

## U. Warlord 831

Chapter 831: The Third Disaster-Grade Lifeform

This time, it took Zhang Lie quite some time to absorb the disaster gene fragments, because his [Ninecarp Transformation] had reached another threshold. Although it didn't advance, Zhang Lie had managed to gain a perfect grasp of the intricacies behind each transformation.

When he returned to the draconian sage's residence, before he could speak, the draconian sage asked, "The third disaster-grade lifeform, now?"

"Of course!"

The draconian sage began, "In light there is darkness, in bitter cold, fiery-hot flames. Such is the duality of mater—"

Zhang Lie broke the draconian sage off. "Sage, just what are you trying to say?"

"I'm trying to give you information about the third disaster-grade lifeform. Don't interrupt me, please."

The draconian sage continued, "Unexpectedly, the frozen world of the surface is a counterpart to the superheated subterranean world beneath it. A preponderance of lava and flame naturally result in an abundance of fire-attuned genetic energy, which has given birth to an unusual lifeform in that world..."

"Enough—just send me to the disaster-grade lifeform!"

The draconian sage sighed, waved a hand, wrapped Zhang Lie up in spatial fluctuations, then dropped him off in a landscape of fire and lava.

The environment was so hot that Zhang Lie felt as though he were nearing the surface of the sun. If not for his disaster-grade ability to acclimatize to even the harshest environments, Zhang Lie might have vaporized on the spot.

Zhang Lie was shocked. "Is this really the subterranean layer of the frozen world...?"

Before Zhang Lie was a huge river of lava which constantly emitted flames. Even the air was glowing red and suffocating. An egg would be cooked in half a second; ordinary superior-grade lifeforms would perish in days.

The moment Zhang Lie appeared in the underground world, a pack of fiery dogs rushed toward him, their bodies burning with flame. Rather than flames feeding off their body, however, it was more like their bodies were made out of flames entirely.

Zhang Lie activated his disaster-grade mistmeld clam soulshard, but they were entirely useless against these flaming dogs, who were composed of flame and seemed to lack rationality entirely.

Zhang Lie kicked at the ground, sending ripples of water-attuned genetic energy flying around him and snuffing out the flames on the dogs.

Zhang Lie projected into the environment. He could sense a disaster-grade lifeform's aura within the lava in front of him, but it seemed to simultaneously be spread out throughout the entire river of lava.

"[Ninecarp Transformation: Golden Tiger]!" The image of a golden tiger appeared behind Zhang Lie's back, and its roar echoed through the air. A golden aura suffused Zhang Lie.

A mountain of blades rested atop the tiger's back, and Zhang Lie's body itself underwent a transformation. His hair turned silvery-white, until they became akin to silver needles.

His genetic energy likewise became more honed. Silvery-white genetic energy gathered over his body, and tigers' stripes appeared on his arms. His eyes became those of a tiger's, and steely sharpness erupted from every pore.

Upon feeling the change in Zhang Lie's aura, the lava began to quake. The flames flared.

Zhang Lie pressed both palms flat on the ground, then leapt forward like a tiger, evading the flood of flames.

"[Fists of the Silent Sea: Fade]!" The [Fists of the Silent Sea] formed a fist in combination with the black serpent form and a mallet with the golden tiger. The condensed genetic energy solidified into sharp silver crystal, spinning so quickly it cut apart the lava like a blade.

Lava sprayed out from the river, which suddenly turned turbulent.

"[Fists of the Silent Sea: Fade]!" A crystal wall appeared behind Zhang Lie, reflecting light in five colors, so dazzling it dazed any who looked at it, so beautiful it sparked their desire.

As Zhang Lie manipulated space, that crystalline genetic energy shot out of the wall behind him in the form of sharp daggers, able to penetrate anything thanks to Zhang Lie's mastery of space. They tore apart space and sky, shooting into the river of lava like raindrops in a thunderstorm and spraying lava all over.

The lava became turbid and rotated quickly, gathering and clumping together to form a gigantic lava dragon that opened its maw and bit forward. It was the manifestation of the entire river of lava, and its jaws were large enough to fit a hundred Zhang Lies within them.

Zhang Lie saw through the artifice immediately. The lava dragon was nothing more than a construct, not a disaster-grade lifeform.

Zhang Lie activated his blood ant and dragonwolf soulshards. Red fur grew out of his skin, and dragon scales covered his limbs. Dragon horns emerged from his forehead, and his aura was immediately magnified.

A blood hurricane manifested, sending hot wind blowing all over. Zhang Lie's claws swiped at the lava dragon and tore it apart. The ground shook as lava spread madly across it and formed countless more lava dragons.

Zhang Lie condensed his genetic energy. Sharp white crystals floated around his body.

"[Fists of the Silent Sea: Hundred Dragons Soaring]!" As he cocked his fist, dozens of crystalline dragons formed behind his back, roaring in unison and causing the lava to quake. The next moment,

they shot out through his fists, their trajectories criss-crossing over the lava, beautiful and striking even as they pierced through the lava dragons and sunk into the river of lava.

The entire world seemed to be quaking, as though the river of lava was roaring in rage. Huge quantities of lava flowed down the river like a flood, filling the entire underground space.

Zhang Lie summoned the sword Guicang, splitting the space before him into two pieces and shielding himself from the impending attack. None of the lava was able to hurt Zhang Lie at all.

A beam of light shone down from above, as though a deity of the sword was descending to the mortal realms. A torrent of water-attuned genetic energy exploded forth from Zhang Lie, and a ferocious shark was manifesting behind his back.

As water-attuned genetic energy rotated around his body and formed a miniature cyclone, the blade Guicang seemed to reflect the boundless ocean.

"[The Boundless Blade: Yawning Wave]!" The ferocious shark shot forward into the depths of the lava, sending steam hissing into the air on impact. Zhang Lie's water-attuned genetic energy blocked the steam from his body.

As the river of lava dried up, the form of a lava salamander was finally revealed. It was massive and formed from what seemed to be free-flowing lava, radiating such heat in its vicinity that it would melt even the sturdiest metal.

Zhang Lie activated his mistmeld clam soulshard again, but it didn't have the desired impact. The disaster-grade salamander opened its maw and shot out a flood of crimson lava.

"[Ninecarp Transformation]!" A black serpent materialized behind Zhang Lie, by now so large and so developed that it resembled the world-swallowing serpent Jormungandr. It let out a threatening hiss as its scales clicked together.

At the same time, Zhang Lie's genetic energy changed attunement again.

"[The Boundless Blade: the River Lethe]!" An underworld river materialized in the sky, one so vast the entire world could see it. The impossibly hot underground layer suddenly cooled down. As though the doors to hell had just been thrown open, tens of thousands of serpents rushed out in a flood...

## Chapter 832: Cleaning Up the Threats

The river of black serpents swallowed up the red lava on impact; it was hardly a fight. The black serpents then demolished everything in their path and drenched the lava salamander. The lava exploded, destroying the black serpents—the salamander had self-destructed its outer shell.

After doing so, the salamander revealed its red ruby-like body. Its actual body was far smaller in size; its lava exterior was more like armor that was formed from its excellent lava-manipulation abilities.

The salamander's true body was only as tall as a regular human, far smaller than the humongous creature that had been formed out of lava. The difference in size made its true body look rather cute, so much so that Zhang Lie was tempted to keep it like a pet, but he quashed that impulse near-immediately. He had to avoid being fooled by the salamander's cute exterior appearance—it was still a disaster-grade lifeform, after all.

The heat that its red ruby-like exterior exuded was over ten times hotter than lava. The moment Zhang Lie thought the true fight was about to begin, the disaster-grade salamander croaked twice. Its eyes leaked out lava as though they were tears, and it turned tail and burrowed into the magma.

Zhang Lie sliced forward, but the salamander was so far that all Zhang Lie managed to cut off was a quivering red ruby tail.

Given the regenerative abilities of disaster-grade lifeforms, it would be able to regrow its tail in the blink of an eye.

"I won't let you escape so easily! [Rune: Float!]" With a thought, the image of a dragonturtle manifested behind Zhang Lie, and the runic tablet of anti-gravity appeared above the hole that the salamander had dug.

Black ripples emanated from the gravity-altering tablet, and ancient runes in an unknown language appeared on it. The disaster-grade salamander continued to scabble in the ground, but it felt a force that relentlessly pulled it up and impeded its motion—and for Zhang Lie, even a minute delay was enough.

With a swing of the blade Guicang, he bisected the disaster-grade salamander.

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

Zhang Lie retrieved the disaster-grade core from the salamander's carcass. It was surrounded by scarlet flames and seemed to be filled with molten lava.

As spatial fluctuations surrounded him, Zhang Lie found himself teleported back to the black desert, where he absorbed the disaster-grade core. Upon doing so, Zhang Lie felt his power grow 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), Blade of the Heavens (pinnacle)

Genes: Basic, 160; Mutated, 150; Superior, 150; Peak, 150; Disaster, 80

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

Zhang Lie needed only to kill two more disaster-grade lifeforms to max out his disaster gene fragments.

As spatial fluctuations surrounded him, Zhang Lie returned to the draconian sage's residence.

The draconian sage was smiling as he received Zhang Lie. "Do you need some time to rest?"

Zhang Lie shook his head. "They were just a few small creatures—I hardly need to rest. We'll continue!"

The draconian sage nodded. "I really do admire the endless energy that youth possess..."

"Come on, come on!"

"The fourth disaster-grade lifeform is from the greenskins' world, and was the reason it became a desert. The greenskins' world had initially been rich and replete with resources, but the explosion of the greenskins' population, coupled with the existence of this disaster-grade lifeform, drained what the world could support."

Zhang Lie frowned. He expected that the disaster-grade lifeform was likely some sort of glutton that fed off of life force or vitality in the vicinity, but his guess was completely off the mark.

"The greenskins began to raid other worlds both to get resources and to reduce their population. In addition to that, wars frequently break out within the greenskins' world, primarily with this disaster-grade lifeform as their opponent. The greenskins call her the mother of cockroaches, and she possesses a frightening reproductive ability. She's able to give birth to tons, literal tons, of cockroaches in one go!"

Zhang Lie's mouth spasmed. "So you mean you want me to clean up a cockroach infestation?"

The sage countered, "Not quite. Don't you want some disaster-grade cores?"

"Alright," Zhang Lie accepted wearily. "I suspect the greenskin king had the ability to deal with this infestation of cockroaches, but that he chose not to do so in order to curb the greenskins' own growth. The mother of cockroaches might have an insane reproductive ability, but I can't imagine the greenskins had it much worse."

The greenskin king had likely left the mother of cockroaches around as a threat in order to refine the next generation of greenskin warriors.

Zhang Lie asked, "It'll be easy for me to get rid of the mother of cockroaches, but how will we curb the number of greenskins afterwards?"

The sage replied, "You don't have to worry about that. The draconians' world isn't like the greenskins' world from before. Our world now has the combined landmass of nine medium-sized worlds, and we have far more resources than the greenskins' world ever did. We'd be able to support three greenskin races, not just one. What's more, aren't you all still expanding into other worlds?"

The draconian world, unlike its medium-sized self just a few weeks ago, now had more than enough resources to support even the greenskins.

"Even if you didn't have an invasion plan, I would have made my own move at some point. The draconian world doesn't need any chaff around."

Zhang Lie guessed, "Were you planning to take advantage of the greenskins?"

"Yes, I was—they need the training. Now that the nine worlds have combined, all the alien races in the draconian world are all to be considered native inhabitants, and I'll need to be looking out for everyone even if they don't belong to my clan."

"Oh? You are magnanimous, after all. Teleport me over, then!" Zhang Lie requested.

With a wave of the draconian sage's hand, Zhang Lie found himself surrounded by spatial fluctuations. The next moment, he found himself in a desert, one filled with huge black cockroaches crawling all around him.

Each cockroach looked fierce and was about as tall as a human. The moment they saw Zhang Lie, they began flapping their wings madly. Their probosces leaked with unusual clear fluid, and their bodies emitted a vile, terrible stench.

Upon seeing these disgusting cockroaches, Zhang Lie didn't even bother with his disaster-grade mistmeld clam soulshard. He sensed the disaster-grade lifeform underground and chose to attack with brute force.

As he clenched his fists, blue genetic energy gathered and rippled around his arms. He flicked his wrists, causing a frightening aura to descend on the world. The skies began to darken, and a fish the size of a whale materialized in the air.

"[Fists of the Silent Sea: Soar]!" A huge wave manifested in the air. The fish slammed its huge tail on the ground and sent a torrent of water surging through the desert...

### Chapter 833: Mother of Cockroaches

As the frightening wave of energy struck the sand, the ground began to crack and splinter. Blue water-attuned genetic energy raged like a storm, sending huge swathes of sand and boulders into the air.

A huge wave of energy swamped the desert, sending the black cockroaches flying into the air, where their bodies were annihilated.

As though Zhang Lie had opened a portal to hell, large swarms of cockroaches were sent into the air in a black tide, provoking a visceral sense of disgust.

The black cockroaches released a dark yellow fluid as they were cut apart by the genetic energy, and a vile stench emanated from their carcasses.

Like a voracious beast, the blue genetic energy devoured all life nearby. None of the cockroaches were spared. The ground broke apart, layer by layer, as cockroaches were sucked out of its interior and destroyed amidst ocean-blue energy that reminded one of ocean waves.

This was a disaster for the cockroaches, a race with a larger quantity of lifeforms than Zhang Lie had ever seen to date. Zhang Lie's punch had been intended for the disaster-grade genetic lifeform underground, but it had actually struck directly at the cockroaches' burrow.

Of course, Zhang Lie could sense the lifeforce that was teeming underground, but the visual impact of all that life was astounding.

Even Zhang Lie's [Fists of the Silent Sea] wasn't able to clear out all the cockroaches. More and more began pouring out from the ground—such was the might of a race that could devour and deplete all the resources of a rich, bountiful world.

The cockroaches weren't fully responsible, but they certainly played an important role in this achievement. They continued pouring out from underground, as though a black flood was overwhelming the land.

From the center of the cockroaches, Zhang Lie could sense a disaster-grade aura. A titanic claw emerged from underground, as sharp as a scythe, but Zhang Lie attacked before the lifeform could.

"[Ninecarp Transformation: Golden Tiger]!" The image of a golden tiger appeared behind Zhang Lie's back, and its roar echoed through the air. A golden aura suffused Zhang Lie. A mountain of blades rested atop the tiger's back, and Zhang Lie's body itself underwent a transformation. His hair turned silvery-white, until they became akin to silver needles.

His genetic energy likewise became more honed. Silvery-white genetic energy gathered over his body, and tigers' stripes appeared on his arms. His eyes became those of a tiger's, and steely sharpness erupted from every pore.

"[Fists of the Silent Sea: Fade]!" The condensed genetic energy solidified into sharp silver crystals, which shot out with Zhang Lie's attack. They tore apart the sky as they pierced through the endless waves of cockroaches and penetrated the interior of the disaster-grade mother of cockroaches.

An ear-splitting screech could be heard from the hole in the ground that Zhang Lie had created. The screech was so shrill that it distorted the air, and the weakest of the cockroaches froze stiff and fell to the ground like drops of rain. However, even more swarmed up and took their place.

As the black scythe-like appendix began to fall toward Zhang Lie, he shot a glance at it. The golden tiger behind Zhang Lie made a move then, swiping its claws and cutting the appendix in two.

"[Fists of the Silent Sea: Fade]!" A crystal wall appeared behind Zhang Lie, reflecting light in five colors, so dazzling it dazed any who looked at it, so beautiful it sparked their desire.

As Zhang Lie manipulated space, that crystalline genetic energy shot out of the wall behind him in the form of sharp daggers, combining water-attuned genetic energy and spatial fluctuations into potent silver beams that could pierce through anything.

They tore apart the waves of cockroaches, exterminating them as though they were made of premium insecticide.

Within moments, cockroach carcasses filled the ground. The disaster-grade mother of cockroaches had no choice but to step out herself, emerging from amidst a veritable mountain of carcasses.

Her humongous body made her look like a skyscraper. She was at least fifty meters tall, and like a centipede, her body was segmented. Each segment was engorged, and the visual impact of her body alone was stunning.

The leg that Zhang Lie had chopped off had already regrown, and dozens of scythe-like legs came sweeping toward Zhang Lie.

Zhang Lie transformed into a dragonwolf with russet fur and limbs covered with dragons' scales. His aura became magnified as a hurricane of blood spawned around him. The next moment, Zhang Lie vanished from sight.

After that, all the legs of the mother of cockroaches were suddenly cut off.

Zhang Lie condensed his genetic energy. Sharp white crystals manifested around his body like silvery-white starlight, glimmering in the air.

"[Fists of the Silent Sea: Hundred Dragons Soaring]!" As he cocked his fist, dozens of crystalline dragons formed behind his back, roaring in unison and causing the lava to quake. Their bodies were

translucent, and they gave off light in all the colors of the rainbow as the sunlight struck them. They roared into the air, causing the entire world to quake.

The dragons shot out through Zhang Lie's right arm, hundreds of them in all, criss-crossing in the sky. Their silvery-white scales, like angels' feathers, covered up the entire sky and turned it into a sea through which the crystalline dragons swam.

The disaster-grade mother of cockroaches was unable to handle their combined might. Her body was torn apart by dragon after dragon, until she was nothing more than pulp.

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

The cockroaches' bodies were crushed by the impact of the mother of cockroaches falling to the ground.

Despite her 'death', the mother of cockroaches continued to squirm and struggle. She clung stubbornly to life, devouring all the carcasses around her, but her body had been torn apart so completely that any recovery she hoped to achieve proceeded at a glacial pace.

This was the first time Zhang Lie had seen a lifeform with such vitality.

Ordinary disaster-grade lifeforms would perish the moment their cores left their bodies, but the mother of cockroaches seemed to be the exception that proved the rule.

The disaster-grade core was located right in the center of the disgusting black mess, and Zhang Lie honestly didn't want to dig through it to claim the core for himself. However, it would be difficult to get to it via any other means; even a king of the realm's authority over space would be hard-pressed to claim such a core outright.

There were very many lifeforms in the region, but superior- and lower-grade lifeforms were unable to touch a disaster-grade core, nor even to get close. For instance, using the disaster-grade lava salamander's core as an example, a superior-grade lifeform that drew close to it would be burned to death before being able to lay a single hand on it.

It wouldn't be too difficult to find peak-grade lifeforms around thanks to the draconian sage's authority, but Zhang Lie had a better choice.

#### Chapter 834: Phoenix in White

"Sage, please send me to Red Comet, the disaster-grade lifeform I brought here with me!"

The sage had been paying attention to Zhang Lie's actions. The moment he heard Zhang Lie's request, Zhang Lie was surrounded by spatial fluctuations.

Red Comet and another disaster-grade lifeform had remained in the draconian world all this time as Zhang Lie's mounts and brawlers. Except for Zhang Lie, no one could command them.

Zhang Lie's sudden appearance startled Red Comet, but it quickly recovered and nuzzled against the side of Zhang Lie's body.

Zhang Lie patted Red Comet and jumped up onto it. "Bring me to the desert region where the mother of cockroaches has fallen. Help me retrieve the disaster-grade core within."

Red Comet flapped its wings and shot forward like a beam of light. As a disaster-grade lifeform that focused on speed, its base movement speed was comparable to Zhang Lie's. If it were to activate its domain, it would be able to move so quickly that it could eclipse even Zhang Lie. In what seemed like the blink of an eye, it had already appeared within the desert.

However, by then, the mother of cockroaches' body had already begun reforming into crystalline chunks that pulsed as though controlled by some heartbeat or another, or as though something were gestating in its midst...

Zhang Lie had no intention to allow the mother of cockroaches to recover. He struck with a snort, sending a tidal wave of water-attuned genetic energy toward it. A violent shark appeared from behind Zhang Lie's body as the energy circled around his body and condensed by his index finger.

As Zhang Lie pointed that finger toward the pulsing tumors, the violent shark shot forward, opening its bloody maws wide and revealing row after row of ferocious teeth. It bit apart the tumors, allowing some unidentified object to fly out and flee. With its incredible speed, Red Comet caught it easily, slashing it apart with a scythe-like appendage.

The gestating object was a small cockroach, the heart of whose body was the mother of cockroaches' disaster-grade core.

A large group of mysterious black dots pulsated and squirmed within the pitch-black core, like small tadpoles but somehow far more sinister. It was shrouded by a dark aura. As Zhang Lie reached out toward it, water-attuned genetic energy wrapped around it and brought it back to Zhang Lie's palm.

Zhang Lie shuddered at the strange way it felt in his palm, then turned to Red Comet. "Good job. You can return to the draconian world now—I'm going to be absorbing this disaster-grade core."

Red Comet nodded obediently.

"Sage, to the black desert!" Once again, spatial fluctuations surrounded Zhang Lie, and he reappeared within the black desert. After he absorbed yet another disaster-grade core, his disaster gene fragments reached a critical threshold.

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), Blade of the Heavens (pinnacle)

Genes: Basic, 160; Mutated, 150; Superior, 150; Peak, 150; Disaster, 90

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

Just one more disaster-grade core would be sufficient for Zhang Lie to max out his disaster gene fragments.

After he finished the absorption process, the sage sent him back to his residence, whereupon he provided Zhang Lie with information about the final disaster-grade lifeform in the newly combined world.

"The last disaster-grade lifeform is originally from the Blackwind world. The Chinese parasol forest within was half-destroyed because of a battle between the king of the realm and another man whom we shall not here name."

Zhang Lie rolled his eyes. "Do you intend to blame this on me?"

Zhang Lie had no intention of acknowledging responsibility: the forest had been burned down by the Blackwind king!

"The disaster-grade lifeform of the forest is apparently from the same ancestor as the Blackwind clan, and was once on good terms with both the Blackwind clan and the draconians. I have quite a bit of information on the lifeform: a white phoenix. It has chosen to live in seclusion in the Blackwind world, and as far as we know, it's an ancestor of the Blackwind clan—or at least the Blackwind themselves think so."

"They think their ancestor is a genetic lifeform?" Zhang Lie seemed astounded. "Are they crazy?"

"I'm not familiar with the details, but according to the Blackwind clan, their clan arose as a result of one of their forefathers coupling with the white phoenix..."

Zhang Lie seemed unsettled by the idea. "The Blackwind might consider themselves mongrels, but I'll hardly subscribe to the idea."

If that disaster-grade lifeform were truly an ancestor of the Blackwind clan, why didn't the white phoenix help them when Zhang Lie was slaughtering them all?

Zhang Lie shook his head. "Send me over. It doesn't matter what connection it has with the Blackwind clan."

With a wave of a hand, the draconian sage wrapped Zhang Lie up in spatial energy and whisked him away. The next moment, he appeared in the Chinese parasol forest.

This was the site of the battle between the Blackwind king and Zhang Lie. After the battle, a large swathe of trees had been uprooted where they stood, and the Blackwind king had even burned much of the forest down.

Fortunately, about half the trees still remained. The draconian sage sent Zhang Lie to the largest remaining tree in the forest.

Zhang Lie glanced around him. "Where's this supposed white phoenix? I don't sense any disaster-grade aura at all..."

Was the sage mistaken? Had he made a mistake after chauffeuring Zhang Lie around for so long? That was impossible—the authority of the king of the realm should have perfect control over incoming and outgoing teleportation.

Zhang Lie glanced all around him in search of something amiss before his gaze finally landed on the crown of the tree.

"What an interesting hiding technique..." Atop the highest branches of the largest Chinese parasol tree was a gigantic translucent egg. "Even spiritual perception can't sense it, let alone visual perception."

Visual stealth alone would do nothing against Zhang Lie; what really mattered was spiritual stealth. This effect was comparable to Zhang Lie's disaster-grade mistmeld clam soulshard—no, it was even better.

The mistmeld clam's soulshard was only able to hypnotize a target, while the egg affected the target's spiritual senses directly. If not for Zhang Lie's remarkable spiritual integrity and his belief in the draconian sage's abilities, he might well have been fooled.

"Looks like it's still asleep..." Zhang Lie smirked. He clenched a fist tightly as spatial fluctuations gathered around it. Blue genetic energy condensed around Zhang Lie's arms, causing a frightening aura to descend on the world. The skies began to darken, and a fish the size of a whale materialized in the air.

"...perfect timing for me to strike, then."

#### Chapter 835: Black Hole

As more and more genetic energy gathered around Zhang Lie's arms, a whirlpool of energy formed around him, around the entirety of the forest. Black leaves began to fall from their branches as the genetic energy overwhelmed the air, spinning so quickly that it made the remaining trees in the forest swerve and bend.

The giant fish in the air swam and waved its fins, marshaling the wind and clouds in the sky.

The remarkable surge in energy that resulted from Zhang Lie's attack startled the translucent egg awake. It shook, and a crack marred its surface—but it was too late.

"[Fists of the Silent Sea: Soar]!" Zhang Lie's attack was ready. Huge gales of wind surrounded him, and giant waves lapped the border of the forest. As Zhang Lie punched forward, the fish slammed its huge tail on the ground and sent a torrent of water surging into the settlement.

Ripples of energy spread out from Zhang Lie, warping the space around him.

Although Zhang Lie had released many such punches before, this was surely the strongest among all his attacks to date. Not only had Zhang Lie charged up a massive attack, he was now at a staggering ninety disaster gene fragments, and he was far stronger than before.

The ocean waves swallowed up the translucent egg as shockwaves surged forth from Zhang Lie, as though a rampaging beast were devouring everything in sight.

Even the tallest and sturdiest Chinese parasol trees began to crack at the trunk and fall to the ground, sending leaves and splinters of wood through the air. Some of the trees were uprooted completely and sent flying. An entire layer of dirt was scraped off the ground, and even the air seemed to be charged. Everything in the vicinity was destroyed, swept clean.

From the air, one could see that a patch of open ground had just been cleared within the forest. The detritus had all been swept against the neighboring trees.

Despite taking Zhang Lie's remarkably strong blow head-on, the translucent egg hadn't yet perished. It burst apart in a flurry of pale white flames, which reached toward the sky and spread apart like a fresh flower. Finally, the flames transformed into a white phoenix.

The phoenix was surrounded by pale white flames, which produced not physical heat but rather spiritual heat. The flames were almost illusory in nature; at the very least, they couldn't do much in the physical realm. Instead, in the spiritual realm, they would burn at your very soul.

Being struck by this sort of flame would be no joking matter. No matter how hot physical flames got, Zhang Lie wouldn't be afraid of them. His vitality and constitution meant that he would easily be able to regenerate and recover from wounds, and he was quite confident of being able to resist intense flame. After all, he had killed quite a few disaster-grade lifeforms specializing in exactly that.

However, this was the first time he had encountered a disaster-grade lifeform that directly attacked the soul, other than the mistmeld clam that he had faced way back when.

If his soul were to be injured, it would take a long time for it to heal properly. After Zhang Lie finished maxing out his disaster gene fragments, he would have to return to the world of the east with Li Qianlin to witness the merger of the worlds of east and west.

The two worlds were large even for large worlds. Despite the battle that Zhang Lie had had with the king of the west, the world of the west was still largely intact—or rather, a world of that size was basically impossible to destroy.

The merger of the worlds of east and west was therefore very likely to create a superior world, and if that were to happen, the other superior worlds likely would make a move. A spiritual injury at this moment would be no laughing matter. Zhang Lie would be forced into passivity, into letting things happen without his explicit control.

Zhang Lie had no choice but to treat this fight even more seriously.

The pale-white phoenix lit up the entire forest in a shade of ghostly white, as though the black Chinese parasol trees had been bleached of their color. The pale-white phoenix's wings fluttered, and it looked as though it were the lord of this ghostly domain. Flames continued to blaze in the air.

As it cried out, it swooped down at Zhang Lie, bringing huge clouds of pale-white flame with it.

Zhang Lie countered with a tidal wave of water-attuned genetic energy. A fierce shark appeared from behind Zhang Lie as genetic energy gathered around him, condensing by his index finger in the form of a small whirlpool.

"[The Boundless Blade: Yawning Wave]!" As Zhang Lie pointed that finger toward the phoenix, the fierce shark shot forward, opening its bloody maws wide and revealing row after row of ferocious teeth. It smashed into the white phoenix, causing steam to rise into the air, and bit off one of the phoenix's wings. However, Zhang Lie's water-attuned energy wasn't able to snuff out the flames.

The pale-white flames glowed brightly as they burst apart in the shark's stomach. Fire poured out of its mouth and lit it aflame. The shark perished under the flames' onslaught.

Zhang Lie frowned. "Looks like I've underestimated this phoenix. Not only do these flames target the soul, they even seem to be able to counter water-attuned genetic energy."

In other words, the phoenix's flames were an ascended, evolved form of ordinary fire. Despite its elemental advantage, it had paid quite a price to counter Zhang Lie's attack. Its flames, which had originally filled the entire sky, seemed to have shrunk considerably.

"[Ninecarp Transformation]!" A black serpent materialized behind Zhang Lie, by now so large and so developed that it resembled the world-swallowing serpent Jormungandr. It let out a threatening hiss as its scales clicked together.

The pale-white phoenix and pitch-black serpent clashed together, dividing the sky between black and white. The phoenix released its pale white flames, while the black serpent emitted black mist.

The two types of energy sizzled as they came in contact with each other.

The pale-white phoenix swooped down from the sky like a meteorite, trailed by a long stream of white fire. The flame trail grew longer and longer, as though the phoenix were a saw that were cutting apart the heavens.

"[Fists of the Silent Sea: Fade]!" Zhang Lie punched forward. The black serpent shot forth, clashing against the phoenix once again.

Unlike the shark from before, the serpent wasn't immolated from the inside out by the phoenix's pale-white flames. Instead, the air itself sizzled as they crashed against each other.

Neither party was about to relent. The pale-white flames tried to devour the black serpent; the black serpent corroded and consumed the energy that made up the flames. Both forces pitted themselves against the other fervently. In the end, the phoenix's flames won out, but at great cost.

The phoenix's body reduced in size once again. It sprayed out a mist of white flame, covering itself under a smokescreen.

Zhang Lie transformed into a dragonwolf with russet fur and limbs covered with dragons' scales. His aura became magnified as a hurricane of blood spawned around him. The next moment, Zhang Lie vanished from the spot.

In the blink of an eye, he appeared behind the pale-white phoenix...

Chapter 836: Just One More

"[Fists of the Silent Sea: Fade]!" As Zhang Lie punched forward once more, another black serpent appeared behind him.

The moment Zhang Lie struck, however, its scales turned blood-red, and dragon's horns emerged from its head. In the blink of an eye, it became a dragon of blood that surged forth with Zhang Lie's punch.

With frightening, boundless energy, it devoured the pale-white flames, then exploded—not because of the flames themselves, but because the blood dragon self-destructed, spreading its aura of annihilation in a wide area about him.

Pitch-black energy devoured everything in its surroundings like a typhoon. The hovering pale-white flames were sucked in and quickly snuffed out; the dragon's energy was like a black hole.

The pale-white flames tried to resist the black energy's incursion, but they never stood a chance. They succumbed to the energy, found themselves devoured, and were banished out of existence.

The ground splintered and cracked around them, and huge boulders and clumps of dirt were sent flying into the air.

The black hole's massive suction force pulled in even the boulders and dirt, forming a massive storm in the air that spread wider and wider. The next moment, the black hole suddenly pinched shut and vanished from sight, leaving nothing behind. The flames and energy that were sucked away vanished without a trace.

As the black hole vanished, leaving a vacuum in the air, the storm only grew more and more intense. A hemispherical hole was left in the ground.

Zhang Lie, standing in the eye of the storm, had an ugly expression on his face—because as the black hole vanished, so too did the phoenix's disaster-grade core. Not only had the energy of annihilation snuffed out the phoenix's pale-white flames, it had even destabilized space to such an extent that a black hole formed.

The black hole swallowed everything up, including the disaster-grade core. Who knew where the core had gone?

Zhang Lie turned to the sky and asked, "Sage, do you have a means of reclaiming the lost core?"

Space shifted once more, and Zhang Lie found himself back in the draconian sage's residence.

The sage shrugged. "You shouldn't have released such an attack without having foreseen the consequences."

Zhang Lie cried out in exasperation, "The disaster-grade lifeform was too weak—it couldn't even survive that one attack!"

The sage rolled his eyes. "And just how many disaster-grade lifeforms do you think could have achieved such a feat?"

Even kings of the realm would have been hard-pressed to do so, let alone mere disaster-grade lifeforms.

Zhang Lie asked, "Is there a way to reclaim it?"

The sage shrugged again. "To be honest, I don't know where the core is, either. I can't locate it with my senses—it's been removed from the world entirely."

Zhang Lie sighed, but he wasn't too disappointed. Killing disaster-grade lifeforms wasn't a particularly difficult task for him. Whereas others had to group up and scheme to barely manage such a kill, Zhang Lie had dealt with five in a row without any rest except to absorb their disaster-grade cores.

Furthermore, he had accomplished all that within three days.

"Are there any more disaster-grade lifeforms in the vicinity?"

The sage rolled his eyes once again. "Do you think that disaster-grade lifeforms are like radishes, that they're everywhere to be found? An ordinary medium-sized world only tends to have one or

two disaster-grade lifeforms. When the nine worlds merged together, the original disaster-grade lifeforms in the draconian world were killed by your warlords."

The world of the dark spirits could not sustain any native life, not even plants, let alone disaster-grade lifeforms.

The demons' world had one or two disaster-grade lifeforms to begin with, but the primordial demon had transformed them all into demons. That world only consisted of plants, poisonous bugs, and demons.

The devil trees' world also had a disaster-grade lifeform, but it was killed when Sun Mengmeng set the entire forest ablaze.

In the end, Zhang Lie was missing just ten disaster gene fragments, a particularly annoying gap.

There were surely a great deal of post-peak-grade lifeforms in the upgraded draconians' world, but it would take quite some time to develop them into disaster-grade lifeforms. Zhang Lie was going to leave for the world of the east with Li Qianlin in two days, and he didn't have the time to spare.

"Right, I still have the proof of kingship from a medium-sized world in my possession..." Zhang Lie retrieved a scepter of bone from his soul space, the proof of kingship of the Mengtai world. The Mengtai world wasn't among the eight worlds neighboring the draconian world, so Zhang Lie had forgotten about it.

The sage glanced at the proof of kingship curiously. "You want me to merge this world with the draconians' world and see if there are any disaster-grade lifeforms within?"

Zhang Lie nodded.

The draconian sage didn't refuse. He sent an announcement to all the humans and draconians in the world, informing them of the upcoming merger and shocking them all. How long had it been since the nine-world merger? The original inhabitants hadn't even managed to get used to the changes yet, and another one was already coming.

The Milky Way's forces were moving far too rapidly... Were kings of the realm so easy to kill? Weren't they the peak of their respective worlds?

The draconian sage initiated the merger of the worlds immediately, without giving the humans and draconians any time to prepare. Given the experience from before, he was certain the humans and draconians could handle the shock.

A beam of light shot into the air, and the scepter of bone floated up along with it. It morphed into an orb of light and revolved around the pillar. The dragon's scale that the draconian sage was responsible for began to glow with light.

The entirety of the draconian world began to tremble as the shadow of another world appeared over the horizon, shocking everyone.

The orb of light floated down toward the dragon's scale and combined with it.

All the inhabitants of the world, the draconians, the mammoths, the bear-men, and so on, saw the new world above the horizon, a world that was slowly approaching theirs. As the will of the

Mengtai world dissolved into that of the draconians' world, the draconian sage roared. The dragon's scale radiated light in ten colors, and the images of ten different worlds flashed over it.

After the merger, the draconian sage's strength and abilities rose by another level. He still wasn't fully accustomed to his newfound strength, but was able to use it reasonably effectively.

The draconian sage closed his eyes. "There is indeed a disaster-grade lifeform in the Mengtai world."

Zhang Lie grinned.

The draconian sage continued, "This disaster-grade lifeform is known as Bahamut, the king of beasts. It's a guardian deity of the Mengtai clan, as well as the beast that will ultimately destroy the world during an apocalypse."

Zhang Lie rubbed his palms. "No need for all these stories. Send me over!"

With a wave of a hand, the draconian sage wrapped Zhang Lie up in spatial energy and whisked him away. Zhang Lie found himself before a gigantic mountain range, one which gave off the aura of a disaster-grade lifeform.

He was certain that Bahamut had to be within...

Chapter 837: Worldshaker

Zhang Lie didn't have time to slowly and leisurely hunt down disaster-grade lifeforms. As he clenched his fists, blue genetic energy gathered and rippled around his arms. He flicked his wrists, spawning a frightening aura in the rapidly darkening skies. A fish the size of a whale materialized in the air.

As more and more genetic energy gathered around Zhang Lie's arms, it looked as though he were at the heart of a whirlpool.

"[Fists of the Silent Sea: Soar]!" A huge wave soared into the air. As Zhang Lie punched forward, the fish slammed its huge tail on the ground and sent a torrent of water surging forth.

The ocean waves swallowed up the entire mountain range as shockwaves surged forth from Zhang Lie, as though a rampaging beast were devouring everything in sight.

Zhang Lie found that he was mistaken. There was no disaster-grade lifeform within the mountain range—the mountain range itself was the lifeform.

Amidst billowing clouds of smoke, a gigantic figure suddenly made itself known. It roared so loudly into the skies that the entire world seemed to tremble. A gale blew away the smoke that had diffused into the air.

Its head was that of a hippopotamus, its limbs those of a lion, its back and tail those of a crocodile. Its tail was as straight as a log, its muscles bunched up like rocks. It opened its maw wide, so wide it seemed as though it could swallow up an entire mountain, and swiped forward with its long claws. Zhang Lie was forced to dodge.

The claws rent the space behind Zhang Lie for thousands of miles, cutting apart the mountain that lay behind him.

Zhang Lie punched forward with his fists, forming a hurricane with his genetic energy. Bahamut suddenly sucked all that energy into his black hole of a mouth, consuming Zhang Lie's pale blue genetic energy completely.

To think there would be a disaster-grade lifeform able to swallow up his whole attack without suffering any side effects...

"[Ninecarp Transformation: Golden Tiger]!" The image of a golden tiger appeared behind Zhang Lie's back, and its roar echoed through the air. It looked somehow metallic, as though it were constructed straight out of gold, and a pair of bladed wings formed twin mountains on its back.

Zhang Lie's body itself underwent a transformation. His hair turned silvery-white, until they became akin to silver needles. His genetic energy likewise became more honed. Silvery-white genetic energy gathered over his body, and tigers' stripes appeared on his arms. His eyes became those of a tiger's, and steely sharpness erupted from every pore.

"Let's see what else you can suck into your mouth! [Fists of the Silent Sea: Fade]!"

The condensed genetic energy solidified into sharp silver crystals, which shot out with Zhang Lie's attack. They tore apart the sky as they penetrated space.

Bahamut opened its maw wide once more, sucking up the silver crystals—which pierced straight through its head. It was unable to break down Zhang Lie's attack in time.

"As I predicted!"

The reason Bahamut was able to swallow its opponents' attacks had to be because of the unusual biology of its body or its disaster-grade domain. Unlike other disaster-grade lifeforms, its domain wasn't something that could be imposed on its environment, but was rather something that activated within its body.

Zhang Lie suspected that Bahamut's domain was something like a black hole hidden in its stomach, allowing it to consume its opponents' attacks without damaging its body.

However, no domain was invincible. Just like how Zhang Lie had managed to break apart the bearman deity's domain of sharpness with condensed sword energy, his golden tiger transformation's penetrating attacks would be the worst match for Bahamut's domain.

Bahamut itself was very surprised: this was the first time it had encountered an enemy whose attacks it wasn't able to consume.

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

A crystal wall appeared behind Zhang Lie, reflecting light in five colors, so dazzling it dazed any who looked at it, so beautiful it sparked their desire.

As Zhang Lie manipulated space, that crystalline genetic energy shot out of the wall behind him in the form of sharp daggers, combining water-attuned genetic energy and spatial fluctuations into potent silver beams that could pierce through anything.

The silver light shot toward Bahamut like raindrops in a storm. Realizing that it wouldn't be able to absorb these attacks, Bahamut swiped at the beams with its claws.

The golden tiger's attacks boasted such fearsome penetrating power that Bahamut found it difficult to counter them. The silver beams left scars and long streaks of wounds along his body. After the bombardment, Bahamut's body was shot through with holes. Only the vitality of a disaster-grade lifeform allowed it to remain standing.

Taking advantage of his foe's weakness, Zhang Lie transformed into a dragonwolf with russet fur and limbs covered with dragons' scales. His aura became magnified as a hurricane of blood spawned around him.

The next moment, Zhang Lie vanished from sight and appeared in front of Bahamut's body. His claws rent at the sky, at the void. Bahamut matched Zhang Lie's claws with its own, so large Zhang Lie's claws looked like toothpicks in comparison. Physically, it seemed impossible that Zhang Lie's claws would be able to affect Bahamut's, but it was Bahamut who ended up yielding under the blow.

"It's over!" Zhang Lie condensed his genetic energy. Sharp white crystals manifested around his body like silvery-white starlight, glimmering in the air. "[Fists of the Silent Sea: Hundred Dragons Soaring]!"

As he cocked his fist, dozens of crystalline dragons formed behind his back, roaring in unison and causing the lava to quake. Their bodies were translucent, and they gave off light in all the colors of the rainbow as the sunlight struck them.

They roared into the air, causing the entire world to quake. The next moment, they shot out through his fists, hundreds of them in all, criss-crossing in the sky. Their silvery-white scales, like angels' feathers, covered up the entire sky and turned it into a sea through which the crystalline dragons swam.

The silver dragons annihilated Bahamut, leaving only crystalline fragments on the ground where it once rested, along with a sparkling disaster-grade core. The black disaster-grade core seemed to harbor a humongous black hole that sucked everything nearby into it.

Zhang Lie picked up the core, found himself surrounded by spatial fluctuations, and vanished from the spot.

The next moment, he appeared in the black desert and began absorbing his last disaster-grade core with undisguised anticipation.

Subsequently, a frightening burst of energy shook the entirety of the draconian world.

Humans, draconians, and other races alike all looked toward the black desert that had combined with the draconian world. White clouds spiraled overhead; the stars shone and glimmered with sudden brightness. All life in the world could feel that some unusual disturbance was happening right then and there.

The moment Zhang Lie capped his disaster gene fragments, energy began swelling from him. The draconian sage tried to suppress the energy, but he found that he was unable to do even that despite being the king of the realm of this world. All he could do was to transfer the energy into outer space, but even that became problematic...

## Chapter 838: Zhang Lie's Metamorphosis

If the waves of energy that Zhang Lie were giving off were not contained, they would immediately destabilize the draconian world, which had just been merged with nine others.

As a result, the draconian sage had no choice but to deal with this energy one way or another. After he transferred it all to outer space, hundreds of neighboring worlds around the draconian world began to quake, and even the shockwaves from that energy proved challenging for the kings of the realm all around to deal with.

Who knew what had happened?

The commotion was so massive that it drew the attention of the champions of all three thousand worlds, and even that of the superior worlds.

The kings of the realm of the superior worlds all glanced toward the draconian world at once.

One such king was located within a dark tomb, large and spacious, more ornate than even the palaces of kings of large worlds, in a chamber surrounded by eighteen pillars lit by pale blue flame.

If Fang Yi were present, he would recognize that this tomb seemed much like the base of the inverted pyramid that he had witnessed during Zhang Lie's trial.

The walls of the tomb were inscribed with hieroglyphs whose meaning had been lost to time, covering the floorboards, pillars, and ceiling. A blackgold coffin lay in the center of the tomb, and its lid was slowly displaced.

Black bandages gushed out of the coffin like appendages, tens of thousands of them squirming within the darkness of the coffin, as though millions of lifeforms had been stuffed into this dark coffin and subsequently amalgamated by some dark technique. A pair of blood-red eyes lit up, and an ancient, hoarse voice echoed in the chamber.

"I feel a source of miraculous strength, stronger than even the will of superior worlds, of the will of the third realm itself! A perfect meal has finally appeared after so long..."

In a world filled with blood, a fierce-looking man rolled out of bed, on which was splayed a large number of aliens from various races, some whose bodies were made of granite, of steel, of fire. All these aliens were naked, with unknown fluid covering the lower half of their bodies.

The fierce-looking man glanced up at the sky, in the direction of the draconian world.

"An existence stronger than even a superior king of the realm has just been born..."

If Zhang Lie were present, he would immediately notice some similarity between the fierce-looking man and the sura of the second realm.

In another world, gloomy and dreary, with light showers of rain so fine they hung like mist in the air, unusual black plants grew out of the ground, tendrils squirming amidst a sea of bones of decomposing lifeforms, moving in the direction of the draconian world...

Ten suns hung in yet another world, the hard, baked earth burning with scarlet, hellish flames. An existence glowing like a sun landed on a golden mulberry tree, one so large that the largest tree of

the devil trees' world was nothing but an ant in comparison. The glowing existence who had stopped there quietly turned its head toward the draconian world.

In a world where everything aged and rotted away, with a dark, dreary wind that aged everything it touched, no lifeform should have been able to survive—and yet a species did, and it managed to thrive.

A species that could make such a hellish habitat its home had to be extraordinary, and extraordinarily dangerous besides.

The timerot species of this world of decay, and the hellspawn species of that world of hellfire, were both species that had mastered the superior worlds that were their home.

The remarkable environment in which they grew, that prevented other species from invading their worlds, allowed them enough time and opportunity to develop and nurture unusual abilities that derived from their environment.

They became nightmares for their neighboring worlds, allowing them to stand at the top of the three thousand worlds, existences that no other species could ignore.

A pitch-black creature climbed out of an ancient graveyard, morphed into a chilling wind, and flew toward the draconian world.

In a world covered by permafrost many times over, so cold that even ten suns in concert wouldn't be able to affect the surroundings, so cold that even time slowed to a crawl, so cold that even the mammoths' world would be an oven in comparison, a world whose temperature was infinitesimally above absolute zero, deep within the ice, the king of the realm of that frozen world sensed the disturbance in the draconian world.

The species that governed this world of frost were special existences known as frostsouls.

The king of the realm commanded, "Identify the source of this disturbance. If it's a threat to us, deal with it immediately."

A frostsoul rushed out of the ice and vanished by the horizon, headed for the draconian world.

Zhang Lie: a disaster-grade lifeform

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

Genes: Basic, 160; Mutated, 150; Superior, 150; Peak, 150; Disaster, 100

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

Zhang Lie had finally maxed out his disaster gene fragments, and he felt strength surging from his body beyond what he had ever experienced. His [Ninecarp Transformation] finally evolved once again, and the various transformations it entailed grew even stronger.

While Zhang Lie's genetic energy was still nominally water-attuned, that energy was charged with the potential to change and manifest into different forms.

As a fish, that energy took on a boundless volume; as a serpent, it became corrosive; as a tiger, it turned into sharp, piercing ice; as a dragonturtle, it grew heavy and substantive; as a qilin, it became fiery and scorching; as a river dragon, it invoked the authority of heaven.

In other words, Zhang Lie was able to substantially change the characteristics of his genetic energy, and was now even able to simultaneously merge two transformations together. He was therefore able to counter any of his opponents on a fundamental level and dramatically change his fighting style from moment to moment.

Compared to before, Zhang Lie's combat ability had grown by leaps and bounds.

He glanced all around him, only to see that the sand that had formed the black desert had all evaporated. Instead, the ground was filled with black-colored lava, so hot it was distorting the air. He... might have made a larger commotion than he was expecting.

However, Zhang Lie didn't mind. After all, the draconian sage was supervising his motions, and the sage would be able to avoid disaster. Zhang Lie stepped forward and vanished from the spot. The space before him tore apart like rice paper.

The next moment, he appeared directly before the draconian sage.

After maxing out his disaster gene fragments, Zhang Lie was able to rend space with brute force, allowing him to teleport himself even without the draconian sage's assistance, to anywhere in the draconian world he had been before.

#### Chapter 839: Preparations for the Merger

The draconian sage chastised Zhang Lie, "Don't just distort space like that—restoring that torn space will cost valuable energy! The draconian world doesn't have much energy left after its merger and subsequent evolution, so if you keep doing this, it'll be very difficult for me."

Much of the draconian world's hoarded energy had gone into restoring the half-dead world of black sand, as well as the two worlds whose proofs of kingship had cracked, during the merger. It didn't have a significant supply of energy left.

"Call me whenever you need to be transported, but don't just tear apart space like that!"

Only Zhang Lie had the privilege of making a large world's king of the realm his dedicated chauffeur—and it was the king who had made such an offer, too.

The draconian sage continued, "You never mentioned that you would release so much energy after absorbing all these disaster-grade cores! Couldn't you have warned me before destroying the black desert?"

"I didn't know I would have caused such a large commotion, either..."

The draconian sage sighed. "Fortunately, I sent you to the black desert. If you had made such a mess anywhere else in the world, I would have choked you to death on the spot!"

Zhang Lie shrugged. "Would you be able to manage such a feat?"

The draconian sage fell silent. Even after becoming the king of the realm of a large world, the draconian sage wasn't confident that he would be able to defeat Zhang Lie at all.

"Scram!" The draconian sage scowled, waving his hands madly at Zhang Lie.

After Zhang Lie left, he rested for a night before setting off the next morning with Li Qianlin and Dong Mingxing.

With Zhang Lie's strength and speed, it would only take a blink of an eye for him to transport them all to the world of the east, but this was a rare opportunity for him to spend some time alone with Li Qianlin, and to cultivate their feelings for each other. He wasn't about to give up on such an opportunity.

He summoned Red Comet and the disaster-grade rainbow-scaled dragon which carried a palace on its back. Zhang Lie commanded the dragon to slow down rather than to fly at its fastest speed.

Li Qianlin was no idiot. She noticed what was going on, but she didn't expose Zhang Lie. After heading to the draconian world, she hadn't been able to spend time privately with Zhang Lie at all, nor even have a private conversation with him.

There was still some time until the merger ceremony, and speed wasn't of the essence, so there was no rush, either.

The king of the west's dragon and palace was luxurious indeed. Zhang Lie enjoyed his accommodations in the palace surrounded by two beauties. The group, taking their time to return to the world of the east, enjoyed five days' worth of scenery before they finally arrived.

The moment Zhang Lie and Li Qianlin arrived in the world of the east, the king of the realm noticed them instantly. They brought such a large disaster-grade lifeform with them that even a fool would notice the disturbance, let alone the king himself. He appeared in front of the disaster-grade lifeform as Zhang Lie, Li Qianlin, and Dong Mingxing left the palace.

Zhang Lie waved at the king. "Long time no see, father-in-law!"

Li Zongming nodded politely. "Good lad. I welcome you to witness the merger of east and west."

He turned to his daughter, a gentle smile appearing on his face. "Welcome back, Qianlin."

Li Qianlin smiled at her father. "I'm back."

He urged, "Go on, go prepare. You're my daughter, the princess of the east, and you have to stand by my side during the ceremony now that the two worlds are finally merging once more."

Li Qianlin nodded, waved to Zhang Lie, and left with Dong Mingxing.

The king continued, "Zhang Lie, I think you had better leave the disaster-grade lifeform by the foot of the mountain. Don't scare the other guests."

Only then did Zhang Lie notice that the appearance of the rainbow-scaled dragon was shocking the other aliens entering the world through the wormhole. Zhang Lie nodded, then set off with the dragon.

Li Zongming asked him, "How is your relationship with my daughter progressing?"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean, how far have the two of you gone?"

"It's... going well, I suppose?"

Li Zongming frowned. "What do you mean, 'you suppose'? Either it's going well or not!"

"I think, well, haha, how are preparations for the merger?" Zhang Lie hurriedly changed the topic upon sensing Li Zongming's glare.

Li Zongming sighed. "As well as I might hope. Parts of the western world mounted a resistance against me, but I managed to suppress it."

The reason that Li Zongming had waited so long even after obtaining the proof of kingship was because there were still elements in the west with power of their own.

However, compared to the power a king of the realm of a large world could bring to bear, their resistance was fruitless. They were annoying simply because they could appear at any moment and didn't have a consolidated base of power. Thus, Li Zongming had to expend great effort to deal with them.

After all, he couldn't simply slaughter his way through the entire world, so he had to come up with methods to suppress and handle the protesters.

Whenever it seemed as though the western world's resistance was dying down, rumors of an impending merger caused more resistance to flare up, dragging out the process for a prolonged period of time.

"Has everything finally settled, then?"

"For the moment, at least. No problems will arise during the course of the ceremony; I can guarantee that much."

Kings of the realm weren't infallible, and they couldn't spend all day surveilling their land.

Of the millions of existences on a world, as numerous as the stars in the sky, the king of the realm would only pay attention to the brightest, the strongest among them, such as Zhang Lie and disaster-grade lifeforms. Any commotion on their part would be transmitted to the king of the realm instantly.

Ordinary, powerless lifeforms, on the other hand—the king of the realm didn't have so much time as to be able to scour through them all for the rabble-rousers among them, who were able to slip through his sight by means of their mediocrity.

Zhang Lie warned, "Be careful. The worlds of east and west are large even among large worlds, and they could very well form a superior world when merged. The moment that happens, trouble will be afoot."

Li Zongming glanced at him curiously. "You know something?"

"It'll take a while for the two large worlds to merge, and there's plenty of time for problems to occur."

Unlike the merger of a few medium-sized worlds, which had taken only a few hours, the merger of a few large worlds might take multiple days.

Li Zongming replied seriously, "I have contingency plans for everything I can think of."

"What do you know of superior worlds?"

"They're the strongest of the three thousand worlds."

Zhang Lie continued, "Have you heard of other superior worlds beyond the ten?"

Li Zongming blinked. "Do you mean that there's a reason there are only ever ten superior worlds among the three thousand?"

"Did you know that the ten superior worlds call the three thousand worlds a breeding ground?"

Zhang Lie countered.

"You mean to say that the superior worlds will strike the moment the merger happens?"

#### Chapter 840: A World of Gloom

Zhang Lie nodded. "The reason the superior worlds haven't taken control of all three thousand is because the formation of a superior world will result in an outpouring of the will of the world's energy. The superior worlds will come to claim that energy then."

"What happens to a world that has its energy consumed?"

"It perishes. It becomes a world devoid of life, where no living lifeforms can tread. However, the goal of these superior worlds isn't to destroy the three thousand worlds, nor can they do so.

"After centuries, these worlds will regain their capacity for life, turning into a few dozen or a few hundred smaller worlds. Once these small worlds become inhabited once more, they'll go to war with each other before eventually combining into medium-sized worlds, and hence into large worlds, and finally into superior worlds once more.

"The moment that happens, the ten superior worlds will destroy it and let the cycle happen anew. In other words, they treat the three thousand worlds like a plot of land, one which can be farmed over and over again for resources.

"This is the truth behind the ten superior worlds."

Li Zongming had wondered why there were only ever ten superior worlds. He had made a few bold conjectures, but none as bold as the truth, as the cruel and harsh reality that awaited him.

This wasn't a war of the worlds; it wasn't universal conflict. No, they were all actors in a game, a game in which none of them could be winners. Be they small or large or medium-sized—all these worlds were nothing more than crops to be harvested by superior worlds. The difference was just that some of these crops were immature, some were barely sprouting, and some basically ready for harvest.

Only now did Li Zongming realize that the struggle between him and the king of the west all these years, for generations in the past, was all because of the pressure exerted by the ten superior worlds.

A ball of emotion seemed to disgorge itself from his throat. Despite all his struggles, was he nothing more than a pig in a pigpen?

"A pig, a pig—nothing more than a pig, of course. It's so horrible it could be nothing but the truth. All these years that I wasted, that I spent for nothing, all these years fattening myself up for slaughter—just what have I been doing?"

Li Zongming raised his head to the skies and laughed a terrible laugh. The entire world quavered with the strength of his emotions, and rain poured down from the heavens above.

Li Zongming's mood was unconsciously affecting the weather, and everyone present felt a sudden heaviness suffuse the air.

Li Zongming was able to accept that the worlds had to war with each other; this was natural law, the means and impetus by which the worlds grew stronger, but the fact that what waited for them all at the apex of their strength was nothing but slaughter...?

After Li Zongming finished laughing, he shook his head wearily, tears in his eyes. "After inheriting the throne, I neglected Qianlin's mother for the sake of the realm, tending to the world with my utmost care—and for what?!"

"Are you alright?"

Zhang Lie could understand the king of the east's feelings. He had spent his entire life striving to reach the peak of the three thousand worlds, only to discover a harsh truth instead.

That he hadn't gone crazy was already testament to his mental fortitude.

As though he still harbored some hope, Li Zongming asked, "Is this the fate of all superior worlds?"

Zhang Lie shook his head.

Li Zongming was about to ask another question when Zhang Lie interrupted, "The superior world that doesn't treat you like a crop is even worse."

"Which world?"

"The world of the death spirits."

Upon hearing that name, Li Zongming shuddered.

Zhang Lie continued, "All superior worlds are alike. Nine of the ten worlds treat the three thousand worlds like arable land, and the last one wants to swallow it all up. Why do you think the superior worlds are all trying to stop the death spirits?"

Li Zongming asked, "What are the superior worlds trying to achieve?"

As the king of the realm of a large world, Li Zongming did know more than the ordinary person about the goals of the death spirits, but with some misunderstandings about what the other superior worlds were doing in order to prevent the death spirits' success.

Zhang Lie rolled his eyes. "Surely you don't think that the superior worlds are defending against the death spirits just out of the kindness of their hearts, in an attempt to protect the realm?"

Li Zongming replied, "As far as I understand, the superior worlds are preventing the death spirits from invading the realm and absorbing more worlds ceaselessly."

The death spirits were currently absorbing a few medium-sized and small worlds, as well as the few large worlds they could get their hands on without being obstructed by the other superior worlds. If they were allowed to continue growing, however, they would soon set their sights on superior worlds.

Li Zongming believed that the other superior worlds had banded together to prevent precisely that threat. He had originally believed that the superior worlds were existences worthy of honor and respect, that their strength derived from their long and illustrious existence.

"Given what you've said, it seems like my understanding of these worlds is completely mistaken."

Zhang Lie shrugged. "Let's say that you know half the story. It's true that the superior worlds are trying to stop the death spirits, but only because the death spirits would cut into their crop yields otherwise."

Li Zongming sighed. "To think that even the superior worlds I once honored were such petty, dark existences... how did you even learn of this secret?"

Zhang Lie shrugged. "The Milky Way is large, and our galaxy is connected to more than just the three thousand worlds of this realm. It's hardly a secret to us. Of course, not all lifeforms from the Milky Way know about this information. I'm a rather special existence even among hunters from the Milky Way."

Li Zongming nodded in understanding. Zhang Lie was making this up; the hundred strongest races of the Milky Way certainly knew about superior worlds, and some among the four prime races might know even more, but no matter what they knew, their information certainly wasn't as comprehensive as Zhang Lie's...