

U. Warlord 861

Chapter 861: Potian's Arrival

Vemacitrin's five legs seemed to be hard at work weaving something as purplish-black flames continued to pour out of its nine heads.

"[Web of Heaven's Might]!" A web of red and black flew out from Vemacitrin and smashed into the bloody dragon. Vemacitrin had quickly realized that heaven's might was ineffective against Zhang Lie and came up with a countermeasure. Instead of trying to use it directly on Zhang Lie, it targeted Zhang Lie's attacks instead.

The blood dragon exploded instantly—but Vemacitrin could hardly have predicted that the true horror would only start then.

Zhang Lie had been inspired by Sun Mengmeng's refinement of her own techniques. She had split her technique into two components; the truly devastating part of Zhang Lie's skill would only be triggered after the blood dragon's explosion.

A wave of annihilation exploded around the dragon. Pitch-black energy swallowed everything in the vicinity like a storm at sea. The entire sea of blood began to boil. Vemacitrin's web of red and black, stitched with heaven's might, was shredded in an instant.

Its nine heads glanced at the explosion in dismay. The explosion had occurred so close to Vemacitrin's body that it didn't have the time or space to avoid the attack.

Just then, a tail emerged from underneath the sea of blood, curled around Vemacitrin, and pulled him underwater before the dragon's carcass detonated completely.

The explosion of the energy of annihilation that made up the blood dragon's body was on the level of a weapon of mass destruction, one that seemed as though it could even destroy a large-sized world.

It enveloped the sea of blood, decomposed it at an atomic level, and transformed the energy so produced into more destruction. Even Zhang Lie, who had launched the attack, had to flee in order to avoid being caught by the aftermath.

The explosion was like a black hole that consumed everything in sight, draining the sea of blood until it reached some threshold. At that point, it shrunk down to a pinhole and vanished, leaving a vacuum in the water. A storm manifested around that vacuum as the seawater cavitated, leaving a spherical hole where Vemacitrin once stood. The sea of blood, drained at least in the vicinity of the hole, was now nothing more than seabed.

As the black hole vanished, the seawater that had been held at bay flooded back into the vacuum in a tumultuous cascade.

Zhang Lie stood in the air as he glanced down at the destruction he had wreaked.

He suddenly felt a sense of premonition. A high-pressure stream of bloody water shot at him, but Zhang Lie was able to react and dodge near-immediately.

Two figures emerged from the sea of blood, one of which had a centipede's head. "Well, he really is quite strong, if he can even avoid such a blow."

The other figure was Vemacitrin.

Zhang Lie frowned. Given what happened right before the explosion, Vemacitrin shouldn't have been able to escape. In that case, there was only one possibility.

Zhang Lie turned to the centipede. "Did you save the spider?"

The centipede was none other than Potian.

Potian replied, "He's my brother, after all. If he were to die in front of me, my father would give me a beating."

That said, Vemacitrin was hardly unscathed. It had lost four more of its eight legs, and the back half of its body had been consumed by the energy of annihilation.

Despite its heavy wounds, Vemacitrin seemed very happy. "I'll admit that you're strong, stronger than the great lords of the xuluo, but now that my brother is here, you're dead now!"

The blood-colored centipede emerged fully from the sea.

The centipede was composed of thousands of segments, each of which had a human face embedded on its back, and whose limbs were a human's arms and legs. It was almost as though its body were formed from over a thousand interconnected humans.

Vemacitrin introduced his brother. "You're aware of heaven's might, and presumably of its ascended version, after having fought the xuluo lords. My brother, Potian, was the one who pioneered the development of this ascended form of heaven's might thousands of years ago."

Zhang Lie looked the centipede up and down, unable to believe that the centipede in front of him was the one who had made that astounding discovery.

"Enough!" Potian called back. "No need for your introduction. I'd like to preserve some of my mystery."

Vemacitrin shuddered. "I'm sorry, Brother, I shouldn't have revealed everything!"

Potian sighed. "I can't tell whether you're doing these things deliberately or by accident."

Vemacitrin continued, "But so what if he knows? Surely he's not an opponent for you, Brother!"

Potian rolled his eyes. "You might underestimate your opponent, but don't underestimate your father. He's at the pinnacle of heaven's might, and he wouldn't have released me if not for the existence of a foe even he would have a hard time dealing with. He'd much rather lock me up for life. Even now, I don't understand why he released me rather than fight himself."

Allegedly, Zhang Lie was the karmic backlash from the xuluo's actions all these millennia for invading and conquering newly evolved superior worlds.

Potian had yet to study the base version of heaven's might as deeply as its father did, and this notion of karma wasn't something it could confirm. Nevertheless, its face became serious. "I don't know

what you are, but for my freedom, you'll have to die here. Vemacitrin, you'll support me from the back!"

"Yes, brother!"

Potian soared into the air. Vemacitrin began to spit out threads of red and black fire from its nine heads, which it wove deftly with its remaining appendages.

"[Fists of the Silent Sea: Hundred Dragons Soaring]!" Zhang Lie cocked back his left arm, channeled his genetic energy into the attack, and sent it straight at Potian.

Howling with the force of thunder, a horde of over a hundred dragons flew toward Potian.

The dragons were fierce and domineering, and all hundred of them boasted the power of annihilation. It was as though Zhang Lie had used [Fists of the Silent Sea: Fade] a hundred times in succession.

Simultaneously, Vemacitrin tossed out a purplish-black fireball which flew over Potian's head and struck the dragons soaring overhead. It burst apart into a flaming web that seemed to surround the entirety of the sky, and its threads were reinforced with heaven's might.

The black dragons exploded in mid-air far from Potian, the energy of annihilation they contained within them forming a chaotic storm and tearing the web of threads apart. Seawater was sucked up from the sea and into the sky, into the mess of black genetic energy that hung overhead.

Potian used its own body as a sword, reinforcing itself with potent penetrating ability. It flew right into and through the middle of the explosion, detonating what dragons remained.

The storm continued raging overhead, but Potian, who had reinforced its own body, suffered no damage from passing through the storm.

Zhang Lie's lips finally quirked up in a faint smile. "Interesting. Finally, a worthwhile enemy!"

Chapter 862: Zhang Lie's Might

Zhang Lie slashed forward. Guicang struck Potian in such a manner that both parties were shocked.

Potian was astonished that, even though it was using heaven's might, Zhang Lie was able to block its attack. Heaven's might was an attack that couldn't be blocked; it was karmic in nature. In other words, Zhang Lie was strong enough to affect natural law with nothing but his sword.

On the other hand, Zhang Lie was very surprised that Potian's attack had left a dent on Guicang. Potian's heaven's might was far superior to the heaven's might of the xuluo lords he had fought.

As Zhang Lie activated his [Ninecarp Transformation], water-attuned genetic energy wrapped around his sword and cascaded down it like a waterfall. The pale-blue shark behind him swam into the air.

Potian's tail grew taut like a steel cable as it struck Zhang Lie with its tail.

The pale-blue shark clamped down hard on the centipede's tail, only to be torn apart as Potian swung it around violently.

At the same time, Vemacitrin snuck up to Zhang Lie from behind, its nine mouths continuously producing purplish-black thread that its legs wove into huge fireballs, half the size of its body—and Vemacitrin's body was as large as a landmass.

The flaming balls of fire were far larger than Zhang Lie's own body. These fireballs, which Vemacitrin had woven in a hurry, were so large they could cover up a third of a continent. It had woven them while Zhang Lie and Potian were exchanging blows with each other.

The size of the resulting explosion would be unknown until they were launched, but they were so large that Zhang Lie certainly wouldn't be able to avoid them. If he had noticed them earlier, Zhang Lie would have stopped Vemacitrin at all costs, but Potian prevented him from doing so.

"Die!" Just as Vemacitrin was about to toss those fireballs out, however, Zhang Lie stepped forward. The image of a dragonturtle appeared behind him, and his genetic energy immediately turned from a pale blue color to a deep, dark brown, like muddy water.

The thick sludge then turned blood-red under the effects of his soulshard. The genetic energy froze space solid, trapping Potian and Vemacitrin within its domain.

Potian felt as though it were wading through a swamp, costing it tens or even hundreds of times more energy just to move forward, or even to wiggle a single finger. It felt as though a mountain were pressing down on its body, one so heavy it could barely breathe, slowing down all its bodily processes.

Even the air seemed to solidify and turn to syrup. The surface of the sea sank; its lowest point was right underneath Zhang Lie.

Potian and Vemacitrin found themselves restrained, leaving only Zhang Lie free to move.

"No matter how strong your heaven's might is, it won't matter if you're unable to cast it." Zhang Lie shot forward like a beam of light, and the genetic energy that had condensed on his blade erupted.

"[The Boundless Blade: Yawning Wave]!" A wave of energy rushed toward Potian, accompanied by a fountain of blood that swallowed it whole.

Vemacitrin, struggling against the solidifying space, managed to toss out its fireballs, which exploded in mid-air. A giant web of fire hung over Zhang Lie and Potian, with heaven's might imbued in every strand.

Vemacitrin's attack was intended to free Potian from the trap.

"[Rune: Control]!" Zhang Lie shouted, summoning the runic tablets controlling gravity and anti-gravity.

Zhang Lie's sword slash half-crippled Potian as the attack struck it head-on. Its head split into thirds and crumbled away in the aftermath of the attack, but Potian didn't die. Where the head had fallen off, a new one reappeared.

To Potian, losing a head was no big deal. There were thousands of human heads embedded in Potian's segmented body, but each of those heads were actually Potian's own. In other words, as long as any of the thousand heads remained alive, Potian would not die.

The two runic tablets reverberated, and golden runes appeared over their surface.

Black ripples emanated from the two gravity-altering tablets, forming a localized region of distorted gravity. The mysterious fluctuations in gravitational strength caused Zhang Lie's opponents to lose control of their own bodies.

"[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.

Zhang Lie swung his sword again, summoning a huge black serpent. The serpent wrapped around Zhang Lie's arm.

"[The Boundless Blade: the River Lethe]!" An underworld river materialized in the sky, one so vast the entire world could see it. Everything turned cold. A chill permeated the air, and even the sea froze over with a thin layer of red-tinted ice.

A strong wind buffeted the battlefield. Blood-colored frost appeared around them all. The world was turning into a hellscape. As though the doors to hell had just been thrown open, tens of thousands of serpents rushed out in a flood.

Zhang Lie leapt high into the air and into the flood of serpents, whose target was the web of blackflame hanging over them all.

The serpents crashed into the web, which sizzled as though it were being corroded away. As more and more serpents flung themselves into the web, it finally disintegrated.

Zhang Lie led the charge through the web. As he did so, the serpents clumped together and began to metamorphosize, transforming from a flood of serpents into one gigantic black serpent that broke through the enclosure and headed straight for Vemacitrin.

After activating [Ninecarp Transformation]'s serpent form, Zhang Lie's dragonturtle domain vanished, and Vemacitrin was able to move once again. It tried to avoid the attack, but it was too massive to be able to do so.

The black serpent pierced through Vemacitrin's body, and small serpents detached from the main body and began devouring it from the inside out.

Vemacitrin screamed in pain; its massive body was now an impediment. Pain swarmed its senses as it tried to peel off the serpents with its nine hundred and ninety-nine hands. The flowers on its heads grew vines that likewise did the same, but to no avail...

Chapter 863: A Superior King

Potian tried to rescue Vemacitrin, but was prevented from doing so by the gigantic web that had fallen from the sky.

The threads of the web, imbued with heaven's might, had significant penetrating ability. Potian's personal strength and deep understanding of heaven's might were more than enough for it to break free, but it had taken a bit of time to do so. That, in addition to Zhang Lie's two runic dragonturtle tablets, meant that Potian was unable to save Vemacitrin in time.

In some sense, Vemacitrin had committed suicide by releasing that flaming web.

By the time Potian broke free, it found itself enveloped in a sea of genetic energy.

"[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.

Black genetic energy filled the battlefield. Even the xuluo had never seen genetic energy so vast and so concentrated—his genetic energy roared as it took the form of a vast, angry sea.

Waves surged toward Potian.

The surface of the sea frothed with angry waves, like dragons emerging with the tide. The entire sea roiled, and lightning crackled amidst the void. Countless serpents swam across the raging sea as lightning flashed ominously overhead, a scene right out of an apocalypse. The sea had morphed into a boundless battlefield. The sea breeze was a horn to action, and the serpents, thousands of courageous soldiers heeding its call.

A tremendous wave enveloped Potian whole.

Potian's face grew alarmed as it roared, imbuing its body with heaven's might as it made to pierce through the waves.

Countless sea serpents emerged from underneath the sea's surface in ripples of seawater, charging toward Potian. When they were destroyed, their energy returned to the sea, primed to form more such serpents. As long as the sea remained, the serpents would spawn endlessly—the boundless sea was the font of life, which gave birth to an endless stream of creatures.

Even if Potian had mastered heaven's might, it couldn't use it endlessly against a never-ending stream of opponents. Even so, Potian was truly a strong foe. Its heaven's might was so potent that it really did manage to charge out of the waves—only to come face to face with Zhang Lie, who had been waiting for it.

Zhang Lie raised the blade Guicang. Under the influence of his active soulshards, his genetic energy turned blood-red.

"[The Boundless Blade: Dragon's Wrath]!" Zhang Lie thrust forward with Guicang, summoning a blood dragon. A blood-red dragon's roar shook the skies. Zhang Lie's attack clashed against Potian, who had transformed his entire body into a blade.

Natural law warped and cracked under the force of the explosion, which was so intense it affected the metaphysical itself.

By then, Zhang Lie had gleaned some understanding of heaven's might and Potian's application of it. Its head was smashed apart and its body flung backwards into the underworld sea beneath him. The raging sea surged forth and rent Potian's body into several pieces.

Even so, Potian remained alive. The various pieces of its body began to grow their own heads, but the serpents that constituted the sea surrounded each piece and began to corrode them away.

Potian reversed its heaven's might and used it for defense rather than offense. Potian was the only one of the xuluo who had managed to accomplish such a feat.

Just then, a giant black figure emerged from the sea of blood and appeared behind Zhang Lie—Vemacitrin. Vemacitrin had made use of its monstrous vitality to survive the serpents' corrosion, and it had managed to pluck them all off its body before it was corroded away.

Immediately after dealing with this time-sensitive issue, Vemacitrin began to attack once more. The flowers on its heads began to spray out a stream of poison.

Vemacitrin didn't think it could beat Zhang Lie; rather, it had lost its sense of rationality after suffering the huge amount of pain that had been caused by the serpents devouring its very body.

"[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 radiated from Zhang Lie like brilliant rays of sunlight. As Zhang Lie swung his sword, they shot toward Vemacitrin, slashing apart the flowers on its head. The purplish-black protective web of flames was unable to hold Zhang Lie's attack back.

Just as it seemed as though Vemacitrin would die, a sigh filled the entire world, echoing in mid-air as a bolt of blood-colored lightning fell from the skies, striking Zhang Lie's attack and cracking his blade.

Zhang Lie knew that the xuluo king might interfere in his battles, but he hadn't expected such precise timing. That said, Zhang Lie didn't intend to give up. The xuluo king's meddling had sparked Zhang Lie's competitive mindset. "I, Zhang Lie, will kill whom I please! Not even a superior king can stop me!"

He infused willpower and genetic energy into his blade, causing the light it gave off to flare. Even the blood lightning seemed to be taken aback by the strength of the attack.

More and more lightning forked down from the heavens, striking Zhang Lie's sword and annihilating his attack.

However, the reason the attack had failed wasn't because of the lightning, but because the amount of energy Zhang Lie was putting into the attack had crossed some critical threshold.

The attack erupted in a splendid explosion, annihilating the blood lightning in an instant.

A roar echoed through the air: "No!"

The voice sounded angry. Its wrathful shout sounded like the world itself was going against Zhang Lie, and the shout was so forceful that the few remaining xuluo fighters found themselves bleeding from all their orifices. They dove down into the sea of blood, refusing to show their heads.

Amidst the xuluo king's anger, the entire sea of blood began to swell and surge, bursting into blood-red flames—but this wasn't enough to stop the explosion that Zhang Lie had triggered.

Vemacitrin's body, located by the epicenter of the explosion, was annihilated. Blood-colored mist filled the air and skies.

"Intruder, you've slain my son!" As the sea of blood swelled, a gigantic bug appeared from its depths, a huge eye located where its head would be. Beneath the eye was an extremely large face, with a hand growing out of each cheek, a shocking sight.

Zhang Lie laughed coldly. "And you've invaded and taken control over hundreds or thousands of superior worlds. Isn't it only fair?"

Chapter 864: Theory of Debt

"No!" Feitian cried. "The xuluo have never invaded other worlds. We did it in order to maintain peace, to provide law and order! The third realm has limited resources, and all the energy has to be divided among three thousand worlds! If there are too many superior worlds, draining the realm of its energy, who knows what might happen?"

Zhang Lie raised his head to the sky and laughed. "Hahaha, haha! You pirates dare to speak of law and order? You might as well argue that you need to maintain income inequality! In that case, let me ask you: what happened to the energy from the destroyed superior worlds?"

Feitian frowned. "I don't know what you heard from others, but what you're doing now is destroying this world—and the realm with it."

Zhang Lie seemed unperturbed. "Don't try to fool me. You might claim again and again that all you're doing is in order to maintain balance in the realm, but you're simply finding excuses for destroying world after newly evolved world! You superior worlds then use that energy to strengthen and grow your own worlds—to consolidate power!"

Feitian narrowed its eyes. Its face turned fierce and evil, and it dropped the righteous tone from its speech. "You know more than you let on, don't you?"

Its eye was calm and placid, like the surface of an undisturbed lake, as though its flurry of emotions moments before was nothing more than an act.

Feitian was very surprised that Zhang Lie knew the truth that was hidden from all but the ten superior kings and their trusted aides. Indeed, the ten superior worlds had used "balance of power" as an excuse to invade newly formed superior worlds, collecting all that energy for themselves so that they and future generations might grow stronger and stronger.

Zhang Lie laughed coldly. "Did you think we were all ignorant and clueless?"

Each of the three thousand worlds of the realm had their own will, but these wills were all subordinate to the will of the third realm. Because the third realm had been divided into three thousand worlds, the will of the third realm itself was incomplete and existed in a rather passive state, but it was superior in quality to any of the wills of individual worlds. Even a superior king of the world was nothing more than an ant to the will of the third realm itself.

"I'm very curious which world you're from." Feitian narrowed its eye, which stared straight at Zhang Lie.

Zhang Lie patted his chest. "I, Zhang Lie, stand for myself—I won't tie myself down to a single world!"

Feitian supposed that Zhang Lie was being backed up by another ancient superior world. "Don't you think I'd know what sort of world has the resources to cultivate a monster like you? Certainly not a run-of-the-mill world! I thought you represented the karmic backlash from the xuluo destroying and absorbing so many smaller worlds, but it seems as though the situation is more complex than that."

Zhang Lie's appearance was too much of a coincidence—why was he in the domain of the xuluo world, rather than in the domain of the other superior worlds?

This seemed like nothing more than a coincidence, but Feitian, who cultivated the arcane power of heaven's might, knew that there were no coincidences in this realm. All was linked to karma, to cause and effect.

Why had someone like Zhang Lie appeared in a newly evolved superior world?

Feitian's original hypothesis was "karma". The karmic backlash from the xuluo's actions would catch up to them sooner or later. Unlike the other superior worlds, the xuluo were particularly susceptible to karma because of the heaven's might they cultivated, just like how drowning was a disproportionately high cause of death for swimmers.

Those who made use of karma would ultimately die of karma.

Feitian had delved deep into the study of heaven's might, and it could barely glimpse the truth of the universe behind a veil of fog. It had been prepared for a karmic backlash someday—but it hadn't expected to fall prey to a scheme instead. None of the three thousand worlds would be able to avoid such schemes, not even a superior world like the world of the xuluo.

Zhang Lie's appearance was one such scheme—it wasn't only karma, but also the machinations and manipulations of the other superior worlds.

Feitian didn't know what sort of plan had been concocted: whether Zhang Lie had been recognized as a promising descendant and was sent to a world in the domain of the xuluo in his childhood to grow up to overthrow the xuluo, or whether he had developed into an elite before being sent into a world that was just about to evolve into a superior one.

Regardless of which possibility it was, Feitian shuddered at the depths of the plan that had to have gone into Zhang Lie's appearance now.

The mastermind behind that plan was surely an expert on karma, who was aware of the one weakness that the xuluo were unable to avoid. Sooner or later, they would be struck by karmic backlash on account of their racial arts.

Karma was something that might have been opaque or abstruse to any other race, but for the xuluo, karma was more rigorous than science itself.

Other superior worlds weren't able to make use of heaven's might, and they naturally wouldn't suffer any karmic backlash for having destroyed too many superior worlds. However, the xuluo were irrevocably linked to this art, and the tally of their evil could only be delayed and held back so long.

In the end, they would have to pay for their actions—as though the xuluo were a large corporation that had taken on one too many loans, were forced to repay them all with interest, and would necessarily go bankrupt as a result.

Feitian had been working to resolve this problem the moment he became aware of it, once he had mastered the power of heaven's might as deeply as he could, but by then, it was too late. Heaven's might had been in use for tens of thousands of years, and the backlash the xuluo would have to suffer had only snowballed since.

Most worryingly, the xuluo world now seemed to be subject to the machinations of its nine other ancient foes.

This was something that had been planned for millennia; Feitian was sure of it.

A few faces flashed across Feitian's mind, but there were only a scant few people in the third realm who had insight into karma as he did—and none were as skilled as to be able to identify this critical flaw in the xuluo world.

At the very least, there were no such sages among the xuluo's enemies.

Could it be an unknown sage he was unaware of, or perhaps someone from an even higher realm?

Regardless of these thoughts, it was clear that Feitian only had one path open to him: to get rid of the trouble standing in front of him at any cost.

To Feitian, Zhang Lie wasn't important—what mattered was the karmic backlash from the xuluo's actions. It had never paid attention to Zhang Lie from the very beginning.

Feitian's next step had to be to delay the karmic backlash further, to hold off the debt collectors for a bit longer...

Chapter 865: Heaven's Might

Feitian eventually concluded, "Regardless of who's supporting you, we xuluo have vanquished a large number of worlds and attempted to invade yours. After killing my son, however, you've wiped clean my karmic debt against you."

Zhang Lie cocked an eyebrow. "I decide when this matter is over, not you."

"Your world hasn't suffered any losses. You gain nothing by fighting me." Feitian swam toward the middle of the blood sea, reaching out as though hoping to save Potian, who had yet to die from its wounds.

Zhang Lie slashed at him, sending a wave arcing overhead. "And what of the elite fighters who perished in battle? What of the dead from the Zongming world? If you had succeeded in the offense, would you have left and retreated if we had told you that you'd gain nothing from us? No—you'd have sucked up the world's energy first."

If Zhang Lie hadn't been present, Li Zongming would have perished from the assault, and Li Qianlin would have suffered a grievous fate.

Zhang Lie was immensely relieved that he had accompanied Li Qianlin to the merger ceremony and prevented such tragedy.

Feitian's eye narrowed. The giant eyeball on its head seemed to pierce through Zhang Lie. "Do you really intend to wage war against me?"

"Wage war?" Zhang Lie scoffed at the notion. No, I'm here to destroy the xuluo world!"

Zhang Lie activated [Ninecarp Transformation]. Water-attuned genetic energy wrapped around his sword and cascaded down it like a waterfall. As he unsheathed Guicang, a pale blue shark rose into the air from behind him.

Feitian's body emerged from the depths of the blood sea. It was then that Zhang Lie realized that Feitian had more than one head—he had at least a dozen, each of which were strung along its body. Each of its heads had only one eye and one mouth. The sea of blood began to froth; its body filled the entire sea.

Feitian's enormous white wormlike body was visible beneath the sea of blood.

At this point, Zhang Lie was starting to get used to the grotesque bodies of the strongest xuluo.

"[The Boundless Blade]!" Zhang Lie swung downwards with a heavy blow, and the shark swam forth.

Feitian's eye glared at the shark, causing it to burst apart in mid-air. By this point, it had cultivated heaven's might to such an extent that it could kill an opponent by glaring and thinking about attacking that opponent.

"[Ninecarp Transformation]!" A black serpent materialized anew behind Zhang Lie, resembling the world-swallowing serpent Jormungandr. He didn't fear Feitian's stare at all. With just a moment's thought, the serpent wrapped around Zhang Lie's arm.

"[The Boundless Blade: the River Lethe]!" He struck once more. An underworld river materialized in space, one so vast the entire world could see it. Everything turned cold, and the temperature dipped below freezing. A layer of thin blood-colored ice appeared over the sea.

A strong wind buffeted the battlefield. Blood-colored frost appeared around them all. The world was turning into a hellscape. As though the doors to hell had just been thrown open, tens of thousands of serpents rushed out in a flood as Zhang Lie swung Guicang at Feitian.

The serpents flew through the sky and straight toward it.

Feitian glanced at the serpents, which began to explode as though they were fireworks.

"It's useless!" it cried out. "No matter how you attack me, you won't be able to succeed. My heaven's might has identified a path to victory—one in which you'll only leave this world as a corpse!"

Zhang Lie ignored Feitian's words. He lifted the blade in his hand high above his head as pitch-black energy exploded from him, looking like a demon descending on the world.

"[The Boundless Blade: the River Lethe]!" Black genetic energy filled the battlefield. Even the xuluo had never seen genetic energy so vast and so concentrated—his genetic energy roared as it took the form of a vast, angry sea.

Waves charged forward, sounding like peals of thunder, like stampeding hooves. Countless serpents swam across the raging sea as lightning flashed ominously overhead, a scene right out of an apocalypse.

As Zhang Lie struck, an underworld river hurtled into existence, roaring into the sea. The sword energy roiled like black waves. The sea had morphed into a boundless battlefield. The sea breeze was a horn to action, and the serpents, thousands of courageous soldiers heeding its call..

As Feitian glared again, the underworld river exploded. The serpents within were killed and transformed into pitch-black genetic energy. The exploding serpents reformed into a black tide,

which returned to the sea. The surface of the sea began to froth, as though dragons were emerging from deep below the surface.

Feitian frowned. Its body squirmed and shifted deep within the sea of blood. As it invoked the king of the realm's authority, a large patch of the sea clashed against Zhang Lie's underworld river in a massive explosion of water.

"[The Boundless Blade: Dragon's Wrath]!" Zhang Lie thrust forward with Guicang, summoning a blood dragon.

A dragon's howl shook heaven and earth. The blood dragon tore apart the seawater as it charged toward Feitian, which glared at it. Unlike before, however, heaven's might was ineffective against the dragon.

Feitian was shocked. Its tail emerged from underwater. Infused with heaven's might, it struck the blood dragon, which exploded and fell to the sea in a rain of blood.

Feitian's humongous eye seemed to be able to pierce through anything. "You've developed some form of heaven's might yourself!"

Zhang Lie didn't respond. He wasn't a fool; he had encountered heaven's might more than once or twice. It would be silly of him not to take advantage of the opportunity to emulate his opponents' techniques for himself.

Feitian nodded to itself. "No wonder my heaven's might was ineffective—you boast your own version of the technique. Only heaven's might can counteract heaven's might—but if you've developed a form of heaven's might yourself, you'll have to suffer my karmic backlash too. You'll die here today!"

"Oh? I decide when I die, not heaven, and certainly not some ersatz mockery of heaven's power like you!"

Hanguang appeared in Zhang Lie's hand. As he swung the blade, two of Feitian's arms were chopped off its body...

Chapter 866: Death Foretold

Feitian didn't seem to care about its injuries. The sea of blood swelled and surged toward Zhang Lie like a wall of blood.

"[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.

His blade annihilated the seawater that threatened to overwhelm him in a burst of energy, then turned it back on Feitian. Feitian retaliated with a burst of blood-colored energy from its mouth.

The high-temperature energy warped the air as it vaporized everything it encountered. When it struck Zhang Lie's blow, the two different types of energy struggled to overwhelm each other, but neither could succeed. Instead, a huge explosion filled the battlefield.

The seawater evaporated, leaving the seabed visible. It began to crack, split, and melt under the energy of the explosion.

Feitian blocked the explosion with the bulk of its body, whereas Zhang Lie destroyed the remnant energy rushing toward him with a swing of his sword.

"[Shadow and Light]!" Time suddenly sped up in the vicinity of Zhang Lie. He appeared before Feitian in the blink of an eye, and his sword slashes fell like rain.

His sword was imbued with the metaphysical concept of time, but Feitian's body was so massive that Zhang Lie found himself unable to strike at its weak spots.

Feitian had curled its body up, shielding its sensitive organs with enough bulk that it looked almost like a planet in its own right.

However, Zhang Lie had no intention of giving up and leaving before destroying the xuluo world. The xuluo king had to die at any cost.

"[Syzygy]!" A burning black sun rose behind Zhang Lie's back, and a bloody moon flared into existence at his feet. Under the combination of the two auras, Zhang Lie seemed to have transformed into a god.

His aura was magnified tenfold, and a halo of black sun appeared above his forehead. Natural law seemed to warp around him. Runes glimmered on the bloody moon by his feet, forming an intricate array.

Zhang Lie's aura grew stronger as stronger as Feitian's heaven's might weakened.

"[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. Sword energy materialized from Zhang Lie's blades into a blood dragon that revolved around his body.

The blade Hanguang morphed into a black dragon, and the blade Guicang into a blood dragon. The two dragons coiled together, and even before the technique was unleashed in its entirety, Feitian felt deeply threatened by the attack. It hastily uncurled its body, but it was too late.

The twin dragons shot out toward Feitian like a hurricane, bearing down on it with the might of Zhang Lie's spiritual sea between them.

Before the dragons struck, the huge pressure mounting on Feitian cracked the seabed and formed a humongous whirlpool right around Feitian. The whirlpool gave off so much suction that it was almost like a black hole.

The boulders in the sea detached from the seabed were sucked into the whirlpool, at which point they were instantly turned to rubble.

Feitian's body didn't survive unscathed. The blow cut it up into pieces, and its blood sprayed everywhere. Limbs and flesh filled its vicinity, even as it tried to stitch itself back together using the authority of a superior king.

Zhang Lie had no intention of giving Feitian such an opportunity.

"[Second Form: Piercing the Soul]!" His disaster-grade mistmeld clam soulshard activated as he infused its energy into his swords, causing them to shine radiantly with multicolored light.

As spiritual energy flowed through him, Zhang Lie found himself capable of seeing into Feitian's soul. It was a fuzzy spherical object, so blurry and indistinct that Feitian seemed hardly like a lifeform itself.

A rainbow arc accompanied Zhang Lie's slash, as though an aurora borealis were visible in the sky. It shone in all the colors of the rainbow, momentarily hypnotizing anyone who looked at it.

With Guicang in hand, Zhang Lie flew through the heavens. His sword shone as brightly as the northern lights overhead, bringing him momentarily out of the physical into the intangible. His cut landed not on Feitian's body, but directly on his soul. As the radiant light assaulted Feitian's soul, its body froze up.

The disaster-grade mistmeld clam soulshard, when incorporated into Zhang Lie's soul-targeting attack, had the ability to target and corrupt its opponents' souls.

Even though superior kings were protected by the wills of their world, Zhang Lie's incredible mental energy was able to penetrate that barrier and stun Feitian for a moment.

The sea of blood began to drain away.

While Feitian stood still and unmoving, Zhang Lie readied another blow.

"[Ninecarp Transformation]!" The sky turned red as red scales covered up Zhang Lie's body like a plate of armor. A deer's antlers appeared on Zhang Lie's forehead, and his body was surrounded with scarlet light.

It looked as though he were a fiery qilin, but the scarlet light didn't come from scarlet flames, but rather from fiery-red water-attuned genetic energy that derived from his transformation. His black hair took on a red tint, as though they were lit up by an inner fire. Interlocking rings of black and red that warped natural law surrounded his body, and a domineering aura exuded from him.

The temperature at which his body blazed caused the nearby seawater to vaporize, and the entire sky was dyed scarlet.

Feitian's soul continued to struggle, but it was still severely affected by the disaster-grade mistmeld clam soulshard.

"[Blades, Extinguish]!" Guicang gleamed brightly in Zhang Lie's hands as he infused more and more spiritual energy into it. From the surface of his spiritual sea came waves charging forward, sounding like stampeding hooves, like raging dragons.

Zhang Lie's spiritual sea expanded greatly, past the confines of his own body. As the mistmeld clam soulshard's energy was infused within, it began glowing with multicolored light, simultaneously illusory and real.

The mysterious and phantasmagorical light stunned and captivated everyone in sight...

Chapter 867: Inconceivable Growth

The sword in Zhang Lie's hands burned with scarlet water-attuned genetic energy. Billowing clouds of red-tinted steam surrounded him as though he were a burning pyre. The high-temperature steam

was so hot that it vaporized much of the sea of blood upon coming in contact with the surface of the water.

This domain of scarlet steam was so dangerous that an ordinary lifeform would likely be vaporized without a trace—as was the case with the torn-apart fragments of Feitian's body, which turned into cured meat after being suffused with the steam.

The temperature around Zhang Lie grew so hot that his surroundings began to warp. Mirages formed all around him.

One of Zhang Lie's blades glowed with radiant light; the other shone scarlet with water-attuned genetic energy. As he combined them both, he produced an even more devastating effect.

The spiritual, metaphysical sea combined with the scarlet steam that hung around Zhang Lie, linking together the physical and metaphysical, the real and the abstract.

The spiritual sea began to burn, as though it had been ignited by the scarlet steam, forming spiritual flame. The scarlet steam, bolstered by the spiritual sea, grew even hotter. Contact with the steam seemed to sap at one's very soul.

Zhang Lie had allowed these two disparate sources of energy to combine, and their merger was so intense that the distinction between the real and illusory began to blur.

Zhang Lie struck with his two blades. The surface of the sea frothed with angry waves, like dragons emerging with the tide.

The waves roared through the sea like galloping steeds, like thundering dragons. From afar, the waves looked like a coven of flaming phoenixes spreading their wings and taking flight; from close up, they looked like flaming dragons.

These manifestations all drew from Zhang Lie's immense spiritual and genetic energy reserves, along with the sword techniques and willpower that he had honed over countless battlefields.

The spiritual sea seemed to belong to a separate dimension altogether, whereas the scarlet water-attuned genetic energy was in Zhang Lie's current dimension. The two sources of energy were linked and made manifest by Zhang Lie, and they both surged forward as Zhang Lie swung his twin blades.

The two blades combined spiritual and genetic energy, willpower and time. All that melded into a tsunami which surged toward Feitian's prone body.

The combination of these disparate energies was so potent that it could destroy any lifeform's body and soul.

No lifeform could block such an attack—but perhaps a world would be able to do so.

Either the will of the world had acted independently, or Feitian had subverted the authority of the king. Under ordinary circumstances, the will of the world wouldn't act to prevent the death of a king of the realm, but it acted now.

The energy of the world formed a gigantic barrier over the top of Feitian's head.

As the tsunami smashed into the barrier, the entire world trembled. Huge quantities of the world's energy were consumed in mere moments to maintain the barrier, but the aftermath of the explosion was too much for it to bear. Potian's body was sent flying, and even the will of the world seemed to be incapable of withstanding Zhang Lie's [Blades, Extinguish].

A tiny crack appeared in the barrier, one which was mirrored by a huge crack that ran through the skies, as though the entire world were protecting Feitian. As Zhang Lie's attack continued, the crack in the sky began to propagate, and the protective barrier seemed as though it would shatter at any moment.

The xuluo world seemed close to absolute destruction. It was shaking violently as the seabed began to crack, causing the seafloor to tilt and stratify. Seawater drained into the cracks and formed huge whirlpools over the surface of the sea.

Just as the protective barrier was about to be completely destroyed by the simultaneous assault of spiritual and genetic energy, Feitian finally broke out of its mental stupor and rapidly began to address its crisis. Its body began to stitch back together as the xuluo world, depleted of its vital energy, began to dry up and turn dark. Feitian ignored the phenomena and continued to drain energy away to restore its own body.

Whether or not it won against Zhang Lie would depend on whether the xuluo world would be destroyed first or if Feitian's body could be restored to full strength.

Indeed, a superior world that had existed since antiquity, which had drained who knew how many newly evolved superior worlds of their energy, wasn't so easy to destroy. Before the world could be destroyed, Feitian's body was restored completely. It went on the offense, spending huge portions of the world's energy in one fell swoop against Zhang Lie.

Zhang Lie's [Blades, Extinguish] had been activated for some time, and it was running out of even his huge reservoirs of stored energy. The moment Feitian regained control over the xuluo world, its burst of energy broke through Zhang Lie's attack.

By that point, more than half of the xuluo world's supply of energy had been used up. The skies, originally a rich, dark red, turned pale as Feitian's faces darkened: thousands of years' worth of energy had been depleted in an instant—the equivalent of hundreds of newly evolved superior worlds' energy.

Without that stored energy, Feitian would have died to Zhang Lie.

Fortunately, it had installed an authority in the world's core that would cause the will of the world to automatically protect itself when it was in mortal danger.

Only kings of superior worlds who had been in power for extended periods of time were able to access this authority. Otherwise, the will of the world wouldn't act to save a king in mortal danger. Kings were easily replaceable; the will of the world didn't derive its strength from its king, and therefore had no need or incentive to keep one alive even longer...

Chapter 868: Potian Begs for Mercy

However, Feitian had made use of the authority of the king to forcefully bind itself to the world.

As it thought back to how it had almost been killed by Zhang Lie, it grew terrified and angry. How could this little bug have done so much damage to it? It had consumed thousands of years' worth of energy! Feitian was unable to maintain its rationality.

"I've underestimated you. I was going to send you away, but now, only your death will quench my rage!" Feitian howled. As it invoked the authority of the world, the sea of blood roiled and condensed around him.

Feitian floated at the eye of the blood-colored whirlpool as its wounds rapidly healed. Its arms, which had been cut off, grew back. "I've never been so angry in tens of thousands of years, and I've locked this form away for all this time. To be able to pressure me to this extent—you, mortal, should feel honored!"

The blood-colored seawater drained into Feitian's body as it swelled up and evolved. Huge numbers of faces and hands grew out of its swollen body; each face had, as usual, one eye and one mouth.

Potian's ruined body emerged from underneath the surface of the sea. It began to laugh. "Haha, you're dead meat! Father's not going to let you go in this form!"

Potian's body had split into quite a few pieces, but only a two-segment piece had survived the ordeal.

Potian regrew from that segment of its body, but it only had the resources to make an additional third segment, a far cry from its previous form. Rather than a centipede, it looked more like a large shrimp.

Even so, Potian had managed to survive Zhang Lie's attack.

"Just existing in his true form is enough to destabilize the xuluo world and do damage to it!"

The superior kings of each world, including Feitian, generally had far more than enough strength to ascend to a higher realm, but they had chosen to remain because they were afraid of what would happen to the worlds they had spent so much care taking of after their departure. In order to prevent their strength from destabilizing their worlds, they sealed it in an alternate form.

"Do you know just what this sea of blood is?" Compared to Potian's original thousand-segment body, its current three-segment form looked strangely comical. The second segment of its body began to laugh shrilly. "The sea of blood is Father's own flesh and blood—yes, it fills up the surface of the xuluo world! Now that all that flesh is returning to Father's body, you're dead meat, haha!"

The first segment of Potian's body cackled proudly. "Why do you think Father was able to suppress my strength? He might as well be the xuluo world itself! No one in this world can defeat him."

Zhang Lie ignored Potian. He slashed in its direction with his blade, and the scarlet genetic energy annihilated the first segment of its body.

The head on Potian's second segment grew alarmed. Even if the arrogant fellow was about to be killed by its own father, Potian itself didn't have the strength to provoke him.

Zhang Lie struck again. Another slash of scarlet genetic energy shot toward Potian, leaving a trail of steam in its wake.

"Save me, Father!" The second segment of Potian's body immediately ran toward Feitian. Its two segments had four human legs between them, and it was able to run surprisingly rapidly across the seabed.

Just as Zhang Lie's strike annihilated the second segment of Potian's body, a mysterious strength descended from the heavens and nullified Zhang Lie's attack.

Zhang Lie easily recognized the source of this mysterious strength: heaven's might! He raised his head and saw Feitian looking down at them from above, its body so massive that it defied all expectations.

Rather than being a dragon that was curled up around the ground of the superior world, it was more like a humongous parasite whose size was beyond anything that the world could support, as though a tree on a building's roof had roots which penetrated through the building, whose canopy covered up the entire rooftop. Feitian had no such roots, but its own body was parasitic in nature. It continuously absorbed more and more of the world's energy to strengthen itself.

Potian had been incorrect on one point: Feitian hadn't chosen to seal away its flesh and blood because it didn't want to destroy the world.

Instead, it was trying to delay the ascension process as long as it could while sucking up all the energy from the world to bolster its physical body.

The sea of blood that covered the entirety of the xuluo world was the result of those efforts.

The reason Feitian didn't want to ascend was because it knew that it would have to start from scratch in the next realm. Rather than be a weak bug in a higher realm, it would much prefer to be a tyrant among the three thousand worlds.

Feitian's body was humongous. Not only did its massive body wrap around the entire xuluo world, its head, with 9,999 faces, was stuck between the xuluo world and the depths of outer space. It had an equal number of eyes and mouths, and at the very center of its head was an engorged eye the size of the sun. Its body was supported by thirty-six legs.

It had stored so much power in its body that it was affecting the flow of karma in the world; its very presence was damaging the world's existence.

The xuluo world was slowly disintegrating. Cracks propagated from where Zhang Lie's attack had penetrated the land, giving rise to a deep abyss.

The space around Feitian began to warp and crack as the will of the world groaned in pain.

When Feitian had first sealed its body and turned its flesh and blood into the sea that covered up the world, it was far weaker than before. After millennia, by the time it unsealed its body, its strength had grown by orders of magnitude.

"Today will be the day of your death!"

Feitian glared at Zhang Lie, triggering an even stronger version of heaven's might. A storm seemed to strike at Zhang Lie.

Scarlet genetic energy surrounded Zhang Lie like flames and steam. Zhang Lie announced, "You might have grown stronger, but that doesn't mean that you're stronger than I am!"

"Hah!" Feitian ignored Zhang Lie's words. How could a pitiful mortal like Zhang Lie hope to best its strength? It would crush him underfoot with the absolute disparity that lay between them.

"[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.

As the two shades of energy combined, everything in sight was destroyed. A patch of void and chaos expanded where the horizon had been.

Zhang Lie's sword strike split heaven and earth, the power of heaven's might, and even Feitian's massive eye. Its entire body was trembling; fresh blood seeped out of the two halves of its eyeball.

Zhang Lie's sword had cut apart the sea and sky—and even the metaphysical concept of karma. If it had just a bit more strength, Feitian would have lost its body as well. This was no laughing matter. Only after being the target of the attack did Feitian realize that the eye wound it had suffered would never heal.

Zhang Lie had cut apart natural law, flesh and blood, and even the spiritual link between its eyeball and the rest of its body.

Feitian thought back to what Zhang Lie had said. "You might have grown stronger, but that doesn't mean that you're stronger than I am!"

Zhang Lie, who had surpassed his limits again and again in the first three realms, had far exceeded Feitian's strength. "We'll end the fight with this final blow. [Ninesoul Dragonblade—Fourth Form: Warping Space and Time]!"

Zhang Lie's gaze landed on Feitian's body. His sword cut apart a manifestation of Feitian's body, one which already seemed to be sliced into fragments.

Feitian's soul, captured by Zhang Lie's disaster-grade soulshard, was likewise split into two with Zhang Lie's blow.

Feitian's eyes widened as its body began to crack. "Karma that presides over space and time...?"

As though it had revealed forbidden knowledge, the cracks on its body swiftly propagated. The next moment, as though Feitian were made of glass, its body shattered into thousands of fragments.

Potian was stupefied by the scene. It could hardly believe that its invincible father, who had honed its physical body for tens of thousands of years, succumbed to just one blow from Zhang Lie. If it hadn't seen Zhang Lie's blow from himself, Potian would never have believed that such a ludicrous event could ever happen.

Feitian's unsealed form was no weaker than even the king of the death spirits, and yet it was still unable to withstand a single blow from Zhang Lie.

Potian belatedly realized just what sort of monster Zhang Lie was.

While it was in a daze, Zhang Lie appeared behind Potian and kicked its head. "We meet again, prince."

Potian's eyes widened as it realized its fate. Now that Zhang Lie had killed its father, he certainly wouldn't let it go, either.

Potian began, "Hold on, wait! I can give you what you want: the strongest form of heaven's might among the entire xuluo population. I'm the one who created the ascended form of heaven's might. You've fought against the xuluo, so you know what this represents: it's a form of strength that someone on your level can't afford to give up!"

Potian begged for its life by advertising the overwhelming strength of heaven's might.

"Your strength is superior to anything the three thousand worlds can bring to bear. Only the king of the death spirits might be able to stand against you—but if you have the power of heaven's might, you'll be invincible!"

Potian knew very well that power over karma was on the same level as power over time and space. No fighter would be able to resist such temptation...

Chapter 869: The World's Core

"Even if you think heaven's might beneath you, you can pass it onto the rest of your race. Heaven's might can skip the process between cause and effect, and it'll give your world a big boost. As a newly evolved superior world, you won't have the foundation, knowledge, or resources that other superior worlds have, and you'll easily become a target."

If Potian had a forehead, it would be beading with sweat. Whether or not it were able to convince Zhang Lie would determine its fate.

"You wouldn't want to face another enemy like us xuluo, would you? I know you might be strong, but if you had to defend against all nine other superior worlds together..."

Potian felt as though it had spoken more that day than during the last millennium combined.

"If your race has the power of heaven's might and its ascended form, given your personal strength, none of the other nine superior worlds would dare touch you. After all, who would dare to provoke such a race? Don't you think so?"

Zhang Lie replied not with words, but rather a slash of his sword.

Potian's body was bisected. As the left and right halves of its body split apart, its eyes widened, as though asking, "Why?"

Zhang Lie replied calmly, "I can learn what I need to on my own."

Shortly after Zhang Lie had ascended into the fourth realm in his past life, the xuluo race had gone extinct. Not a single xuluo survived. Back then, Zhang Lie was very surprised that even an ancient superior world couldn't avoid the fate of destruction.

Hundreds of thousands of years, even millions of years, of history—all that lost in a single moment. Were there really any races that could survive for eternity?

One of the more established hunters in the fourth realm had laughed at him then.

There were few existences that could survive for eternity, that was true—but the xuluo were destined to fall from the beginning. How could a ridiculous power like heaven's might not come without any drawbacks or consequences? They were simply not apparent at first glance.

The use of heaven's might was, in some sense, equivalent to taking a loan from heaven, the world, or natural law. A superior world was a large customer, and the will of the world would overlook small enough debts. Once the debts grew to a certain extent, however, debt collectors would be mobilized.

The xuluo had been destroyed because they couldn't pay back their loan on time.

It was precisely because of his past experience that Zhang Lie knew about the hidden downside to heaven's might, this debt that would ultimately have to be repaid. Heaven's might boasted an intoxicating strength—until it came time to pay the price for that strength.

Strong though it might be, Zhang Lie had no intention of allowing any other human to access this malicious power. "We humans can survive on our own strength."

The seabed of the xuluo world began to crack once again. Dark energy gushed out of the ground like ghouls clambering out of hell in search of souls and debts owed to them.

Within moments, the whole of the xuluo world was covered in black fog. The world itself seemed to be crumbling to pieces.

Zhang Lie's face turned serious. The black fog that tried to close in on Zhang Lie was vaporized by the scarlet genetic energy that surrounded him.

"This is—" Zhang Lie reached out and grasped a handful of fog, which he crushed in his palm.

The hunters of the Milky Way referred to this substance as apocalyptic essence. Across the three thousand worlds, it bore many names: energy of destruction, energy of annihilation, source of evil, and so on.

It appeared only rarely, but whenever it did, it marked the downfall of a world. The world's destruction was guaranteed; no one could stop it.

Zhang Lie recalled what a hunter had told him in his past life: that the king of the xuluo had realized the double-edged nature of heaven's might after long contemplation. However, xuluo society had been built on the premise of heaven's might, and it would be impossible for the xuluo race as a whole to discard that strength even if the xuluo king commanded it. The entire race would revolt—and even if all the xuluo were somehow willing to accept, the other superior worlds would take advantage of the xuluo's weakness to attack them.

All the superior races were crafty and self-serving. It was evident that the xuluo would be dramatically weakened if they were to give up heaven's might, and they would be devoured by the other superior worlds.

The xuluo king's hand was forced by internal and external pressure. Despite Feitian's knowledge of the perils of heaven's might, it had no choice but to keep using it.

It was easy for a thrifty person to spend more, but far harder for an extravagant person to cut down on spending.

The xuluo had worked hard to get to where they were, and Feitian itself had worked hardest among all the xuluo. Even so, Feitian's error in judgment at that critical juncture had doomed the entire race.

The reason Feitian didn't ascend to the fourth realm, so fervently collected the energy from newly evolved worlds, and sealed the bulk of its body away was to strengthen both the world and itself in order to suppress the impending disaster and 'debt collection'.

Feitian knew that it couldn't delay the inevitable forever, but it didn't know what else to do.

Now that Zhang Lie had slain Feitian and the world's energy was allowed to run rampant, the disaster that had been held in abeyance now triggered in earnest.

Huge cracks criss-crossed through the world. The hole in the sky began to propagate, and the heavens cracked as though they were made of glass. Pitch-black energy continued to pour into the world as the xuluo began to howl and scream, their bodies dissolving upon being surrounded by the energy.

Zhang Lie had no intention to save any of the xuluo. Who knew how many newly evolved superior worlds they had destroyed all these years—and how many lifeforms were there in each such world? Their hands were sullied with blood, so much blood it would never be wiped clean from their histories. The other superior races were much the same.

Zhang Lie's target had never been the xuluo. Very quickly, he found a glowing beacon of light that came from deep within the world—the world's core.

By the time Zhang Lie closed in on it, it was already surrounded by the mysterious black fog, tendrils of which wrapped around the core and tried to steal its power away.

The world's core emitted pulses of energy in an attempt to resist the fog.

Zhang Lie reached out, slashed the tendrils of fog to ribbons with his swords, and claimed the core for himself.

This was Zhang Lie's primary objective, and what he believed would be a core ingredient for his limit-breaking disaster-grade potion. However, one superior core was insufficient. If Zhang Lie's hypothesis were right, he would need at least three superior world's cores for such a potion...

Chapter 870: A Superior Envoy

With the world's core being taken away, the destruction of the world proceeded at an ever-increasing rate. The skies continued to crumble, and spatial rifts spawned all over the world.

Before they could suck Zhang Lie in, he escaped from the world with brute force. Moments after his escape, the spatial rifts merged together and summoned a huge storm.

The remnant energy in the world burst in a magnificent explosion, swallowing up the world in a shower of light.

The light illuminated the void and was just about to release a huge wave of energy into the realm when the will of the world suddenly descended, locked the surrounding space down, absorbed the energy from the impending explosion, and prevented its destruction from affecting other nearby worlds.

In the end, all that remained of the xuluo world was a cloud of rubble where it once stood.

The xuluo world, one of the ten superior worlds, was wiped off the face of the third realm. This was the karmic backlash that resulted from use of heaven's might. The moment the entire race adopted that overwhelming power, the fate of the xuluo world had been written in stone.

Where the xuluo world once stood, the rubble from the world was slowly condensing. Under the influence of the will of the world, after countless years, the rubble would form a brand new world. This was part of the cycle of the third realm. As older worlds were destroyed, newer ones formed. The three thousand worlds were continuously undergoing such a cycle of rebirth.

The xuluo world was rather far from the Zongming world, but fortunately, Zhang Lie knew roughly in which direction he was headed.

At his current level of strength, he wouldn't need to make use of wormholes to travel between worlds. He was able to brave the void with no protection at all, and it only took him ten days to return to the Zongming world, whereupon he shared the good news with Li Zongming.

Li Zongming was simultaneously overjoyed and overwhelmed by Zhang Lie's strength.

Zhang Lie had taken down a superior world, one that had existed since antiquity! He had never heard of anyone managing the like—and especially not alone.

However, Zhang Lie had done so. Zhang Lie had created a miracle.

The xuluo world was a superior world that had existed since antiquity, and the xuluo king was without equal in this realm. None but the other superior kings could be its match—save for Zhang Lie alone.

Zhang Lie's appearance had rewritten history.

Li Zongming wasn't sure whether this was good or bad news. Would the other superior worlds consider Zhang Lie such a huge threat that they would band together in an attempt to get rid of him?

Li Zongming was worried about this possibility, but he had already chosen to side with Zhang Lie.

Back during the merger of the worlds of east and west, Zhang Lie hadn't backed down even though he knew that he might be facing the kings of superior worlds. Even if they were all going to band together and target him now, Li Zongming would surely stand by his side.

Li Zongming sighed and shook his head with a bitter chuckle. "All I wanted to do was to merge the two worlds and finish something no generation of eastern kings before me managed to accomplish—and it caused a whole slew of problems."

Li Zongming could hardly have predicted the ramifications his success would bring.

He had at least gained a little insight into the chain of events that followed after talking to Zhang Lie, but he was wholly unprepared for Zhang Lie's complete victory in the xuluo world.

"I wonder what's going to happen now...?"

"At the very least, we're all fine at the moment."

Li Zongming gave Zhang Lie a small smile. "You're not wrong. While you were gone, my dear daughter pined after you, calling your name left and right. She's been very worried—you should talk to her."

Zhang Lie nodded and left.

Li Zongming sighed, both hands at his back. "It's well past time my daughter got married..."

Despite the sigh, Li Zongming's lips were quirked up, and he looked pleased. To be able to attract such a powerful son-in-law—perhaps he should consider having a few more daughters?

After a dozen days or so, the remaining xuluo invaders had all been captured by Li Zongming, and he had repaired what had been destroyed during their invasion attempt.

The worst was over: the Zongming world had successfully evolved into a superior world, and the immediate crisis was past. However, none of those fighters who had died in battle would be able to revive.

As Li Zongming had suggested, Zhang Lie headed to the young woman who was waiting impatiently for any news of her 'husband'.

Zhang Lie grinned as he hid his aura, appeared behind the young woman, and covered her eyes with his palms. "Guess who I am!"

The young woman, startled, elbowed her assailant's stomach—only to yelp in pain as she felt her elbows slam into something harder than steel, harder than anything in the third realm.

"My elbows," she cried.

Zhang Lie's eyes widened. "Are you alright?"

Luckily for Li Qianlin, Zhang Lie had disabled the genetic-energy barrier that now surrounded him subconsciously. Otherwise, she would have been screaming in pain.

Zhang Lie caressed the young woman's elbows tenderly as he sighed. "Why did you suddenly attack me?"

Li Qianlin glared at him. "What do you mean, why did I attack you? You were the one who appeared behind me out of nowhere! I was so scared that I responded instinctively. It's all your fault—ouch, my arm!"

"Alright, alright, it's my fault."

Li Qianlin glared at him. "So you're finally done gallivanting around, are you?"

Zhang Lie blinked. "Were you waiting for me, my dear wife?"

Li Qianlin blushed. "Hmph! Didn't you go take down a superior world? How did it go? Are you hurt?"

Zhang Lie smiled cockily. "Heh—shouldn't you ask about the superior world instead? I took over the entire world easily!"

Li Qianlin made a chopping motion with her hand at Zhang Lie's head. "That's not something to brag about! Your opponent was a superior world that's been around forever! Aren't you being too rash?"

"Are you worried about me?"

"Of course!"

Zhang Lie and Li Qianlin chatted the afternoon away, growing closer and closer. His relationship with Li Qianlin had been developing gradually in steady and stable companionship, but just as they were growing comfortable with each other, an unwelcome guest arrived in the Zongming world: an envoy from a superior world.

When Zhang Lie received the news and went out to meet with this envoy, whose body was a pillar of flame, he was understandably upset. "What's the matter? Are there other superior worlds who want me to invade them?"