

U. Warlord 921

Chapter 921: Monarch Gene Fragments

If Gold Comet were a god-class lifeform, then what would Zhang Lie, who had killed an ancient superior king, be called? A godkiller?

"Perhaps a myth-class lifeform, then?" But that didn't seem too suitable either. Gold Comet was hardly old enough to be considered a myth or legend.

"Monarch-class, perhaps..."

Suddenly, Zhang Lie blinked. "Ah, what an idiot I am! I can tell just by consuming the meat of such a lifeform—the will of the world surely has some designated name for it!"

Gold Comet immediately rubbed its scythes against each other, then cut off two big chunks of flesh from its legs.

Zhang Lie was very surprised. "After ascending to monarch-class, has your crystalline body turned back to flesh and blood? But no—I could sense how hard it was from when I touched you..."

Zhang Lie had infused genetic energy into his palms when stroking Gold Comet, and he had a good sense of Gold Comet's body composition.

"In other words, you must be able to transform between flesh-and-blood and crystal freely..."

Was this a special characteristic of a monarch-class lifeform? Zhang Lie hurriedly shook his head. "No, now's not the time to ponder such questions. Gold Comet, what are you doing? Why did you suddenly cut yourself?"

Gold Comet proffered the meat to Zhang Lie with its scythes.

"For me?" Zhang Lie was visibly surprised. "You know that I grow stronger by feeding on genetic lifeforms, so you're offering it to me as a gift?"

Gold Comet nodded.

Zhang Lie sighed. "Thank you. I'm very touched, but don't do this in the future, you hear?"

The reason Zhang Lie had fostered Gold Comet's growth was because he was curious about what lay beyond disaster-grade, not because he wanted to consume its flesh. Gold Comet was a pet; how could he stand to consume his pet's flesh?

Meanwhile, on the frontline, the coalition troops were suffering under the sudden appearance of Team Zenith. The members of Team Zenith had split into two parties and invaded the coalition members' worlds, giving their kings of the realm huge headaches.

The kings immediately returned to save their worlds, but Team Zenith was far too strong. Three of the kings who had returned perished at their hands. By the time the rest of the kings formed a huge party intending to counter the members of Team Zenith, they had fled.

"Dastardly humans!" The atmosphere in the coalition's meeting room was dark and dreary. "Such vile viruses, using these underhanded tactics!"

The kings of the realm had clearly forgotten that they had used the same tactics against the draconian world to begin with.

One king asked, "How's the frontline?"

"It's not going well. As the draconian territory shrinks, they're able to consolidate their defense on a smaller patch of territory, and our tactics aren't working out against them any longer. We even suffered a few ambushes and lost quite a few of our forces that way. We lost three kings of large worlds and four kings of medium-sized worlds in just a single day..."

The remaining kings all grew visibly frustrated.

One king stood up. "I can't stay here any longer. I have to rush back—my world is being attacked as we speak!"

The king of the Chiyan world raised a hand. "Sit back down!"

"If we can't take down their frontline, it's meaningless to keep fighting. I'd rather defend my world!"

Another king cried out, "Are we going to give up on the progress we've made thus far? Once we lose this opportunity, that's it! We've spent three whole months executing this plan, and we can't give up on imminent success just like that."

The king of the realm that had stood up snorted. "Easy for you to say—you're not the ones whose worlds are currently being attacked!"

"What are you talking about? We're all allied—if people start to leave, how are we going to maintain our offense? We need to be thinking about the bigger picture. If sacrificing your world allows us to preserve the integrity of our frontline, we'll surely compensate you for your loss afterwards."

The superior king that had stood up retorted, "And why does this sacrifice have to be of my world, not your world?"

Chiyan broke up the debate before it became a fight. "Enough! We can't be fighting among ourselves—there are enemies we have to handle!"

The kings of the realm quieted down.

"If we can't take down the draconian world's frontlines and they're attacking our worlds, what should we do?"

Another king suggested, "Why not change our tactics? Rather than go on the offensive, we can focus on defense to counter the six strong combatants that have joined the fight."

Another king scowled. "Won't that mean giving up the frontline?"

The kings of the realm became more perplexed. Zhang Lie's innocuous suggestion and the reappearance of Team Zenith proved to be a conundrum. If they were to focus on defense, their progress for the last few months would be for naught; if they were to continue focusing on offense, they might lose their own homeworlds.

The king of Chiyan surveyed the room. Glancing at the other kings' faces, he could see that Zhang Lie had already succeeded. The moment the members of Team Zenith were sent out to rejoin the fight, the other kings' morale had been crushed.

The king of Chiyan proclaimed, "We only have one path left to us."

The other kings reared up in shock. "Are you intending—"

Chiyan nodded. "Think carefully. These alien lifeforms are all tumors and viruses that will destroy our realm. If we don't suppress them and get rid of them, we'll all die anyway. We've already tried to muster up resistance. If we draw our forces back now, they'll only take the opportunity to invade our territory. Do you think they'll let us live?"

The kings of the realm couldn't deny the validity of the king of Chiyan's statements.

Zhang Lie had no intention of asking to feed on Gold Comet's body, but he couldn't deny that doing so would be hugely impactful to his own growth, and he wouldn't turn down the flesh that Gold Comet had already given him.

Gold Comet's wounds healed almost immediately as Zhang Lie hefted the flesh in his hands. He didn't have to ingest the flesh at all—given his current abilities, he could extract the gene fragments directly with his genetic energy.

[For consuming the flesh of a monarch-grade blood mantis, you received one monarch gene fragment. Current total: 1]

Zhang Lie received confirmation that the will of the world termed such lifeforms monarch-grade lifeforms—his guess had been completely correct. "As expected, the name isn't anything as ridiculous as god-class."

[For consuming the flesh of a monarch-grade blood mantis, you received one monarch gene fragment. Current total: 2]

Upon absorbing these two monarch gene fragments, Zhang Lie felt a burgeoning vitality exuding from every cell in his body, which seemed to have turned to miniature suns. His body began to radiate light. A single monarch gene fragment was stronger than even ten disaster gene fragments.

"This strength is intoxicating..."

Chapter 922: A Large-Scale Assault

Zhang Lie continued to absorb more gene fragments.

[For consuming the flesh of a monarch-grade blood mantis, you received one monarch gene fragment. Current total: 3]

In the end, because of the limited amount of meat that was available, Zhang Lie only recovered five monarch gene fragments.

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 (pinnacle), Ninesoul Dragonblade (pinnacle), Blade of the Heavens (pinnacle)

Genes: Basic, 160; Mutated, 150; Superior, 150; Peak, 150; Disaster, 100; Monarch, 5

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

Just five monarch gene fragments brought Zhang Lie incomparable strength. He could hardly imagine just how strong he would become after maxing out his monarch gene fragments.

Zhang Lie felt strength coursing all over his body, and he wanted to work it off.

Just then, however, Zhang Hanxiang rushed up to him.

"Is something wrong, Hanxiang?"

Zhang Hanxiang jumped up in shock as Zhang Lie suddenly teleported to her side.

"Did something happen in the frontline?"

"Brother, you scared me!" Zhang Hanxiang had still been quite a fair distance away from the farm, but Zhang Lie had already noticed her coming from that far away... "Just as you anticipated, Brother, the coalition is launching a joint attack in response to Team Zenith's antics."

"Faster than I thought... Are they really that easy to bait?"

None of the kings of the realm had planned for Team Zenith's sudden reappearance, and they had all been unpleasantly surprised by their sudden encounter with Team Zenith. They were the ones who were supposed to be harassing the draconian world—but Zhang Lie had flipped the tables on them!

Furthermore, Zhang Lie had controlled a small group of their soldiers via his mismeld clam soulshard, which provided him with ready information about their plans, and which he could take advantage of to induce delays.

With sufficient information and a much-reduced defensive border, the draconian territory was largely immune to the sneak attacks that the coalition carried out, and the coalition forces' retreat was frequently delayed by the soldiers controlled by the mismeld clam soulshard.

The coalition forces were getting pincerred by warlords from the front and Team Zenith from the back, and the status of the coalition was deteriorating faster than even Zhang Lie had predicted.

Zhang Hanxiang continued, "The coalition isn't composed of idiots, either. They're unwilling to give up on the fruits of their labor that they worked so hard for. Before the coalition collapses, they're planning on doing one final invasion attempt, as you expected, Brother."

"Excellent news. We'll be able to take them all down in one fell swoop, then." Zhang Lie smirked.

This would be a great opportunity to test out the strength of the gene fragments he had just acquired.

Gold Comet flew over to Zhang Lie's side, and he rubbed the mantis's head. "Would you like to come with me?"

Gold Comet nodded: it too wanted to test the limits of its strength.

Zhang Hanxiang glanced at the mantis with some surprise. "This is Red Comet, isn't it? How did it turn golden?"

Zhang Lie shook his head. "It's not Red Comet any longer, but rather Gold Comet."

Zhu smiled. "Red Comet has evolved, Hanxiang."

Zhang Hanxiang's eyes grew wide. "Beyond disaster-grade?"

Zhang Lie nodded. "Monarch-grade."

Zhang Hanxiang sucked in a deep breath. With evident pride in her eyes, she announced, "Brother, you're going to shock the galaxy once again."

The existence of a monarch-class lifeform meant that there were corresponding monarch gene fragments, which would be able to elevate hunters to yet another level of strength.

"Not quite yet. Monarch-grade lifeforms might exist, but Gold Comet's the only example of it in the third realm. Even if more such lifeforms appear, I can't imagine they could do so naturally—so we, the Zenith Dojo, will maintain a monopoly over them."

At the very least, Zhang Lie didn't have any intention of releasing this information publicly in the short term.

He turned to Zhu. "Zhu, continue cultivating more disaster-grade and monarch-grade lifeforms. One or two won't be enough—I want at least a dozen, preferably two."

Only Zhang Lie could dare to make such an outlandish claim. All Zhu's efforts had produced a single monarch-grade lifeform, and producing a dozen or two would require immense numbers of disaster-grade ones.

The draconian sage shook his head. "Cultivating more such lifeforms will be impossible, not even two or three. It'll ruin this world."

Zhang Hanxiang was visibly confused. "What's the matter, Sage?"

Zhu frowned. "But haven't you agreed to let us use this land, Sage?"

The draconian sage sighed. "If you want to cultivate more lower-grade lifeforms, be my guest—but the evolution from disaster- to monarch-grade consumes incredible amounts of the world's energy."

Zhang Lie recalled the phenomenon that had appeared during Gold Comet's evolution.

"If more such evolutions occur, this world will be drained dry."

Zhang Lie nodded. "Zhu, I'm afraid I'll have to make life somewhat more complicated for you. You can continue cultivating disaster-grade lifeforms here, but we'll have to go elsewhere for the monarch-grade evolution."

It looked as though it would be necessary to take over more worlds so that they could be used as hatching grounds for such lifeforms.

"Let's set out to meet this coalition, shall we?" Zhang Lie shattered space, bringing Zhang Hanxiang and Gold Comet with him to the frontlines of the invasion.

When he arrived, the warlords were in heated combat with the kings of the realm, who had swarmed the battlefield in large numbers and were pushing the warlords back.

The kings were potent fighters in their own right—but no match for Gold Comet, who was happily sharpening its scythes, excited to test out its newfound strength.

Zhang Hanxiang looked into the distance, at the air covered by flame and smoke. "Brother, be careful. The king of Chiyan was injured in battle against Yang Ze, but after he recovered, he grew even stronger. He's already past the limits of a peak king of a large world!"

Chapter 923: Decimating the Kings

Scarlet flames wreathed around the king of Chiyan. He looked like a god of fire that had descended to the realm. Every punch he made morphed into a flood of flame. The kings of the realm had been fighting on par with the warlords until Chiyan entered the battlefield and tipped the scales in his favor.

"Don't worry. Your brother's never lost before, and he never will."

Zhang Lie clenched his fist tightly. Blue genetic energy gathered around him as space vibrated. The ripples spread out over his arm. As he flicked his wrist, a frightening aura began to emanate from his body.

A gale formed over the battlefield. Everyone looked toward the skies, which had rapidly darkened. A fish the size of a whale had materialized in the air and was covering up the sun.

Upon seeing this whale, the warlords cried out in excitement, while the kings of the realm turned stiff. The reason the warlords were so excited was because they knew what this whale represented—Zhang Lie was here!

Meanwhile, the kings of the realm could sense the gigantic reservoir of genetic energy that the whale harbored.

More and more genetic energy gathered around Zhang Lie's arms, spinning rapidly until it looked as though he were in the center 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 toward the battlefield.

The frightening density of genetic energy caused space to warp. Towering waves formed of water-attuned genetic energy grew larger and larger, like enraged black dragons, as they swept across the battlefield.

The kings of the realm grew visibly alarmed at the strange phenomenon that was unfolding.

"Just what's happening?"

"I've never heard of these tumors having such a secret weapon..."

"Could something be wrong?"

A huge ocean swamped the sea and the sky. Waves filled with spatial energy rushed toward the gathered kings of the realm, sounding like peals of thunder, like stampeding hooves.

The kings of the realm, despite all their strength, felt as though their lives were in danger. This was no mere attack—it was a weapon of mass destruction!

If they had known that the draconians had such an ace up their sleeve, they would never have formed a coalition to try to combat the draconians. All they could do now was to use their defensive techniques and layer them atop each other in hopes that they would be able to block the attack with their combined strength.

The king of Chiyan manifested a sea of scarlet flames.

The scarlet flames condensed over the battlefield like a thousand sharp swords breaking through the cloud cover, like galloping steeds, like thundering dragons. The king of the Chiyan world infused his genetic energy into the sea of scarlet flame, which clashed against the pale blue waves in mid-air. Half the sky was red, and the other half blue.

Subsequently, the pale blue waves exploded in the air—the heart of the attack. The explosion shattered space and sent waves of force rippling all around it. Like a rampaging beast, it devoured everything nearby. The pale blue waves quenched the scarlet flames within moments as the coalition forces cried out in despair.

The kings of the large worlds had enough strength to withstand the bulk of the attack, but the kings of medium-sized worlds died almost instantly as they were hit by the attack.

The warlords were simultaneously overjoyed and shocked by what Zhang Lie had accomplished.

Even though they were fighting with their lives on the line, they were still slowly but surely losing against the combined might of the kings of the realm—but Zhang Lie's single attack had changed the trajectory of the battle.

The warlords finally understood just how large a gulf lay between them and Zhang Lie.

Zhang Lie himself marveled at his newfound strength. He had been strong even before absorbing monarch gene fragments, but he certainly wouldn't have been able to suppress all the gathered kings of the realm with just one attack.

The combined might of the kings was quite impressive. Zhang Lie's attack might very well have been blocked completely by the kings before his acquisition of monarch gene fragments—at the very least, it wouldn't have dealt such a heavy blow to these kings, and it wouldn't have destroyed their army beyond repair.

This had to be the power of monarch gene fragments.

The coalition really was unlucky to have roused Zhang Lie's ire right after he acquired a massive boon.

The only one among the kings of the realm who could barely remain standing was the king of Chiyan.

Just as his sister had described, this king of the realm had fought against Yang Ze and improved dramatically in strength after recovering from his wounds. He had surpassed the limits of a regular king of a large world, and was slowly approaching the might of a superior king.

However, despite his strength, he was held back by the size of his world—he lacked sufficient energy from the will of the world to truly advance and become a superior king. Even so, it was impressive that he had managed to reach such heights—and a pity that he had provoked Zhang Lie.

Zhang Lie clasped both hands behind his back as he propelled himself through the air toward the king of Chiyan. "Are you the king of Chiyan, who injured my teammate Yang Ze? I've been interested in meeting you to learn who would be so bold as to hurt me and mine."

The king of Chiyan glanced at the unwelcome intruder, his eyes narrowed. The moment Zhang Lie appeared, he had sensed Zhang Lie's overwhelming strength and aura. His very soul was warning him against the man standing right in front of him. The king of Chiyan desperately wished to avoid the upcoming fight.

How many years had it been since the king of Chiyan felt so threatened? Never before had he felt such calamitous strength, as though he could very well drop dead and die out of nowhere.

The king of Chiyan sucked in a deep breath. "Are you the champion of mankind, Zhang Lie?"

The fallen kings of the realm glanced at each other in dismay, unable to believe that the rumored king of mankind was right there in front of them.

They had exchanged countless blows with the warlords of the third realm, and they had learned from them about an existence of unimaginable strength, one who had become deified.

The warlords spoke of a man whose strength eclipsed them all by hundreds and thousands of times, who could destroy a large world in the blink of an eye...

The kings of the realm refused to believe such nonsense. They expected that the warlords were simply making up this figure to frighten them and deter them from trying to invade further.

Now, however, the kings of the realm were staring at living proof of this legend.

Even working together, the kings of the realm succumbed to just one blow from Zhang Lie, and the weaker kings were instantly annihilated. Truly, Zhang Lie was on the level of a god.

They thought that the members of Team Zenith were the opponents' greatest assets, each with the strength of a peak king of a large world, but this was a monster beyond regular monsters. They shouldn't have formed a coalition; they should have lain hidden in their own worlds. How were they supposed to deal with such a monstrosity?

Chapter 924: A Problem Resolved

The gravely wounded kings of the realm all looked toward the king of Chiyan, who was the strongest remaining king. The king of Chiyan himself wanted to flee, but he knew very well that if he tried to do so, he would be killed in a matter of moments.

"[Ninecarp Transformation]!" Zhang Lie activated his signature technique. Black genetic energy gushed out from beneath his feet.

A black serpent materialized from behind Zhang Lie's back, its genetic energy so condensed and concentrated it looked almost alive. It hissed at the gathered kings, causing their faces to turn ashen.

The king of Chiyan forced a smile. "You're indeed quite strong. I wonder how you compare to the fellow I defeated?"

"I've grown even stronger since, and I'm certain I won't lose out even to you!"

The king of Chiyan forced himself to think of Zhang Lie as an opponent he could defeat. Only then could he keep a tight rein on his emotions and prevent himself from panicking. If he were to ponder just how strong Zhang Lie really was, his mental state would immediately collapse.

He sent out another field of fiery waves, which covered the sky and seemed to be charged with strength.

Unlike before, however, hordes of sharks swam amidst the sea of fire.

Zhang Lie frowned. This technique that the king of Chiyan had demonstrated seemed somehow familiar—like Yang Ze's technique, or more accurately, an enhanced version of Yang Ze's technique that was subsequently adapted to the king of Chiyan's own framework.

It looked as though the king of Chiyan's fight with Yang Ze had been particularly influential in his development as a fighter.

"[Fists of the Silent Sea: Fade]!" Zhang Lie punched forward. The black serpent behind him shot forth toward the hordes of fiery sharks.

As it breached the waves, countless red sharks pounced toward its body, reviving from the flames after their death the same way that Yang Ze's sharks did.

The king of Chiyan even added his own flair to the attack.

After the flaming sharks tore off part of the serpent's body and consumed the mass of black genetic energy, they would explode, causing a second wave of damage to the serpent. Subsequently, the sharks would reform from the sea of flames.

The repeated explosions caused the serpent to writhe in pain, but the corrosive genetic energy that it possessed wasn't easy for the king of Chiyan to deal with, either. That corrosive energy was slowly but surely sapping away at the sea of flames; neither the black serpent nor the red sharks were truly winning the confrontation.

To augment his strength even further, Zhang Lie activated his dragonwolf soulshard. A hurricane of blood spawned around him.

The next moment, Zhang Lie charged through the sea of flames in a blood-red beam, destroying the sea whole and appearing in front of the king of Chiyan. With a single punch, he blew the king of Chiyan away—only to see that king morph into a bundle of flames.

Zhang Lie was very surprised, but it was evident that the king he had struck was no more than a clone made of flames.

The king of Chiyan had, by then, moved far away. He held his arms high above his head as scarlet flames wrapped around his body and turned him into a scarlet sun, one which dyed the entire sky a lurid red.

The scarlet sun morphed into a huge dragonwhale, which swallowed up Zhang Lie.

Subsequently, the scarlet sun exploded, sending flames roaring into the sky. The entire battlefield was consumed by the flames; surely no one could survive the attack.

Before the king of Chiyan could be gratified by his success, however, a voice came from behind.

"Aren't you going to celebrate after killing one of my clones?"

The voice sounded nightmarish to the king of Chiyan. He turned immediately, but just as he reacted, a claw pierced through his chest.

The king of Chiyan's eyes bulged. He had seen his attack swallow Zhang Lie whole! How had Zhang Lie made a reappearance?

Zhang Lie smiled coldly. "Do you really think I would be incapable of identifying the mirage hidden behind your sea of flames?"

As fresh blood dyed the king of Chiyan's chest red, Zhang Lie continued, "Ah, I forgot to tell you, didn't I? I taught Yang Ze most of his techniques."

Zhang Lie had fought against Yang Ze countless times, and he was intimately familiar with the mirages that Yang Ze would create with his water-attuned genetic energy. It was laughable that the king of Chiyan would dare to try similar techniques on him, but he was happy to play along with the king of Chiyan for a bit.

Scarlet flames erupted from the king of Chiyan's body, but Zhang Lie stood amidst the flames as though they weren't present, as though he was immune to their heat.

The king of Chiyan shouted, "What are all of you doing? We can't back down now. The tumors and viruses are already invading our worlds—they won't let us go even if we surrender or flee!"

The kings of the realm, realizing the truth of the king of Chiyan's words, pounced toward Zhang Lie.

Zhang Lie shook his head. "It's all useless! Gold Comet, I'll leave the rest to you."

A golden beam shot through the air, leaving lines of red across the necks of many a king of the realm.

The next moment, their heads fell off their bodies—even to their death, they were unaware of what had happened to them. Their bodies continued to rush forward for brief moments before their momentum drained away.

Gold Comet waved its scythes, boredom showing through its gaze. It was rather dissatisfied with its first battle after its ascension—its opponents were too weak.

The warlords stared at Gold Comet in shock. None of them had noticed its arrival because Zhang Lie was so eye-catching. Everyone's attention had focused on Zhang Lie, not realizing that Gold Comet was almost as strong as Zhang Lie himself.

There were at least a dozen kings of large worlds before them, and a few dozen kings of medium-sized worlds. Gold Comet had slaughtered them all in less than a second, so fast the warlords hadn't been able to catch its movements.

Gold Comet found these kings of the realm far too weak to be worth fighting against, but to the warlords, the coalition force had been a burdensome enemy. All of them working together had barely been able to hold the warlords back, but Gold Comet had dispatched them all in less than a second. It boasted tremendous attack power and overwhelming speed.

Xing Ying was the first to react. "Could that be what the champion of mankind once told us about...? A post-disaster-grade lifeform...?"

Upon hearing Xing Ying's shocked murmurs, the warlords present at the scene were even more surprised. They stared at Gold Comet with awe.

The fact that a post-disaster-grade lifeform had made an appearance meant that there were surely corresponding gene fragments to be obtained. They hadn't yet finished acquiring their disaster gene fragments, and now there was already another evolution beyond that...

The warlords didn't know what to think anymore with regards to Zhang Lie. The disparity between them and Zhang Lie was simply too large. No one present was a match for Gold Comet; they had to finish collecting disaster gene fragments before worrying about anything beyond that.

Upon witnessing the slaughter of the kings of his coalition, the king of Chiyan's eyes turned flaming red. He howled in anger, "Just what have we done? Why do you insist on killing us all?!"

Zhang Lie didn't dress his words. "Weakness is tantamount to original sin. Either submit or die—I'll allow you to choose that much, at least."

"I'll kill you!" The king of Chiyan had gone mad from anger. Power burst from his body—he tried to self-destruct and bring Zhang Lie down with him.

"No, I don't think so." Before the king of Chiyan could completely self-destruct, Zhang Lie beheaded him.

Chapter 925: Drug Development

Everything happened so quickly that the entire battlefield fell silent.

The warlords again marveled at Zhang Lie's strength. He was so strong that his techniques were impenetrable to the eye—they could see that he had done something, and they could see the outcome of what he had done, but the process in between seemed to be obscured completely.

Zhang Lie returned to Gold Comet's side. As he took in Gold Comet's deflated expression, he patted it on the back. "Don't worry. There are plenty of strong foes out there, and you'll have more than enough opportunity to shine."

Gold Comet nodded.

Zhang Lie turned to Xing Ying. "Inform the members of Team Zenith that we're done here—tell them to return."

The warlords could clean up the battlefield without his help. Zhang Lie shattered space and returned to the draconian world.

The moment he returned, the draconian sage teleported to his side. "Well? Is everything resolved?"

Zhang Lie rolled his eyes. "Are you underestimating my strength?"

The draconian sage laughed heartily. "I suppose you're right. If you step in yourself, there's nothing you can't handle."

Zhang Lie asked, "Where is the Yeluo research facility?"

The draconian sage teleported Zhang Lie to the entrance of the facility, which was located in the draconian capital. Within the facility, countless spiritual herbs were being cultivated and grown. Quite a number of Yeluo were moving through the facility and watering the plants around them.

Zhang Lie walked briskly through the facility, straight toward the Yeluo chieftain. Subsequently, he handed him a xuluo bone. "Chieftain, can you see if this material can be a substitute for an asura's thorn in this potion that I want to make?"

Zhang Lie handed over the recipe for the peak limit-breaking potion as well as the xuluo bones he had collected. During the war against the xuluo, Zhang Lie had amassed quite a lot of xuluo bones via Li Zongming. Unfortunately, he hadn't managed to collect the bones of the xuluo king, although he did succeed with the four great xuluo lords.

The Yeluo chieftain pondered the question for long moments. "I can't give you a definite answer, your majesty. If you don't mind, would you be willing to leave these materials here? I will inform you the moment I have any success with them."

With the third realm's affairs finished, Team Zenith returned to Mars.

Although almost a month had passed in the third realm, barely two had done so on Mars. After Zhang Lie left Hong Xi with a few instructions, he brought the members of Team Zenith back to Earth.

The disciples of the Zenith Dojo that remained on Mars were able to teleport straight back to Earth via the teleportation apparatus.

Once Zhang Lie and the others returned to Earth, Zhang Lie immediately reported to Hong Tianqi, "Matters on Mars are resolved."

Hong Tianqi sighed in relief. "As expected of you—your efficacy truly shocks me."

"Will you let me know where you've kept your map fragments in the third realm, then?"

"No problem." Hong Tianqi sent Zhang Lie a series of coordinates via transceiver.

After concerted effort, the galaxy had managed to piece together a simple map of the third realm. Zhang Lie looked at the map and the coordinates that Hong Tianqi had given him.

"This is..." Zhang Lie was shocked to see that the coordinates pointed to a familiar location. "Isn't this one of the worlds I've been to?"

Zhang Lie discovered that Hong Tianqi had left the map fragments hidden in a world to which he had already traveled, in which a battle for kingship had been taking place. "Is this fate?"

He returned again to the third realm, with the members of Team Zenith in tow. Zhang Lie had the other members of Team Zenith continue their conquest of the nearby worlds as he prepared to set off on his journey.

Just as he was preparing the five-colored dragon for travel through space, however, the draconian sage called him back. "I don't know where you're headed, but if you have time, go talk to the Yeluo chieftain. Apparently, he's made some progress with the research you tasked him with already!"

"So quickly?" Zhang Lie immediately dropped what he was doing.

"According to our research, these bones can replace the asura's thorn to some extent. This is the fruit of our labor." The Yeluo chieftain led him to a research laboratory. In a test tube rack was a vial of blood-red potion lined with skeins of gold, which wriggled like worms.

Zhang Lie asked, "How's the efficacy?"

The Yeluo chieftain shrugged. "We've done a few tests on living subjects, but they all died."

"What?!"

The Yeluo chieftain sighed. "According to our research, you need to reach a specific threshold in strength or constitution to be able to absorb the potion without any side effects."

"Just like the other limit-breaking potions, then... those who consume it will likely have to max out their peak gene fragments and superior limit fragments first."

There were a dozen or so people who satisfied these conditions within the Zenith Dojo, but most of them were on Mars. The only ones who satisfied such conditions in the third realm were the members of Team Zenith, Zhang Hanxiang, Yun Bing, Chu Feng, and the others.

Zhang Lie asked, "And will there be any side effects for those hunters who do satisfy these requirements?"

"We can't say," the Yeluo chieftain replied, with some hesitation.

A researcher standing beside him reported, "This is the first time we're making such a potion. Without your recipe, your majesty, we wouldn't have had any idea what to do."

Zhang Lie was a little vexed himself. Although the world at large believed that the limit-breaking potions were his creation, the truth was that he had simply imported knowledge from his former life into this one.

His own proficiency with potionmaking was about on the same level as the Yeluo chieftain—and if the Yeluo chieftain was unable to discern how safe this potion was to consume, it was unlikely he would be able to do so himself. Perhaps there was currently no one in the galaxy who knew more than he did about these limit-breaking potions, but he was less of a potioneer than, say, the Yeluo chieftain.

"If we stall here, we won't be able to make any further progress. Let me call Zhou Ying over."

Zhou Ying asked, "What's the matter, Captain?"

"I'd like for you to be a lab rat—or rather, to test out the newest potion that the Yeluo chieftain has come up with."

Zhou Ying's [Avatar of the Fae] boasted overwhelming vitality, and she had managed to spur its growth by combining with the shaman of the wood spirits. Furthermore, her constitution was well equipped to handle all sorts of spiritual herbs and medicines.

"What potion?" Zhou Ying asked.

"Limit-breaking Potion #4, an experimental version of it!"

Zhou Ying's eyes grew wide. "Captain, you've already come up with peak limit fragments?"

Two days ago, Zhou Ying had heard that Zhang Lie had discovered a post-disaster-grade lifeform by evolving Red Comet. Now, she learned that he was on the verge of producing Potion #4. Either event would rock the Milky Way, both in quick succession—she didn't know what to say.

Zhang Lie shook his head. "Potion #4 isn't ready yet. This is only an experimental version, and it'll have to be tested to see if it's effective."

He brought Zhou Ying to the Yeluo chieftain's research laboratory, whereupon the Yeluo chieftain brought over the experimental vial of Potion #4. He explained, "This recipe is still in its infancy, and we can't be certain of its effects or risks."

Zhang Lie added, "There are two conditions required for consuming Potion #4: to have superior limit fragments, and to have maxed peak gene fragments. Among the hunters of the third realm, only the members of Team Zenith and vanishingly few other hunters besides satisfy both these conditions. Of this small pool of candidates, you're the best suited to potion-testing."

Zhou Ying nodded firmly. "I accept the risk. You've worked hard coming up with these potions to aid our growth so that we might be able to catch up to you, and we can hardly grow strong without risk. As a genetic hunter, I'm more than happy to take this opportunity."

Chapter 926: Karmic Strength

Zhou Ying was just about to down the vial in one gulp when Zhang Lie held her back. "Hold on."

Zhou Ying asked, "What's the matter? Please don't worry, Captain, I can handle any side effects that may occur."

Zhang Lie shook his head. "No, it's not that. Take a sip at a time, so that we can identify any changes to your body, collect data, and stop any problems before they compound."

Potion #4 would affect a hunter's genetic code at its most fundamental level, and if something were to go wrong here, even Zhou Ying's boundless vitality wouldn't be able to resolve the problem.

Zhou Ying took a sip. Fire burned her throat and body. It was a scorching baptism.

She felt as though she was experiencing the blood ants' genetic technique, [Bloodbath]. As the potent effects of the potion surged through her body, a scorching heat enveloped her from head to toe, as though she had immersed her entire body in a vat of chili peppers.

Sweat poured down her back, as though she had been running through the rain.

As a disaster-grade lifeform whose body had crystallized, Zhou Ying began to flare with light, which resolved into the color of jade.

Her boundless vitality flooded out of her, sending the laboratory apparatus all around her crashing to the ground. Golden skeins of blood revolved around her body, and Zhou Ying instinctively activated [Avatar of the Fae].

An outburst of green light shielded Zhou Ying. Her hair grew long enough to reach her legs, turning into a green the color of sparkling jade. Green motes of vitality surrounded her like fireflies.

The green slowly leached out of her body as it turned the color of jade. Her body grew stronger and stronger. Zhou Ying's eyes brightened, her pupils flecked with gold.

The Yeluo chieftain was very satisfied. "It looks like you've fully digested the potion already."

Zhang Lie asked, "How do you feel? Does it hurt anywhere?"

Zhou Ying shook her head. "My body feels better than ever. The will of the world informed me that I've received a single peak limit fragment."

Zhang Lie and the Yeluo chieftain glanced at each other, both overjoyed.

"Excellent news!" the Yeluo chieftain grew even more excited. "I expect this is a great success."

"No, it's too early for that," Zhang Lie cautioned.

Chastised, the Yeluo chieftain nodded. "You're right, your majesty, it's not time to grow relaxed just yet. We'll have to collect some more data with respect to Miss Zhou Ying's body. We still need to confirm that the potion has been absorbed entirely, and that there are no side effects we need to know about."

Zhang Lie nodded. "If Zhou Ying successfully finishes the entire potion and obtains fifty peak limit fragments, we can be assured of our success then."

Zhou Ying looked toward the vial of Potion #4 she held in her hand with greed, but she knew that it was only sensible to wait.

After the Yeluo chieftain inspected her fully, he declared that she was in exceptional health. Her vitality had grown stronger and richer upon imbibing the potion.

The Yeluo chieftain suggested, "At this point, I think you can try consuming the entire vial at once."

Zhang Lie shook his head. "Better to find an isolated location. I'm afraid the energy released upon consuming the potion will create a mess."

Considering what just drinking a sip of the potion had done to the laboratory, the Yeluo chieftain certainly agreed.

The group headed to the desert of black glass. It used to be a desert of black sand, but after Zhang Lie's evolution here upon maxing out his disaster gene fragments, all that sand had turned to glass.

Zhou Ying swallowed the remainder of the potion in one large gulp. As the herbal energy swept through her body, she felt as though her body had become a world in its own right. What she gave off was no longer vitality—but rather a world's energy.

Zhou Ying's face took on the color of a boiled prawn.

Her blood boiled, and energy rushed out of her body and formed a hurricane around her. The black glass beneath her cracked, and the entire draconian world began to shudder.

The draconian sage teleported to the source of the disturbance. "What's going on? What have all of you done?!"

The energy that filled Zhou Ying's body had reached a critical threshold, as though a supernova were exploding. Her body began to crack, and frighteningly dense energy seeped out of those cracks.

The Yeluo chieftain's face grew alarmed. "Something's wrong!"

He hadn't expected that the potion would be so strong.

Zhou Ying's body began to repair herself with her boundless vitality, but even as her wounds closed, they opened up again. Zhou Ying made a pained expression. Crystalline powder spread through the air as Zhou Ying's cells underwent apoptosis. Huge amounts of energy gathered by her heart, and she couldn't help but cough out a mouthful of fresh blood.

The blood that left her body evaporated instantly, revealing just how hot her body had become.

Zhou Ying circulated her technique at full force, sending her vitality throughout her body. Golden and black threads accumulated around her, forming a cocoon that trapped her within, as though forcing all the rampaging energy back into her body.

The Yeluo chieftain asked in surprise, "What's this?"

Zhang Lie, on the other hand, seemed to be familiar with these golden and black threads—threads of karma.

At that very moment, Zhou Ying was undergoing a metamorphosis. Burgeoning genetic energy in her body was destroying it from the inside out even as her vitality healed all that damage. The two forces warred within her, refining her lifeforce and the genetic energy contained within the limit-breaking potion.

The golden and black threads stabilized the two conflicting sources of energy. The power of heaven's might, infused into the potion via the xuluo's bones, activated and skipped past all potential failure outcomes.

There had been the possibility that Zhou Ying's body would decay, unable to handle the stress of the clashes between the two forms of energy running rampant through her body; that Zhou Ying would run out of steam and be unable to fuel her transformation; that Zhou Ying would grow mentally unstable...

All those possibilities were elided over with the help of the power of heaven's might. Instead, success lay in sight.

The cocoon split apart. The black and golden threads vanished in the air, and Zhou Ying was once again surrounded by jade-green vitality. Her advancement had made her dozens of times stronger than before, and gold and black threads shone in her eyes.

Zhang Lie and the Yeluo chieftain sucked in deep breaths of relief.

Zhou Ying had succeeded.

The Yeluo chieftain got to his knees. "Your majesty, my calculations were clearly awry. I never expected the potion would produce so much energy, and Zhou Ying almost died as a result. Please punish me."

Zhou Ying had managed to absorb a sip of the potion successfully, but there had almost been a problem when she downed the entire vial.

If not for the fact that Zhou Ying's body was brimming with vitality as a result of her unique framework, she might have perished. Zhang Lie had made the right decision in allowing Zhou Ying to be the test subject—any other member of Team Zenith really might have died...

Chapter 927: The Ninth Prince's Dire Straits

Zhang Lie shook his head. He told the Yeluo chieftain, "This isn't your fault."

"Thank you for your mercy, your majesty!"

Zhang Lie shook his head. "If you had improperly accounted for the potency of the vial or used inappropriate ingredients, I wouldn't have let you go so easily—but this potion contains elements beyond the purview of potionmaking, which can't be understood using the same framework."

The Yeluo chieftain was very surprised by what Zhang Lie said. He had brewed the potion himself; what extraordinary elements could Zhang Lie be talking about?

While Zhou Ying was absorbing the superior limit-breaking potion, Zhang Lie could clearly sense the power of heaven's might, the remnants of the energy that had been infused into the xuluo's very bones, which had added some variability to the effect of the potion.

Success and failure—both were governed by heaven's might. Without heaven's might, Zhou Ying wouldn't have been able to obtain limit fragments successfully.

But that wasn't quite right, either. It was more accurate to claim that Zhou Ying had successfully used her vitality as a conduit to absorb the power of heaven's might and use it to succeed in the absorption of limit fragments.

Heaven's might was a force much like natural law, and it was far more advanced and abstract an idea than spiritual herbs and ingredients. It was only natural that the Yeluo chieftain had been unable to take such a variable into account.

The draconian sage sighed, "Hey, now, don't ignore me! When are you going to answer my question?"

Zhang Lie and the Yeluo chieftain both turned toward the draconian sage. Zhang Lie apologized, "Sorry, Sage—we were too engrossed in our discussion."

The Yeluo chieftain added, "This is a new potion that his majesty had us research."

The draconian sage sighed again. "I don't know how you've been able to make so many discoveries, one after the other."

When Zhou Ying came to her senses, she smiled as she inspected her body. She had gained fifty peak limit fragments, just like that.

"How do you feel?" Zhang Lie asked.

"Remarkably good, just like when I consumed Potion #3—no, I feel even better than that! My combat strength has increased by leaps and bounds, maybe even by an order of magnitude. It's just that—"

Zhang Lie frowned. "Are there any issues?"

Zhou Ying continued hesitantly, "Why am I seeing these strange golden and black threads?"

"If I'm not mistaken, that should be the power of heaven's might. The golden threads represent positive karma, and the black threads negative karma. If you hone your senses, you may be able to control these karmic threads."

Zhou Ying frowned. "Karma? It sounds fantastical..."

"Such is the nature of natural law. At its extremes, everything looks that way—isn't quantum mechanics just like that?"

Zhou Ying nodded. She wasn't very familiar with quantum mechanics, but she had heard of it and learned a little of it, and it was as abstruse as Zhang Lie claimed.

The Yeluo chieftain continued, "Although it might be possible to absorb the entire potion by drinking it in portions, as a safety precaution, I intend on adjusting the recipe to ameliorate its devastating potency.

Although Zhang Lie was able to extract and expel the power of heaven's might from the xuluo bones, he didn't intend to do so.

The fact that hunters would be able to encounter and sense the power of heaven's might was undoubtedly a boon. Just because Zhang Lie himself wasn't interested in heaven's might didn't mean that the members of Team Zenith, or even the rest of humanity at large, would be the same.

Although Zhang Lie had learned from the xuluo king himself that heaven's might was a double-edged sword, it was a power of unbelievable potency. It was only one manifestation of karmic power, just like Zhang Lie's time-based attack was different from the one that Fang Yi had intuited.

In the xuluo king's hands, the karmic power had manifested as heaven's might; in his son's hands, it had manifested as the ability to penetrate one and all.

Zhang Lie didn't think much of heaven's might, but given the talents that the members of Team Zenith possessed, he was certain that they would be able to come up with their own unique manifestations of the power.

The double-edged nature of heaven's might could have been a deterrent for some, but Zhang Lie didn't feel that this was a big problem. He didn't intend on spreading the power widely, and only a rare few people would be able to access Potion #4.

Even then, only a fraction of those who consumed Potion #4 would be able to obtain a karmic power. Unlike the xuluo, not every human would have access to such power, and no calamity would doom the race.

With only a few members of humanity having this power, Zhang Lie would be able to nullify or otherwise deal with its negative side effects.

Regardless, the conclusion was that Potion #4 had an even better effect than expected, and Zhang Lie was very pleased with the Yeluo chieftain's efforts.

He retrieved a few more bones from his storage-type soulshard.

Upon sensing the power imbued in the bones, the Yeluo chieftain's face grew alarmed. "This strength—these bones are stronger than the previous batch you gave me!"

"These bones came from the four great xuluo lords. Chieftain, please help me concoct a few more vials of Potion #4 using these bones."

The Yeluo chieftain was visibly hesitant. "Your majesty, I'm afraid that the potions made with these bones will be even more potent than the sample vial we just tested..."

Zhang Lie shook his head. "It's not a problem. Brew the potions—I'm confident you'll be able to lower the potency, and I believe in the members of Team Zenith."

The Yeluo chieftain sighed. "If you insist, your majesty. I'll do my best, but I can't guarantee that it will work out."

After leaving the Yeluo chieftain with this task, Zhang Lie set off on his multicolored dragon.

Back in the world of the scalemen, the ninth prince, who had become king, was rather frustrated.

Zhang Lie had left over two years ago. After becoming king, the ninth prince had worked hard to maintain law and order, and the world seemed to be improving day by day. He had re-established connections with neighboring worlds, and even invaded and conquered some to expand his reach.

The ninth prince had never forgotten the lessons that Zhang Lie had taught him, and the world of the scalemen benefited as a result.

The new king didn't know whether he could be a ruler that his descendants would sing the praise of, but he was committed to being a wise and virtuous ruler, one who lived up to his master's reputation.

Even so, this king was now beset by a huge dilemma, one that could spell the death of the world: it was being invaded by hostile forces.

Wars between worlds was a common phenomenon, but the problem lay with the scaleman world's enemy—a mysterious foe whose units were wrapped up all over in black cloth, without any trace of life. No one understood how they were animated, and they had no weaknesses to speak of. They came forth in immense numbers, in what seemed like a neverending flood.

Those of the draconian world would recognize them instantly—the black spirits.

The appearance of the black spirits broke the peaceful atmosphere of the scaleman world.

The black spirits had suddenly swept through all the worlds around them before ending up at the scaleman world. Unable to handle the blitzkrieg assault, the new king of the realm panicked as the black spirits took over half the world.

The scaleman world had just managed to recover from the debacle with the Jinghun clan—and now, it seemed that they would be subject to yet another calamity. The new king had no choice but to enter the battlefield himself, but even so, the tide of black spirits seemed interminable...

Chapter 928: Reappearance of the Black Spirits

The black spirits had fielded a fighter as strong as the king of a large world. Countless strips of black cloth filled the air like giant serpents, twisting together into a construct twenty meters tall.

Although the new king was a king of a large world, he was unfamiliar and unpracticed with combat. The black bandages that danced in the air blocked all his attacks even as they laid waste to his soldiers.

The new king grew wounded almost immediately. Just as he thought he would die, a fish the size of a whale materialized in the sky.

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 toward the black spirit.

Ripples of energy spread out from Zhang Lie, warping the space around him. The towering waves looked like enraged black dragons, and they swamped the battlefield.

Upon seeing the flood of genetic energy, the new king's eyes widened with disbelief. He was familiar with this genetic energy, intimately so—he had seen it destroy the walls of his empire.

The memory flashed before him, as though he were experiencing it anew.

Just as he and the crown prince thought themselves trapped in a dead end, despair drowning them from all directions, that figure had made an appearance.

Ripples of air formed around Zhang Lie's arm, growing more and more intense as Zhang Lie combined spatial force with his water-attuned genetic energy, sucking in the nearby space like it was nothing more than papier mache.

Howling gales formed in the air, causing a flood that arced through the air and swamped the entire capital like a giant tsunami.

When the guards on the city walls saw what was happening, their faces turned alarmed. "An enemy attack!"

The flood of water crashed against the tall, sturdy walls of the capital and broke a gigantic gap through it.

The crown and ninth princes stood still at that moment.

The entire capital shook. The water-attuned genetic energy exploded through the air, forming a hurricane of water and sending pulses of energy that covered the entire capital. It seemed almost as if a disaster-grade lifeform had gone on a rampage within the capital, summoning wind and rain so strong that some of the guards were blown straight off the walls.

The storm swallowed up all the infrastructure and buildings close to the city walls, turning them into a pile of ruin and rubble.

As the hurricane revolved, the buildings nearest the palace were uprooted and sent flying. Pillars of shattered stone and balconies of wood whipped through the air, and even the palace infrastructure became unstable.

The crown and ninth princes watched the aftermath of the attack in shock. It seemed as though the figure towered over all walls, despite the walls being far larger than he was.

The pale-blue energy that had reappeared in the new king's sight, different though it had become in the meantime, was immediately recognizable. That one punch had dispelled the danger that the scaleman world faced, the danger that the ninth prince himself was in.

If Zhang Lie hadn't broken down the city walls, the Jinghun would have claimed the scaleman world for themselves. What Zhang Lie's fist had broken wasn't just the walls to the city, but also the dark clouds that threatened to overwhelm the scaleman world—the power of fate. Everything that had followed, including the ninth prince's ascension to the throne, had come as a result of that punch.

Now, when the scaleman world was once again in crisis, Zhang Lie used the same attack against its enemies.

The flood of genetic energy smashed into the giant formed from black cloth. Shockwaves surged forth from Zhang Lie, swallowing up the giant and ripping it to pieces. The storm then sucked up all the black spirits nearby, sweeping through them and decimating their number.

"Ninth prince, how did you end up in such a sorry state?" A familiar voice rang out by the ninth prince's ear. He raised his head and looked toward the sky, where a familiar and imposing figure had once again appeared in sight. The ninth prince's eyes welled with tears.

It had only been two years since they had last seen each other, but it felt like an eternity.

To the new king, that familiar figure was more worthy of respect than even his father. He was a master to the king, but one to whom the new king felt more kinship than even his father.

A torrent of emotions welled out of him and crystallized into a single word. "Master!"

The new king, who hadn't cried despite the doubts and suspicions of his officials and people against his rule, despite the appearance of the black spirits, despite the overwhelming odds and despair he faced—he cried now, bawling like a child, because his master had returned. No longer did he need to suffer needlessly, to pretend that he was invincible, because now he had a backer.

That which could pierce a man's heart wasn't a blade or bullet, but a kind word and a gentle gaze. Zhang Lie dropped down by the new king's side and patted him on the shoulder.

"Ah, you. You've become the king of the realm—it's past time to stop crying."

The king smiled like a child. "In front of you, Master, I'll always be a kid."

It felt as though he had returned to the day two years past, when the man in front of him had saved him from haplessness.

Zhang Lie commented, "You don't seem to be doing too well over here..."

The new king sighed. "These invaders are far too difficult to deal with. After they entered our world, they've been slowly eroding our control over the land. I learned from a few refugees that these invaders are known as the black spirits. Allegedly, they've invaded quite a few nearby worlds."

Zhang Lie frowned. Things weren't progressing as he remembered.

To his knowledge, the sudden invasion of the black spirits was something that should have occurred years down the line. Was the fact that their invasion had moved forward a result of the butterfly effect he had caused?

Zhang Lie had no other explanation for the phenomenon.

The new king was paying close attention to Zhang Lie's expression.

"Master, are you aware of the origin of these invaders?"

Zhang Lie nodded. "More or less. As you know, they're known as black spirits. In some sense, these spirits aren't living creatures—they might as well be mindless spirits of death, like zombies."

Chapter 929: Slaughtering the Death Spirits

The king gasped. "Do you mean to say that these black spirits are already dead?"

"More precisely, they're monsters that were created from souls."

"Are they ghosts or spirits?"

"Similar to both, but not truly either. They're weapons of war created by the death spirits, manufactured from a combination of corpses and the living."

The king clarified, "The death spirits are the mastermind behind all this, then?"

"You wouldn't understand even if I explained it, and knowing too much would only put you in danger. Finish cleaning up the rest of the black spirits first."

If Zhang Lie were to tell the new king that the black spirits were being controlled by the death spirits, whom even the other superior worlds feared, he doubted any good would come out of it—it was more likely that the king would shrink back in fear.

After Zhang Lie dealt with the strongest black spirit, the king and his soldiers easily handled the rest.

The king led Zhang Lie to the palace and asked expectantly, "Why have you come, Master? Could you have rushed over because you knew that our world was in danger?"

Upon seeing the king's shining eyes, Zhang Lie couldn't help but sweat. In the end, he couldn't bring himself to claim that it was all a coincidence.

"I would be lying if I said otherwise. As your master, I was worried about what would happen after I left. Although I have quite a number of disciples, you're one of the ones I care about most. I left an imprint of my aura behind that would let me know if this world was ever in danger."

The king was instantly touched.

Zhang Lie coughed and tried to hide the blush from his face. "Of course, I'm also a busy man with lots of tasks to accomplish, and I came back to this world for other reasons as well. After seeing that the black spirits were bullying my student, there was no way I could let them go."

The king asked, "Master, what's your plan now?"

Zhang Lie smirked. "I'll slaughter them all and destroy their stronghold."

The king bowed and cupped his hands. "Thank you for your assistance, Master!"

"While I deal with the black spirits, there's a task I need you to help accomplish."

"Anything, Master!"

"It's just a minor errand. Help me find this item—it's located somewhere in this world."

Zhang Lie handed the king the coordinates he had received from Hong Tianqi. Subsequently, he strode out of the palace, beckoned to the multicolored dragon, leapt up onto its back, and flew off in the direction of the black spirits.

Not only had Zhang Lie maxed out his disaster gene fragments, he had even obtained a few monarch gene fragments. Even before obtaining these monarch gene fragments, he had been able to slaughter a king of a superior world—and now, his combat strength had grown even further.

The black spirits were naturally unable to block Zhang Lie's advance, but Zhang Lie himself didn't make a move. He had Gold Comet deal with all the black spirits while he watched on the throne atop the dragon.

What made Zhang Lie uncomfortable was that the worlds that the black spirits had conquered were sucked free of lifeforms and even the world's energy. The worlds closer to the stronghold were the worst impacted by the black spirits.

The black spirits began to marshal their forces, their black cloth bandages spinning together to form a huge ball of cloth which seemed to be bulging monstrously from the inside.

Gold Comet morphed into a beam of light and bisected the ball in half. However, whatever sustained the ball didn't dissipate—the black bandages unraveled into a long river.

Gold Comet's scythes cut apart the river in a flurry, turning cloth into scraps.

Zhang Lie rode the multicolored dragon into the world in which the black spirits had constructed a stronghold. Its surface was a barren black desert, and the will of the world had been completely consumed. "This world is dead," Zhang Lie proclaimed.

Purple flames spread across the desert, as though a sea of purple flame were overlaid above it.

"For there to be so many void spirits—just how many worlds did the black spirits take over, and how many lifeforms did they kill?"

From above, Zhang Lie estimated he could sense about a hundred million spirits.

He shook his head. "The black spirits have truly gone crazy."

He couldn't understand just what the death spirits were thinking. Did they really think the black spirits' rapid, uncontrolled expansion would go unnoticed?

The death spirit king had left countless black spirits all over the three thousand worlds—and no one knew how many had been taken over by the black spirits.

Now that the black spirits were aggressively taking over other worlds, however, they would immediately draw the attention and scrutiny of the other superior worlds. Wouldn't that destroy all the planning that the death spirit king had done to date?

"Perhaps the death spirit king doesn't care that his plans will be exposed?"

But just what had happened to cause the death spirit king to act so recklessly? In the end, Zhang Lie could think of only one thing: the destruction of the xuluo world.

Zhang Lie sighed. "In the end, it's my fault again...?"

Logically, there should have been no reason for the death spirit king to expose his plans even with the destruction of the xuluo world.

Could something have happened to the barricade that the other nine superior worlds had constructed around the death spirits' world? Surely not. The nine superior worlds had spent millennia constructing the barricade, and it should have been able to survive the destruction of the xuluo world, at least temporarily.

If the destruction of the xuluo world had really been problematic, the envoy from the superior world wouldn't have acted so high and mighty in front of the Zongming world.

Surely the millennia of construction had shored up the barricade enough to hold?

"No, I can't understand what's going on. There's some critical component of the death spirit king's plan that I'm missing, I'm sure of it."

The dragon flew over the surface of the planet. Zhang Lie could sense a vile, disgusting source of energy from deeper within the black spirits' territory, and he motioned for the dragon to head toward it.

He encountered a phenomenon similar to that which Fang Yi had experienced: a huge sandstorm. However, Zhang Lie was no Fang Yi. He stepped outside the palace and stood atop the dragon's head. As he clenched his fists, blue genetic energy gathered and rippled around his arms. He flicked his wrists, spawning a frightening aura.

A sandstorm began to rage around him. The two sandstorms clashed, sending black sand all over—as though two huge armies were clashing against each other.

A pale blue whale flew out amidst the sandstorm and revolved in the air.

More and more genetic energy gathered around Zhang Lie's arms, spinning rapidly until it looked as though he were in the center 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 toward the air.

The pale-blue genetic energy overwhelmed the opposing sandstorm. Ripples of energy spread out from Zhang Lie, warping the space around him.

With a shudder that shook the world, the opposing sandstorm suddenly dissipated.

The outcome of the clash was obvious. The shockwaves and water-attuned genetic energy exploded, releasing a huge burst of energy that swallowed up the nearby lifeforms like a rampaging beast.

"A mobile warship, is it?"

With the sandstorm quelled, a black pyramid was exposed within sight.

Chapter 930: A World's Bounty

The black pyramid tried to flee, but it was rooted by the effects of [Fists of the Silent Sea: Soar].

Zhang Lie snapped his fingers. Gold Comet morphed into a beam of light and cut apart the black pyramid.

"Just a mobile warship, not the cruiser itself..."

The death spirits had developed a unique form of spiritual architecture which could transmute corpses and living matter into black spirits and void spirits respectively. Beyond that, they had also constructed specialized battleships: a large black pyramid and three smaller ones.

The large pyramid was the main cruiser, whereas the three smaller pyramids were mobile warships that served to protect it. The cruiser had a whole slew of abilities. Not only could it be used in battle, it was the main venue in which the death spirits transmuted corpses into black spirits.

Each of the three smaller pyramids was able to summon a storm in the desert in order to shield the main cruiser.

As a race that thrived off invasion, the death spirits were far more developed on this front than the other superior races.

'If I don't manage to find the main cruiser, I won't be able to deal with the black spirits.'

Thankfully, Zhang Lie's senses were very developed, and he was able to sense the large pyramid. He flew toward it, and it quickly appeared in sight.

Just then, a purple laser beam lit up the entire night. It was so bright it tinted even the black sand into purple. A huge beam of light shot toward Zhang Lie, but before Zhang Lie could make a move, Gold Comet had split the beam in half with its scythe.

Zhang Lie pointed to his front. "Get rid of that pyramid."

Gold Comet shot forward in a beam of light, its scythes whirling, slicing apart the black pyramid layer by layer."

Black fog drifted out of the pyramid and transformed into huge black bandages, which tried to stop Gold Comet's advance. However, the bandages were no match for Gold Comet's scythes—Gold Comet now had strength comparable to that of a king of a superior world.

As Gold Comet continued slicing apart bandage after bandage, more shot out from the black pyramid. Gold Comet cut the cloth apart into ribbons, over and over again, until the flow of cloth finally slowed.

"[The Boundless Blade: Yawning Wave]!" Zhang Lie extended his pointer finger like a sword, and water-attuned genetic energy gathered around it. As he directed his finger toward the pyramid, sword energy erupted like a wave which covered up the sky, sliced apart all the bandages, and cut the top half of the pyramid off.

The existence within the pyramid stilled.

Upon witnessing what lay within, Zhang Lie grew enraged.

The interior of the black pyramid was filled with the bones of various lifeforms. The black spirits were performing a cursed ritual to transform whatever lifeforms they had captured into black and void spirits.

Atop a stone altar, an alien screamed. The black bandages that surrounded its body tore it apart and devoured it.

All the bones that were gathered in the pyramid had come from such aliens, sacrificed and devoured one by one... Upon recalling how many void spirits there were in the black desert, Zhang Lie's gaze glinted.

Black genetic energy gushed out of his feet. As though a portal to the underworld had opened, a pillar of genetic energy rose into the air, roaring like fire. As Zhang Lie unleashed this technique, even Gold Comet cowered in fear, not daring to approach him.

"[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. Its massive body stretched toward the sky, like a titanic beast of yore.

"[Fists of the Silent Sea: Fade]!" The serpent pounced forward and swallowed up the entire black pyramid.

Black cloth bandages stretched out of the pyramid like a long river, dancing through the air. They reached out for the serpent, only to be dissolved by its pitch-black genetic energy. Undaunted, more bandages spooled out from within the pyramid.

The master of the pyramid—the black spirit king in charge within—gathered all the energy that the pyramid possessed and used it to generate a giant made of black cloth, who rushed toward the serpent.

Part of its body was dissolved by the black genetic energy, but its body was so thick that its interior wasn't damaged.

The bandages covering the surface of its body melted into black sludge.

"You lamentable existence—you should never have come into existence."

The black serpent coiled around Zhang Lie. Its scales turned a blood-red color and horns protruded from its forehead as it transformed into a dragon of blood.

"[Fists of the Silent Sea: Fade]!" As Zhang Lie punched forward, the blood dragon roared in rage, its howls echoing through the air. The dragon's howls were like Zhang Lie's own. Zhang Lie's anger caused the dragon of blood to redden. Flames erupted from its body as it smashed into the black spirit king in an explosion of cataclysmic strength. The black pyramid was swallowed up in its entirety.

A wave of annihilation covered the sky and the black desert, spreading rapidly and devouring everything it touched. Even Gold Comet, who had evolved into a monarch-grade lifeform, had to avoid the attack.

The explosion was like a black hole that sucked up everything in sight—black sand and the remnants of the black spirits. Shortly after it formed, the black hole closed up with a snick, leaving behind a huge crater in the desert.

Zhang Lie frowned. "This sort of feeling..."

Zhang Lie landed by the crater, whereupon he could clearly sense huge quantities of the energy of the world at the base of the crater.

With a wave of Zhang Lie's hand, the sand within the crater was swept away, leaving behind a tattered coffin. He uncovered the lid, revealing a multi-colored glow.

Zhang Lie was shocked.

The coffin was full of the energy of the world, radiant and reflective. The energy was so densely packed that it had condensed into a liquid form, and there was enough energy within the coffin to power a superior world.

Of course, the energy of a superior world was more advanced in quality, though the fact that the energy within the coffin matched the quantity was shocking enough.

"It would take at least three or four large worlds, two dozen medium-sized worlds, and countless small worlds to gather so much energy..."

If he weren't mistaken, the black spirits had stored all the energy of the world they had accumulated in that coffin. It had been protected so securely that it had survived Zhang Lie's assault even when the black spirit king itself did not.

Just what were the black spirits trying to do, claim all the energy of the world in their vicinity?

Zhang Lie frowned as he pondered the question. Were the death spirits trying to incite a war prematurely?

At any rate, Zhang Lie had no intention of returning the energy of the world within the coffin to the neighboring worlds—it was his by right of combat.

Using all this energy to induce the evolution of disaster-grade lifeforms would be a tremendous boon—and it had other uses besides.

"I suppose I can give the ninth prince—no, the new king—a little gift..."