessing Zhang Lie's strength for himself, he changed his mind.

There was no need for Zhang Lie to adopt such tricks and techniques, after all. If he really wanted to, he could take over the world of the east by brute force alone, too..