

U. Warlord 941

Chapter 941: A Shocking Sight

Placed side by side, the four different cocoons were an astounding sight.

Yang Ze's cocoon vibrated more and more strongly. Zhang Lie could sense that Yang Ze had finished absorbing the entire contents of the potion, and was now moving onto the final stage of the transformation.

An ocean surged forth from within the cocoon, sending the sound of rumbling thunder echoing throughout the draconian world. The shards of glass in the black desert began to vibrate in synchrony with the cocoon, cracking as the vibrations reached a crescendo.

The disturbance caused by Yang Ze's cocoon summoned the draconian sage once again, who teleported over and grumbled, "Zhang Lie, what did you do this time?"

Zhang Lie shrugged. "I'm innocent—it's not my fault!"

The draconian sage was perplexed as he looked at the four different cocoons. "What are these?"

The vibrations coming from Yang Ze's cocoon grew stronger and stronger, as though there were a herd of galloping steeds on the horizon.

Zhang Lie explained, "Yang Ze and Fang Yi are absorbing the peak limit-breaking potion. Yang Ze's the one causing this phenomenon."

The draconian sage scowled. "In the end, it's something you caused again!"

Despite the draconian sage's grumbling, he could hardly expel Zhang Lie and the others. If something did happen, Zhang Lie would certainly step up and resolve the issue in order to avoid causing undue stress to the draconian world.

Zhou Ying and Sun Mengmeng glanced at the transformation occurring to Yang Ze in surprise. The crystalline bud that had been formed from his pale blue genetic energy was slowly unfolding.

Zhou Ying asked, "Why didn't I experience such a phenomenon when I absorbed this potion?"

Zhang Lie shrugged. "It's likely a matter of compatibility between the xuluo bones that formed the base of your potion and your framework."

As the crystalline bud flowered in its entirety, forming a crystalline lotus, pale blue genetic energy erupted from the cocoon, spreading out all over in the form of raging waves like galloping steeds, like thundering dragons. The genetic energy was, shockingly, charged with authority over space.

"Zhou Ying, your framework is about life and vitality; Sun Mengmeng, yours about fire. Although Yang Ze's framework is nominally about water, his understanding, intuition, and mastery over space is beyond anyone else's in the team. After absorbing karmic power, he's likely reached a more complete understanding of space."

Zhang Lie stood firm amidst the expanding ocean, like a landmass that would weather wind and storm.

The rampaging energy cracked Yang Ze's cocoon. As Zhang Lie had mentioned, Yang Ze was surrounded by swirling spatial force.

As his pale blue genetic energy surged, space itself began to resonate and vibrate. The shards of black glass beneath them cracked and splintered, but the vibrations wouldn't affect Zhang Lie and the others.

All the hunters present had reached a minimum threshold of strength, and it would be ridiculous for any of them to be unable to withstand the aftereffects of Yang Ze's evolution.

The surface of the sea frothed with angry waves, like dragons emerging with the tide.

Zhang Lie and the members of Team Zenith might not be affected by this phenomenon, but they couldn't say the same about the other inhabitants of the world. If the sea were allowed to spread any further, it might cause significant trouble.

The draconian sage made a move immediately, invoking the authority of the realm to lock down the surrounding area.

As the genetic energy frothed more and more violently, even Sun Mengmeng and Zhou Ying were starting to grow unsteady. The barrier that the draconian sage had set up began to crack.

Yang Ze's figure appeared at the heart of the disturbance, surrounded by blooming lotuses all around him. It was a scene of surprising tranquility and elegance. Ripples of light crept up and down his body, giving him an otherworldly appearance. He suddenly opened his eyes, which gleamed with black and gold. The rampaging ocean turned glassy within moments, all disturbance quelled.

Yang Ze turned to Zhang Lie and the others, smiling gently.

"It looks like you've gained quite a bit," Zhang Lie commented.

Yang Ze dipped his head. "More or less."

The draconian sage grumbled again, "All of you might be happy, but look at what I have to deal with! The barrier almost broke!"

Just then, Sun Xiaowu's cocoon began to ripple as well. Piercing golden light emerged from the cocoon, lighting up the entirety of the black desert. All the inhabitants of the world could sense the golden light that came from afar. As golden runes revolved around the cocoon, a pair of golden arms broke it open from the inside. A giant in radiant gold emerged.

Sun Xiaowu's transformation was much like Sun Mengmeng and Zhou Ying's; it wasn't as outlandish as Yang Ze's. The golden giant glowed brightly once more, then faded away, leaving Sun Xiaowu's regular body behind. The difference was that he now had a corona of gold all around him.

Following Sun Xiaowu, Li Feng broke out of his cocoon. He caused a much larger disturbance. As the cocoon broke, the howls of a thousand dragons echoed through the air.

Dragons of light, so many they couldn't be counted, rushed out of the cocoon and filled the sky. Subsequently, all at once, they swooped down toward Li Feng's cocoon, breaking it apart in a wave of overwhelming white light. Gold and black flashed by their eyes, so bright they had to avert the sight.

The draconian sage breathed a sigh of relief.

Thankfully, Sun Xiaowu and Li Feng hadn't caused as much of a problem as did Yang Ze. Otherwise, they would have caused a tremendous headache for the draconian sage.

Just as Li Feng's transformation finished, Fang Yi's cocoon finally began to move.

Zhang Lie watched on expectantly. Fang Yi's cocoon was the most unique among the four present, and he expected it to produce the largest disturbance of all.

Fang Yi's cocoon was threaded with gold and black, gray and silver—the combination of karmic and temporal power. As the loops of time surrounding the cocoon broke, the density of temporal energy surrounding the cocoon increased dramatically, tearing a slit in the cocoon. Wind and storm rushed out, summoning gale winds and lightning.

As the slit widened, a dragon of wind and a tiger of lightning emerged. The howling gales grew stronger, and lightning forked indiscriminately.

A pillar of lightning struck the cocoon as time froze. The surroundings all turned a dull gray; the cocoon was the only source of color. Bolstered by the power of the natural elements, Fang Yi finished the last step in his transformation.

In the gray world of frozen time, Zhang Lie's eyebrow twitched. The gray flaked off him; he had used his overwhelming strength to free himself from his temporal constraints. He was very surprised that Fang Yi had managed to disrupt the flow of time to this extent by consuming the peak limit-breaking potion...

Chapter 942: Complete Metamorphosis

Wind and storm combined and crackled as the wind dragon and storm tiger revolved around the cocoon. Space deformed like putty and was sucked within as the silver and gray threads merged and vanished. Zhang Lie frowned and scrutinized the cocoon more closely—rather than vanishing, they had transformed into the formless energy of time, colorless, shapeless, tasteless, but influencing the world all the while.

The gold and black threads of karma continued to weave around each other, twining and twining until they formed a single thread of dark gold.

Dragon-like lightning, tiger-like storm, formless time, timeless space—those four disparate energies combined into a cohesive whole, tied together by this dark gold thread. The energies revolved around each other, summoning a howling gale surrounding a spatial rift.

Part of the energy from the spatial rift seeped into the lightning-attuned genetic energy, turning it into void lightning. The pitch-black lightning spiked and sizzled, combining with the spatial rift that was forming and tearing apart the space around Fang Yi.

The spatial storm and void lightning whirled around each other and merged together—the combination of spatial force and the howling storm on one hand, and the combination of lightning and time on the other.

All that energy, combined with the karmic power that Fang Yi had sensed for the first time, became something so abstruse that even Zhang Lie couldn't claim to comprehend it.

It was difficult to sense and harder still to understand. Zhang Lie thought that it was a force that belonged to a realm above his ken—somewhat like heaven's might, but wholly different.

Zhang Lie tried to comprehend it, but he was only able to glean a modicum of understanding—that all things were predetermined in the long, winding river of time. He now understood what the combination of time and karma resulted in: fate!

It was a power that transcended both of its constituents. Karma was prophetic, but it could be subverted and blocked. Fate, on the other hand, was trickier to avoid.

The combination of wind and storm, spatial force, void lightning, time and space, karma and fate—all of it combined into a hurricane, as though a new cocoon had formed out of the remnants of the old one.

Even Zhang Lie himself felt threatened by the cocoon.

With nothing but his own willpower, Fang Yi was condensing and refining his strength, dividing the various forces that combined into the power of fate up into skeins of thread of different colors.

The cocoon shrunk, bit by bit.

Zhang Lie's eyes widened. As Fang Yi simultaneously refined the elements of fate, the power of fate itself seemed to be creeping closer to its own evolution—destiny. Fang Yi was far from being able to channel that overwhelming power, but the fact that he was approaching its threshold was shocking enough to Zhang Lie.

Fang Yi, having refined those energies to the best of his ability and shrunk the cocoon by half its original volume, broke his control over the gray world of time. Time began ticking anew.

The draconian sage blinked, bewildered. "What just happened?"

As the king of the realm, the draconian sage was the highest-authority figure in the world, and he was the first to realize that something was amiss. Time had stopped. The other members of Team Zenith all sensed that something was wrong, but not precisely what.

The draconian sage sighed. "Anything that has to do with you, Zhang Lie, is always a major problem."

The members of Team Zenith all turned to Zhang Lie, hoping that he would confirm what had happened.

"Ah, what's that?!" The Yeluo chieftain suddenly pointed before him, where Fang Yi's cocoon had undergone a rather significant change.

Sun Mengmeng frowned. "Fang Yi's cocoon didn't look like this before, did it?"

Yang Ze nodded. "Fang Yi's cocoon had cracked, and the energies within it flooded out. How did the cocoon reform?"

Li Feng added, "Perhaps one or two of us might have been mistaken, but if we're all saying the same thing..."

While the members of Team Zenith puzzled over what was going on, lightning fell from the heavens, only to be absorbed by the cocoon. The threads that made up the cocoon split up into different colors, wind and storm in green and purple, spatial rifts and void lightning in black, time and space in silver and gray, karma and destiny in black and gold.

The seven distinct colors shone radiantly, dispelling the lightning and the dark clouds that remained in the air. Sunlight shone down once more.

Fang Yi stood still and silent, basking in the sunlight. Wind and storm morphed into a dragon and tiger and circled him. Spatial rifts and void lightning were arrayed by his back.

Loops of time layered themselves over him, and the mysterious, suffocating strength of fate washed over his body.

Fang Yi opened his eyes, which shone with newfound wisdom. "How do you feel?" Zhang Lie asked.

"I've learned a lot. I understand a lot, now."

Fang Yi gave off a completely different impression than before after absorbing peak limit fragments. Zhang Lie had had some idea of just what Fang Yi had gained from his breakthrough—his understanding of time and space, combined with that of karma, would elevate his mastery of all three powers to an entirely new level.

Zhang Lie simply wasn't sure just how much Fang Yi had intuited from the process.

The members of Team Zenith walked up to him. Yang Ze punched Fang Yi on the chest lightly. "Oho, I thought I made enough of a commotion when I broke through, but yours was even more astonishing!"

Fang Yi smiled in response.

Zhang Lie clapped. "All of you met my expectations and successfully obtained peak limit fragments. This also shows that the recipe that the Yeluo chieftain has devised is indeed successful."

Sun Mengmeng grumbled, "We just almost died in the process!"

If not for the restorative, their physical bodies would likely have been incapable of absorbing the potent medicinal properties of the potion. Their cells would have undergone apoptosis and killed the hunters.

The Yeluo chieftain shrugged. "Well, all's well that ends well. No one died, at the very least, and we figured out how to curb the side effects of the potion."

The members of Team Zenith were speechless. They felt as though there were something wrong with the Yeluo chieftain's words, but they couldn't pinpoint what, exactly.

He had instructed them to consume the restorative if any problems arose during the process, and they did do so, but the experience was something none of them would ever want to recollect...

Chapter 943: Preparations for the War

Nevertheless, obtaining peak limit fragments would simultaneously confer many hidden benefits for the members of Team Zenith to discover themselves.

Sun Mengmeng asked, "Captain, you mentioned that you called us here for three things. The first was the development of the peak limit-breaking potion. What are the other two?"

Zhang Lie replied, "The second matter is that the death spirits have made their move."

The draconian sage frowned. "The death spirits, whom you said were intending on destroying the three thousand worlds?"

Sun Mengmeng nodded. "Yes, the race associated with the black spirits."

However, the members of Team Zenith and the draconian sage weren't as shocked as Zhang Lie had expected.

Yang Ze replied, "While on the battlefield, I've noticed the black spirits in the neighboring worlds behaving abnormally. Are they finally making their move?"

Sun Xiaowu asked, "Captain, does this mean that the death spirits are unable to wait any longer?"

Li Feng suggested, "In that case, the death spirits are planning to recall all the black spirits and trigger a war that will destroy all three thousand worlds?"

Zhang Lie blinked in surprise. "None of you seem all too shocked. Did you know something beforehand?"

"A little," Sun Mengmeng replied. "We served as vanguards in the invasion of neighboring worlds, so we've had to interact with the black spirits a little."

"A little?" Zhang Lie frowned, feeling as though they were hiding something.

Yang Ze shrugged. "Or rather, we've been pushing the black spirits back all along."

Sun Xiaowu added, "After all, Captain, you didn't specially point out worlds we had to target, so we simply chose to fight against the black spirits. After learning about the death spirits from you, we decided it would be best to forestall their invasion."

Fang Yi continued, "The black spirits tried to invade the draconian world in the past, too, so it would be sensible for us to retaliate regardless."

Zhou Ying seemed taken aback. "All of you did that, too?"

The members of Team Zenith nodded.

Sun Mengmeng said, "No wonder! I was so puzzled as to why the black spirits in the vicinity have all vanished. I thought that the death spirits were simply recalling their forces in preparation for something big."

Yang Ze likewise remarked, "No wonder I haven't been able to find any of the black spirits recently! I thought they were making a move, but it was just the rest of you!"

Zhang Lie clutched his head. He finally understood why the death spirits had pushed up their invasion so far forward—it really was a butterfly effect caused by his actions.

Zhang Lie had wondered just which of his actions could have caused the death spirits' errant behavior. Even if the flapping of a butterfly's wings in South America were to cause a typhoon in the eastern hemisphere, there had to be a chain of events between the first and the last.

It was inconceivable that there could be spooky action at a distance. The events had to be linked somehow, and Zhang Lie had only interacted with the black spirits when they invaded the draconian world.

His successful defense shouldn't have prompted such a response. There were a large number of black spirits scattered over the three thousand worlds. The destruction of a middle-sized black spirit world would be all but irrelevant to the death spirits' plans, and there was no reason that they would rush their planned invasion forward by almost a decade as a result.

Zhang Lie now understood that what had caused the death spirits' adverse reaction wasn't his own actions, but rather those of the members of Team Zenith. Upon revealing what he knew of the death spirits to the members of Team Zenith, the future had changed.

It had felt good to share what he knew of the future back then, but the consequences of his actions were now catching up to him.

Zhang Lie couldn't help but ask, "How many of the black spirit worlds did you all attack?"

"Two," Sun Mengmeng replied.

"Three," Yang Ze said.

"Five." Fang Yi.

"One." Sun Xiaowu.

"Two." Li Feng.

"One." Zhou Ying.

Fourteen in all—fifteen, if the world that Zhang Lie had freed from the black spirits' invasion was included.

Zhang Lie almost spat out a mouthful of blood. No wonder the death spirits had moved their plan forward! They had surely found that their outposts were being destroyed at a remarkable, unprecedented rate—all because of what the members of Team Zenith had been doing!

In the past, Zhang Lie had informed the members of Team Zenith about the death spirits' plans. This caused the members of Team Zenith to target the black spirits' worlds while invading the worlds neighboring the draconian world. Combined, they had destroyed fourteen black spirit outposts.

It had taken the death spirits a tremendous amount of resources to send the black spirits out into the three thousand worlds under the scrutiny of the superior worlds, but fifteen of them had been destroyed in an instant.

Zhang Lie himself would be incensed, let alone the death spirits.

Sun Xiaowu seemed confused by Zhang Lie's expression. "What's wrong, Captain?"

Zhang Lie raised his head to the sky and murmured, "Nothing. I've just realized how complicated time and fate are."

"There's nothing to fear about the black spirits—and I can't imagine the death spirits are that strong, either. Captain, we don't have to worry,"

Sun Mengmeng consoled Zhang Lie after witnessing his abnormal expression.

Zhang Lie shook his head. "The death spirits are hardly as weak as you think. The death spirit king himself is a fiend—after consuming large quantities of the world's energy, he might as well be the strongest existence in the third realm."

In Zhang Lie's past life, the death spirit king had only been killed by the nine other superior kings working together in concert—and even then, five of the nine had perished in battle.

"Stronger than you, Captain?" Sun Mengmeng asked.

Zhang Lie shrugged. "I've never fought him before. How would I know?"

Sun Mengmeng continued, "What's the third matter you wanted to speak to us about, Captain?"

Zhang Lie replied, "Actually, the second and third matters are linked. Now that the death spirit king is making his move, there'll soon be a war that encompasses all three thousand worlds. Get ready."

The members of Team Zenith nodded.

Now that they had all consumed the peak limit-breaking potion, Zhang Lie was more confident in their ability to survive and contribute during the upcoming battle.

He instructed, "I'll be sending out commands for the warlords to retreat from the frontline and to start preparing for the upcoming battle. All of you should tie up any loose ends and prepare for the war to break out at any point as well."

The members of Team Zenith nodded firmly.

Zhang Lie was about to continue describing the death spirits' potential plans when the draconian sage suddenly interrupted, "Zhang Lie, your girlfriend is looking for you."

"My girlfriend? Li Qianlin, you mean?"

He spread out his senses and noticed Li Qianlin and Dong Mingxing walking over. He immediately turned to the members of Team Zenith. "Alright, we're done here. I have other affairs to take care of, so I'll be leaving now."

Chapter 944: Discussions within the Palace

Zhang Lie vanished from the spot and immediately appeared behind Li Qianlin and Dong Mingxing. "Now, where could you girls be heading toward?"

Dong Mingxing yelped, jumping up in shock. "What's with you—why did you suddenly appear out of nowhere like a ghost?"

Li Qianlin laughed sheepishly. "We needed to talk to you about something."

"About what?" Zhang Lie cocked his head.

Li Qianlin replied, "Like you said, the death spirits are making their move."

Zhang Lie's face turned serious. "How did you come by this information?"

That the death spirits had started making their move was just Zhang Lie's hypothesis, and he was starting to prepare for the eventuality of war—only to find that Li Qianlin might be able to confirm that hypothesis for him.

Li Qianlin replied, "It's news from my father. Like you surmised, the death spirits broke through the barricade that the other superior worlds set up a few days ago, and they're currently laying waste to the worlds in their vicinity."

Zhang Lie nodded in understanding. "Your father must have learned about this from the other superior worlds. Is that right?"

Li Qianlin inclined her head. "A few days ago, envoys from the other superior worlds requested that Father participate in the defense against the death spirits."

Zhang Lie was a little surprised, but not because of the arrival of the envoys.

The superior worlds would take all the help they could against the death spirits, and they would certainly enlist the Zongming world to that end. Not only would they be able to use the Zongming world as cannon fodder, it would likely be destroyed by the death spirits, leaving them with one fewer enemy to contend with afterwards.

Regardless of how unwilling the Zongming world was to participate, the other superior worlds would surely band together to force its hand. If the Zongming world refused, the superior worlds would likely destroy the Zongming world before dealing with the death spirits.

What shocked Zhang Lie was how quickly the death spirits had made their move, even before he had finished his preparations, as though he had done something else to trigger the butterfly effect.

Zhang Lie didn't understand which of his actions could possibly have caused this new development.

He rubbed his lower jaw. "What will happen if the Zongming world refuses to participate?"

Li Qianlin shrugged. "Father didn't ask. He wanted to hear your opinion first."

"I'll head to the Zongming world immediately."

Zhang Lie confirmed Gold Comet's location in the draconian world, then teleported over to it. If he wanted to reach the Zongming world as quickly as possible, he would need Gold Comet's speed.

He returned to the two women with Gold Comet in tow. "Alright, we'll set off now."

Gold Comet, with Zhang Lie and Li Qianlin riding on its back, morphed into a beam of golden light and shot off. Dong Mingxing was left behind.

Dong Mingxing blinked a few times before crying out, "Hey, hey! Come back! You've left me behind!"

Gold Comet's speed was incredible. Within just an hour, they had passed through three worlds and were within sight of the Zongming world.

Over the last two years, under Li Zongming's leadership, the Zongming world had been growing stronger and stronger by the day. Zhang Lie had Gold Comet bring them straight toward his palace.

Li Zongming appeared at the entrance to the palace to welcome Zhang Lie and Li Qianlin personally.

"You're back! And so quickly, too—I just sent out the news."

Li Zongming then turned to Gold Comet. "This is... the red fourth-level beast from before."

Zhang Lie replied, "It's a monarch-grade lifeform, now—according to your classification, a sixth-level beast."

Li Zongming's eyes widened as he looked Gold Comet up and down. "Incredible, son-in-law. I expect you have the only such beast in the third realm."

Zhang Lie replied, "Let's not discuss Gold Comet at the moment. Shall we consider what the death spirits and other superior worlds are up to?"

"Very well. I'd like to hear your opinion, Zhang Lie," Li Zongming replied.

He invited both of them into the palace and had his servants prepare some tea. "I expect Qianlin has already told you about the details," he began.

Zhang Lie nodded. "The death spirits are finally making their move, and they've already broken through the superior worlds' barricade. The envoys of the other superior worlds have been sent over to enlist you in battle, haven't they?"

Li Zongming nodded. "Everything is as you've said."

Zhang Lie replied, "I expected the death spirits would make their move sooner or later, but this is far ahead of schedule."

"Indeed."

"What did the other superior worlds tell you?"

Li Zongming replied, "They intend on convening a meeting among the leaders of all the superior worlds—allegedly to discuss the death spirits' threat, but realistically to force my hand."

Zhang Lie cautioned, "You have to attend this meeting. The other superior worlds will never allow you not to participate, regardless of how unwilling you may be."

Li Qianlin analyzed, "If the Zongming world were to refuse, the superior worlds would likely destroy us before dealing with the death spirits! It might cost them a bit of manpower, but it's surely better than to let us profit while doing nothing. Isn't that so?"

Zhang Lie gave her a thumbs up. "They're worried that we might be able to take advantage of their weakened state after defeating the death spirits to destroy them all and take over the third realm in one fell swoop."

Li Qianlin continued seriously, "That's right. All the combatants will be weakened by the war, and if our forces were in top shape, then..."

That would be when the other eight superior worlds were weakest, and even the Zongming world, easily the weakest among the superior worlds, would be able to invade them all easily then. This was an outcome that the other eight superior worlds had to avoid at any cost.

Chapter 945: Come Back Quick

Zhang Lie explained, "The other eight superior worlds don't want to see anyone backstab them while they're fighting against the death spirits."

In order to prevent this, there was no way they could allow the Zongming world to remain an idle spectator. They gave Li Zongming an ultimatum: either participate in the defense, or die.

Zhang Lie continued, "It's clear how strong the death spirits are—all eight other superior worlds feel as though they have to give the battle their all, without having even resources to spare to protect themselves."

In addition, it revealed that the other eight superior worlds were determined to destroy the death spirits. This time, they wouldn't simply barricade the death spirits up. They would destroy the death spirits for good, without giving them a chance to retaliate.

Li Zongming nodded. "I understand what you're saying, more so than anyone else, but it's precisely because I understand that the decision is that much harder for me."

Although the Zongming world had become a superior world, it hardly had the same amount of resources as did the other superior worlds, which had existed since antiquity. The Zongming world had newly evolved, and it boasted far less manpower and strength than the others.

Li Zongming knew how challenging a foe the death spirits would be. It had required the other eight superior worlds' combined efforts to suppress them—and despite all that effort, the death spirits had broken free again.

The death spirits would be far stronger than his world was equipped to handle, and it would be a disaster for his world to participate in the battle now. All the gains he had made over the last two years would be wiped out, and he would fare worst among all the superior worlds if they were to manage to defeat the death spirits.

If the Zongming world didn't participate, it would be destroyed by the other superior worlds; if it did, it would be suppressed and controlled as a result of its weakened state.

There simply had been too little time for the Zongming world to prepare. Two years was far too little time for Li Zongming to stockpile energy, and his world remained far below its maximum capacity and capability.

The moment the war began, the Zongming world would be the first casualty.

Li Zongming was stuck between a rock and a hard place. Either his world would be destroyed or enslaved; there was no third option.

"You only have one choice now: participate in the war."

Even Zhang Lie wasn't confident that he would be able to defend against the other eight superior worlds' combined assault, let alone Li Zongming.

The biggest problem wouldn't be dealing with the eight other superior worlds, but rather the death spirits and their king. If the Zongming world were to go to war against the other eight superior worlds, the death spirits would continue growing stronger day by day, feasting on the world's energy of the worlds they conquered. Even if the Zongming world were to survive the eight worlds' assault, it would subsequently have to contend with the death spirit king.

Furthermore, the Zongming world and the other eight superior worlds would surely all have their capabilities reduced if they were to go to war against each other—whereas the death spirit king

could keep growing stronger. If they allowed the death spirit king to grow unchecked, he would become a menace that no one could stop.

Zhang Lie told Li Zongming seriously, "This is something you have to do not just for the good of the Zongming world, but also the fate of the third realm."

The death spirit king was an evil that had to be eradicated at any cost; if he consumed enough world's energy, no one would be able to stop him.

Li Zongming nodded. "I think so too."

In that case, why did Li Zongming summon him? Zhang Lie understood quickly. "You want to borrow my strength."

Li Zongming smiled, somewhat embarrassed. "We're family, aren't we? I want to take advantage of your strength."

Li Qianlin lowered her head, flushing.

"Very well. I'll head to the meeting with you." Zhang Lie accepted readily.

The death spirits represented a disaster for the entirety of the third realm, and Zhang Lie had no choice but to participate as well.

"I'll also have the warlords under my command participate in this war as part of the Zongming world's forces."

Li Zongming was so happy he leapt up and embraced Zhang Lie in a tight hug. "Wonderful, wonderful! My wisest decision in this life was to have Qianlin—that was what allowed me to grab such an excellent son-in-law! Zhang Lie, you're truly my savior!"

Zhang Lie pushed Li Zongming aside. "When do we set off?"

Li Zongming replied, "The envoys mentioned that the meeting will be convened within the next few days."

"Very well. I'll head back to the draconian world to make some preparations. Now that the death spirits have made their move, I have a good idea as to what the meeting will be about. Before all three thousand worlds are dragged into this war, I'll have to set some plans in action."

Li Qianlin raised her hand. "Actually, there's a bit I don't understand. If the superior worlds are so strong, why do they want to embroil all three thousand worlds in the war? After all, many of those worlds might as well be ants in comparison to the superior worlds. What could they do?"

If the superior worlds had really valued the other worlds, they would have discovered the death spirits' treachery long ago.

Li Qianlin continued, perplexed, "In that case, why expand the scope of this war?"

Zhang Lie replied, "It's true that they don't think much of the many worlds that form the third realm—all large worlds and below might as well be ants. Even so, they'll act prudently."

Li Zongming waggled a finger. "Daughter, what the superior worlds fear aren't the manifold worlds of the third realm, but rather the death spirits. They're worried that, if they were to exhaust too many

resources against the death spirits, they would be swarmed by these lesser worlds. They're worried that an existence like the Zongming world might emerge out of nowhere."

"An existence like the Zongming world, which would grow to boundless heights while they're tied up with the death spirits and unable to prevent its growth..." Zhang Lie mused.

Li Qianlin nodded. "I thought these superior worlds were immeasurably strong, but it looks like they have to worry about quite a lot of things, even so..."

"Strong doesn't mean unintelligent, after all," Zhang Lie quipped.

After laying out some plans with Li Zongming, Zhang Lie left the palace. "Qianlin, you should stay in the Zongming world rather than head back with me. Accompany your father—Gold Comet and I will return to the draconian world, deal with matters there, and then come back. I'll accompany your father to the meeting of the worlds then."

Li Qianlin folded her arms. "You're getting tired of me already?"

"Ah, no—it's just that you've rarely been able to return. Why don't you spend some time with your father?"

Li Qianlin smiled. "I was just making fun of you. Come back quick, you hear?"

Chapter 946: We'll Talk Later

Zhang Lie smiled. "I'll be back in about two days."

He leapt up onto Gold Comet's back. Gold Comet morphed into a beam of golden light and shot off into the distance.

Once they returned to the draconian world, Zhang Lie immediately summoned the members of Team Zenith. "Have the warlords all been recalled?"

Sun Mengmeng shrugged. "Captain, we can't all be like you. You were only away for a few hours. We've informed them to return, but it'll take them a while to get back."

Yang Ze asked, "Has something happened, Captain?"

Zhang Lie nodded. "Indeed. Things are progressing at a faster rate than planned. The death spirits have already made their move. They've broken out of the barricade that the eight other superior worlds set up, and the three thousand worlds of the third realm will all be embroiled in war sooner or later. That's why we need to make some preparations now. I need to speak with the draconian sage immediately."

"I'll let him know at once!" Sun Mengmeng rushed off into the distance.

The members of Team Zenith looked at him with serious expressions. They had learned of the death spirits' purpose from Zhang Lie, and they knew that the death spirits would be tough foes.

What kind of opponent would be able to drag the entire realm into a protracted war? This would be the most difficult foe they had faced to date.

Shortly after Sun Mengmeng left, space within the meeting room began to twist. The draconian sage and Sun Mengmeng appeared directly in the room.

The draconian sage asked, "Zhang Lie, has something happened? Something related to the death spirits you were talking about, perhaps?"

Zhang Lie nodded. "The death spirits are moving faster than expected. They've broken out of the barricade that the eight other superior worlds set up. The superior worlds are convening a meeting, and the three thousand worlds will all be implicated."

The draconian sage asked, "Are the death spirits that strong that this war will spread throughout the entire realm?"

Zhang Lie shook his head. "The death spirits aren't the ones trying to drag everyone into the war—the superior worlds are."

The draconian sage frowned. "Aren't the superior worlds fighting against the death spirits?"

"That's exactly why they want to drag everyone else down with them."

The draconian sage frowned. "It looks like both sides are troublesome foes, then... Whom should we side with?"

Zhang lie replied, "We can't work with the death spirits. The goal of the death spirit king is to consume the entirety of the third realm. If we ally with them, they'd turn us into those vile black spirits."

The hunters collectively shuddered as they thought about the vaguely humanoid figures composed of black bandages, like walking zombies.

Sun Mengmeng asked, "Are the superior worlds trying to prevent anyone from profiting from their victory despite not participating?"

Yang Ze nodded. "And to stop themselves from getting backstabbed, too..."

Zhang Lie repeated what he had said in the Zongming world. "They're worried that, if they were to exhaust too many resources against the death spirits, they would be swarmed by the lesser worlds. They're also worried that other worlds might take advantage of the war to grow strong and become superior worlds, which would threaten the current superior worlds' future power."

The members of Team Zenith nodded.

"The superior worlds don't want the current balance of things to shift. They'd like to remain dominant in the third realm, with no new contenders for power."

The draconian sage asked, "What are your plans?"

"We have no choice but to participate in the war."

The draconian sage nodded. Indeed, they had no other choice. "If we don't participate, the superior worlds might make an example out of us. They're all bastards and hooligans—even if they have to conserve much of their power for the death spirits, it would be trivial for them to destroy a couple of large worlds each. This is the strength of a superior world."

Of course, the Zongming world, which had recently ascended, didn't count.

The Zongming world hadn't had enough time to bolster its resources, and the only indicator that the Zongming world was a superior world was that Li Zongming himself was stronger than a king of a large world. If Li Zongming were removed from the picture, the Zongming world would only be able to fight at the level of a peak large world.

Meanwhile, the superior worlds each possessed the strength to take down a few dozen large worlds much like the Zongming world—independent of their kings' powers. If Zhang Lie hadn't been present to defend the Zongming world, it would have been destroyed by the xuluo.

"Even if the superior worlds weren't a factor, we would have to destroy the death spirit king regardless. His ambition is to devour the entire realm, so we have no other choice but to work together with these vile, shameless superior worlds," Zhang Lie continued.

The superior worlds had no intention of fighting alone; they would drag everyone down with them.

Zhang Lie laid out his plans. "Sage, you'll prepare a fighting force that will represent your contribution to the war. Members of Team Zenith, you'll each lead an army conscripted from the inhabitants whose worlds you invaded. I'll be leading a party of warlords to fight on behalf of the Zongming world."

The draconian sage sucked in a deep breath. "Hold on, you'll be a representative of the Zongming world, not the draconian world?"

"Right. I'll be participating in the meeting convened by the superior worlds as a warrior of the Zongming world. Is there a problem?"

The draconian sage cried out, "Yes, there is! You can't leave us or the humans behind just for the sake of your girlfriend!"

Although the draconian sage was normally rather annoyed by the problems that Zhang Lie caused all over, Zhang Lie was still the strongest combatant that the draconian world possessed, without a doubt.

The draconian sage hadn't been worried about the upcoming war because of Zhang Lie's presence, but after the revelation that he would be joining the forces of another world instead, the draconian sage couldn't help but panic.

Zhang Lie continued, "In addition, the members of Team Zenith will not participate in the death spirits' war."

"Why not?!" the members of Team Zenith and the draconian sage asked simultaneously.

Sun Mengmeng elaborated, "Didn't you have us drink the peak limit-breaking potions so we could do something in the war?"

The draconian sage complained, "You're not even allowing the draconian world access to our next strongest combatants? Just what are you planning?"

Zhang Lie turned to the members of Team Zenith. "I have plans for all of you. We can't just be focused on the war against the death spirits—we have to be thinking about the enemies we'll face after the war, as well."

"The enemies after the war?"

"We'll discuss it later," Zhang Lie replied. He seemed entirely confident of successfully repelling the death spirits.

Chapter 947: Already Planned

In Zhang Lie's past life, the superior worlds had managed to take down the death spirits without his help—given his presence, their victory in this life was all but guaranteed. Furthermore, the death spirits hadn't managed to absorb as much world's energy as before, and Zhang Lie had intercepted part of their spoils. The death spirit king wouldn't be as strong.

It was true that Zhang Lie had destroyed the xuluo world and weakened the superior worlds as a whole, but he and the Zongming world were more than sufficient to make up for the lack of the xuluo.

What had been done in his past life could easily be achieved in this one. There was no reason to expend all his trump cards and power on this single war alone.

The draconian sage clutched his head in panic. "Without you and the warlords, without the members of Team Zenith, how will our world survive the war?"

Zhang Lie rolled his eyes. "Sage, I feel like you've gotten too used to our presence."

The sage lifted his head. "What do you mean?"

"Before I and the rest of Team Zenith showed up, how did your world deal with the Mengtai invasion?"

The draconian sage tugged at his head. "But this time around, our opponent isn't just a medium-sized world—it's a superior world that far exceeds all others! Even the other superior worlds have to be wary of the death spirits. We would be hard-pressed to protect ourselves in this conflict, let alone fight against the death spirits."

"You're quite right. If the death spirits were to invade the draconian world, it would be annihilated in less than an hour. Unless I and the rest of Team Zenith were present, the draconian world wouldn't stand a chance."

"That's precisely what I'm saying!"

Zhang Lie continued, "But you would hardly be facing the death spirits alone, and they certainly wouldn't be focusing on you. You're nothing more than cannon fodder in the fight between the death spirits and the other superior races."

The draconian sage frowned. "That sounds even worse!"

Although Zhang Lie was stating the truth, the draconian sage was still somewhat hurt by his words. The draconian world was a peak large world, but it would still be little more than cannon fodder in this war. It didn't have the strength to do anything instrumental—though all that would change if Zhang Lie and the members of Team Zenith were to participate on the side of the draconians.

Zhang Lie and the members of Team Zenith were strong enough to be a third nexus of power in this conflict—or, at the very least, on equal standing with a superior world.

Zhang Lie shrugged. "At any rate, it'll be straightforward enough for you to survive. You won't need to fight against the death spirits directly—just protect yourselves."

Sun Mengmeng asked, "Won't some of the draconians have to sacrifice themselves in battle, then?"

Yang Ze nodded. "Although I can't say I understand what you're planning, Captain, if any of us from Team Zenith were to participate in this war on the draconian world's side, we would surely be able to mitigate the human and draconian losses."

This would be a mythical battle which would draw in all three thousand worlds of the third realm, unprecedented in its history. The members of Team Zenith didn't want to miss out on such a once-in-a-lifetime event.

Zhang Lie replied, "Sacrifices are only natural. No draconian or human could live wholly under another's protection, and I and the members of Team Zenith will ultimately set off toward another realm. The draconians and humans shall have to learn to live without our presence—as well you know, Sage."

Humans and draconians were no flowers to be cultivated in a greenhouse. If Zhang Lie were to continue protecting them all, they would start developing an unhealthy dependency complex.

If even the draconian sage was feeling this way, it was evident how the ordinary draconians and humans had to feel—and if this feeling of dependency were allowed to grow, the humans and draconians of the third realm would be crippled.

Zhang Lie continued seriously, "We're happy to support you—not to sustain you."

The draconian sage nodded. "You're absolutely right. We've been too comfortable lately, and we're already starting to forget our training. It's too convenient to rely on you and your team, and the death spirits' war will be an excellent opportunity to forge the draconian and human hunters anew in the flames of war."

The death spirits' war would be a massive conflict, and one beyond the level of the draconian world. Even if the humans and draconians were to suffer defeat, there would be no impact on the draconian world.

Furthermore, the draconian world would still be host to Team Zenith, and it was under Zhang Lie's protection. The draconian sage simply wanted to avoid unnecessary loss of life—but in that case, the hunters could never become strong. They were no greenhouse flowers, no pandas to be kept in a zoo. The draconians and humans were proud fighters in their own right, and they had to be kept that way. To do so, their skills would have to be refined in battle.

Sun Mengmeng added, "Don't include our human forces in your count. They've all been participating in the invasion of neighboring worlds, and humanity as a whole has grown far stronger than it has been before."

Zhang Lie nodded, adding, "There's no need to worry too much, Sage. The draconian world has changed dramatically. The draconians, humans, and all manner of other species will serve as excellent fighters."

The humans, in particular, were bolstered by the increased gains that they had received in the second realm as well as the limit-breaking potions that Zhang Lie had devised. They were incomparably stronger than the previous generation of hunters.

Zhang Lie continued, "With this strength as basis, even in a war of mythical proportions like this one, the draconian world won't lose too much of its forces. I guarantee it—after all, you're not the only large world participating in the war."

Sun Mengmeng continued, "On the battlefield, you don't necessarily have to be too much faster than others—just one step is enough."

Sun Xiaowu grumbled, "That's supposed to be when you're chased by a tiger, not on a battlefield, surely!"

Yang Ze said, "Well, the principle is the same. If you don't want to be cannon fodder, you just have to be stronger than those around you."

The draconian sage nodded approvingly. "I do feel quite a bit more confident given your words."

"And not only that," Zhang Lie added, "I can have Zhu arrange for a few peak- and disaster-grade lifeforms to fight alongside you."

Li Feng grinned. "As expected of our captain—he's been preparing for this well in advance!"

Sun Mengmeng asked, "Captain, do you have any plans for us during the death spirits' war?"

"Surely you must have some plans for us if you're forbidding us from joining the draconians." Yang Ze turned to Zhang Lie as well.

Chapter 948: Clamoring to Participate

Sun Mengmeng asked, "Captain, do you have any plans for us during the death spirits' war?"

"Surely you must have some plans for us if you're forbidding us from joining the draconians." Yang Ze turned to Zhang Lie as well.

Zhang Lie was just about to speak when sharp knocks rapped at the door. Even before the door opened, the draconian sage had used his authority as king to figure out who lay behind it.

"Your sister seems to be searching for you," he told Zhang Lie.

Zhang Lie wasn't surprised. Just as the draconian sage could invoke his authority to see who lay behind the door, Zhang Lie could use his power to do the same. "What's the matter, Hanxiang?"

Zhang Hanxiang opened the door, her face beaming. "Brother, look who I brought with me!"

Zhang Hanxiang moved aside, revealing a figure behind her that made the members of Team Zenith light up in excitement.

"Hong Xi!"

Standing behind Zhang Hanxiang was Hong Xi.

Zhang Lie had sensed Hong Xi behind Zhang Hanxiang near-immediately, and he wasn't too surprised. He smiled as expected. "Hong Xi, you've finally ascended to the third realm."

Hong Xi nodded. "I finished up my responsibilities on Mars. Reconstruction will take some time, and I left Jun Jiuxiao and Ye Xianchen in charge of those affairs. Subsequently, I handed my tasks in Limit in the second realm to my brother. With all that settled, I finally ascended."

Zhang Lie smiled. "Excellent timing. You've arrived just in time to participate in a mythic battle that will remain in the annals of the third realm."

Zhang Lie would be fighting in the thick of things, and he might not have the attention to spare for others. He couldn't take over the role of commander for the war.

The warlords, led by the four prime races, could be an independent force on the battlefield. Zhu herself could lead the lifeforms she controlled.

After succeeding in the trial that the realm had seen fit to bestow her, Zhu had lost all the negative side-effects that came as a result of her being a stowaway. Participating in this war would be much-needed training for her, as well as for the disaster-grade lifeforms that she was trying to evolve into mythic-grade. They needed to participate in as many of these large-scale battles as they could.

The humans would be led by the warlords; the draconian sage would take care of the draconians.

The problem rested with the fact that the draconian world consisted of more than just humans, draconians, and genetic lifeforms. There were factions and races of varying strength and number, which Zhang Lie intended to make use of on the battlefield.

The members of Team Zenith and the warlords had conquered many worlds, and there were bear-men, mammoths, greenskins, and so on in the draconian world.

These races wouldn't necessarily listen to the draconians. The draconian sage hadn't had time to come to an agreement with these races, who had been bested by the members of Team Zenith and would only follow their command.

In order for these forces to work in harmony with each other, it was imperative that there be an overall command in charge of the draconian world at large.

It would have been ideal for this command to consist of Zhang Lie and the members of Team Zenith, but Zhang Lie had to represent the Zongming world, and he didn't want the members of Team Zenith to participate in the war. The third-most suitable person would be the draconian sage, but he didn't intend to participate personally, either—he would be immensely difficult to replace if he were to die in battle somehow.

Hong Xi would be a perfect candidate to fill this role.

"Hong Xi, I name you commander of the draconian world's forces in resistance of the death spirits' invasion."

Hong Xi was gobsmacked. She had just ascended—she was nothing more than a newbie! Commander?

"Can I really do it?"

Zhang Lie nodded firmly. "You can."

"No, I can't!" Hong Xi's voice quavered.

Zhang Lie smiled gently. "You'll be fine. The other races are still cowed by the threat of Team Zenith. If you can explain to them what's going on, I'm sure they'll understand the benefits of cooperation. You'll be able to take advantage of the name of Team Zenith to serve as the battlefield commander."

The draconian sage understood what Zhang Lie was trying to do. "You're trying to form some sort of coalition among us cannon fodder?"

All the inhabitants of the draconian world could at least agree on two things: they didn't want the draconian world to be defeated, and they didn't want to die. In that case, they would have to use others as cannon fodder.

Zhang Lie continued, "The best approach for our survival is to gather together a large enough group of cannon fodder and compensate for lack of quality with quantity. That's the one chance that the draconian world has for survival on a battlefield with two massive foes."

The draconian sage was touched that Zhang Lie had thought so far ahead.

Zhang Hanxiang raised a hand. "I want to participate, too! I want to be part of this mythical battle!"

Zhang Lie scowled. "Ridiculous! Do you understand just how dangerous it is for you?"

"Of course!"

"What would you know? Do you know what the death spirits are like—or how shameless our allies, the superior worlds, can be? Do you know of the superior worlds that lord over this realm?"

Zhang Hanxiang replied excitedly, "No, I don't know any of that, but if it's a war that you're calling mythical, Brother, it has to be something truly impressive!"

Zhang Lie had never thought much of any of the draconian world's invasion attempts, and the fact that he was calling this war mythical revealed just how imposing and impressive in scope it would be.

Zhang Hanxiang's analysis was correct. The scope of this war would encompass the entirety of the third realm, the likes of which had never been seen and would likely never be seen again.

Zhang Lie sucked in a deep breath. "If you're unaware of your enemies, how can you expect to fare well in battle? You'd perish on the battlefield without realizing how you've died. Stay behind in the draconian world and wait for my return."

Zhang Hanxiang frowned and crossed her arms. "Can't you bring me along with you, Brother?"

"You know nothing of the enemy! It would be foolish to bring you with me."

Zhang Hanxiang protested, "But Hong Xi has just ascended as well! She doesn't know anything about the enemy, either—why would you let her become the battlefield commander?"

Zhang Lie clutched his head in exasperation. "The enemy we're facing this time is no joke. The death spirits are being led by the death spirit king, whose goal is to take over all three thousand worlds of the third realm and become the strongest existence within it."

Zhang Hanxiang frowned.

"That's only the start of his ambitions, too—he plans on using the third realm like a springboard from which to drain the first and second realms dry, before heading up into the fourth and fifth realms. His ambition is bolstered by overwhelming strength, and I can't afford to take care of others while in the heat of battle."

Hong Xi trembled and wanted to shrink back.

She had just advanced, and she didn't have any third-realm gene fragments to her name. For Zhang Lie to have set up such a foe for her—how was she meant to do it all?

Zhang Lie continued, "Our enemy is a terrifying foe, and our allies are unreliable and shameless. The only reason we're working together with them is because we can't let the death spirits succeed. The superior worlds' goal is to drag all three thousand worlds into the battle with them, hoping that as many of them perish as possible so that they can profit from those worlds afterwards."

In other words, they were allies only in name.

The strongest enemy they had faced to date, and the worst allies to have—there could be no worse combination.

Sun Mengmeng suggested, "Captain, considering the big picture, I believe it would be more appropriate for Hanxiang to be the battlefield commander."

Zhang Lie glared at Sun Mengmeng.

On the other hand, Zhang Hanxiang seemed very touched. "Thank you, Mengmeng!"

Sun Mengmeng smiled gently at Zhang Hanxiang.

Yang Ze thought for a moment, then added, "I agree with Sun Mengmeng. Hong Xi has just advanced, and even if we tell everyone that she's your disciple, it'll be hard for her to gain traction. Her roots in the third realm are too shallow."

Zhang Lie pointed at his sister. "Is Hanxiang any better?"

Sun Mengmeng replied, "At the very least, she arrived in the third realm before Hong Xi, and more people are aware of her. Hong Xi's a perfectly fine candidate, but Hanxiang's been here longer, and they all know that she's your sister. The draconians and humans, at least, will do their best to protect her."

Everyone understood that a commander was necessary for the battle.

The warlords and members of Team Zenith had taken down too many worlds, and the various races would frequently clash with each other unless they were appropriately controlled. An apt commander was necessary.

However, these races only feared the warlords and members of Team Zenith, so the commander of these forces had to have some level of strength, as well as guards composed of humans and draconians alike.

Human guards were particularly important: human hunters had participated in the invasion of nearby worlds under the direction of the members of Team Zenith, and the races feared and respected human strength.

From this perspective, Zhang Hanxiang, who was known to the third realm and a familiar face to the human hunters, was a better choice than Hong Xi.

Chapter 949: Commander Hanxiang

In terms of status and identity, Zhang Lie's sister would indeed serve this role better than Hong Xi.

The draconian sage nodded. "I agree with Sun Mengmeng. Zhang Lie, you mentioned that you wouldn't be able to remain in the third realm forever. Neither will you be able to protect your sister for life."

If Zhang Hanxiang were to become the battlefield commander, Zhang Lie would surely end up protecting the draconian army in battle. As he said, he wasn't going to send his sister to the battlefield to die, so if Zhang Hanxiang were ever in danger, Zhang Lie would surely protect her.

Zhang Hanxiang would simultaneously be the battlefield commander and the shield that would save the draconian army's lives.

Although the draconian sage had made up his mind to have the draconians participate in this mythical war, forging themselves anew in the heat of battle, it was too large a stage, and the combatants too strong, for the draconian sage to truly feel secure about their odds.

It was as though the death spirits and the superior worlds were two massive cogs. The draconian fighters were like a rock that would be ground to powder between them, crushed in an instant.

The draconian sage wanted his people to grow stronger, not to die needlessly. With Zhang Lie to protect them, his fighters would be far more likely to survive despite the enormity of the war.

The draconian sage continued, "Your sister isn't a flower to be carefully cultivated within a greenhouse, and you won't be able to assist her for life. If you want her to grow, she needs to have these experiences for herself."

Sun Mengmeng nodded firmly. "The draconian sage is right. Zhang Hanxiang's a rather strong hunter in her own right, thanks to your help, and I'm certain she'll be able to protect herself."

Although the draconian sage was pushing for this decision partially for his own gain, his words weren't wrong.

Hong Xi added, "Master, I'm not doubting your decision, but I do lack the confidence to become the battlefield commander and take on a mythical boss almost immediately after my ascension into the third realm."

Zhang Hanxiang stepped forward. "Brother, I'm not making a fuss needlessly, and neither am I trying to act spoiled. I truly do want to participate in this battle so I can improve myself. As your sister, I can't be holding you back all the time. I don't want everyone to refer to me as your sister—I want to grow strong enough that they refer to you as my brother."

Zhang Lie replied seriously, "Are you certain? Even the draconian world isn't strong enough to be more than cannon fodder in this war—and it's at the peak of large worlds!"

"I understand."

"Your opponent isn't simply a king of the realm, but an ambitious madman who wants to consume the entirety of the third realm. Our teammates are hoping that we'll die so that they can pilfer our resources. Even so, will you join the battlefield?"

Zhang Hanxiang nodded again. "I understand how difficult this will be for me, Brother, but I insist."

Zhang Lie sighed. "Very well. If you insist, you can be the commander responsible for the draconian world's combined forces. However, since you lack experience, and Hong Xi has commanded forces in the second realm and on Mars, I'd like to appoint her as your deputy commander to keep you in check."

Zhang Hanxiang frowned. "Brother, won't you give me more trust?"

Hong Xi stood erect. "Yes, Captain! I'm familiar with Hanxiang, and I'll keep an eye out for her."

Zhang Lie nodded. "I trust in your abilities. Don't let Hanxiang lead you astray."

"Brother!" Zhang Hanxiang sighed.

By the time all this was settled, the warlords had returned after receiving Team Zenith's summons. They had been scattered throughout the frontlines, but were now brought together once again. Zhang Lie explained what was going on to them.

"The death spirits have broken past the superior worlds' defensive barricade, and war will sweep over the three thousand worlds of the third realm. In the coming days, I'll lead all of you to fight as representatives of the Zongming world.

None of the warlords present questioned his decision. It mattered not to them whether they represented the draconian world or the Zongming world—neither belonged to them, after all. The draconian world contained humans, and most of them had never heard of the Zongming world—but the important thing was that Zhang Lie was leading them.

Xing Ying raised a hand. "Who are the death spirits?"

Zhang Lie had only explained the relationship between the death spirits and black spirits, as well as the death spirits' ambition, to the members of Team Zenith. The warlords were unaware of that connection.

"Do you know of the dark spirits?" Zhang Lie asked.

Xing Ying nodded. He had watched Fang Yi encounter and subsequently fight against the black spirits in the past as part of Zhang Lie's trials.

"The death spirits rule over the black spirits. The death spirit king is a madman who's trying to swallow up the realm. We'll be representing a superior world in a war that will sweep over the realm."

"And what are these superior worlds?"

"They're the strongest worlds in the third realm. There are ten of them in all, nine of which are ancient existences, and the tenth of which is new—the Zongming world, which we'll be representing."

Although the warlords didn't quite understand what the death spirits and death spirit king represented, they knew that these death spirits had to be dangerous threats if they could threaten the third realm at large. Such threats naturally had to be removed.

"For Zhang Lie, the champion of mankind!"

"For Zhang Lie, the champion of mankind!"

"For Zhang Lie, the champion of mankind!"

Whether or not they understood was irrelevant; they just had to shout to boost morale.

Zhang Lie had hypnotized them all with his disaster-grade mistmeld clam soulshard, and the warlords were little more than fools who couldn't think for themselves by now.

Zhang Lie nodded in satisfaction upon seeing the warlords respond so fervently.

Afterwards, Zhang Hanxiang and Hong Xi, with the help of Team Zenith, began to pick out strong fighters among the people they had conquered. Zhang Lie had intended to help them as well, but upon witnessing how smoothly everything was progressing, he simply smiled, nodded, and walked away.

Team Zenith and the warlords had taken down a shocking number of worlds. Team Zenith had made a name for itself; after the dissolution of the Worldpact Coalition, the neighboring worlds had been unable to muster up any further resistance. They either submitted to the draconian world or were killed. Given these circumstances, many neighboring worlds chose to surrender.

When these worlds were informed that they would have to send a battalion of fighters to fight in a war against the death spirits, they refused to believe what they heard. A few even thought that this was a ploy from the humans and the warlords who had conquered them. Although they didn't dare reject the order outright, they tried to delay or push it off.

Chapter 950: A Demonstration of Power

Xing Ying's eyes narrowed. "It looks like we'll have to remind them of our strength."

Zhang Lie waved a hand. "It's not a problem. Once the superior worlds contact them, they'll beg to join us. We'll head off to the superior worlds' meeting for now."

Zhang Lie motioned the disaster-grade multicolored dragon over.

After being fed by Zhu for some time, and after consuming a portion of the world's energy, the disaster-grade multicolored dragon had undergone a rather impressive evolution. Gold Comet, whose evolution enhanced its speed rather than its size, was the exception rather than the norm. Most disaster-grade lifeforms grew larger, like the multicolored dragon.

Its body had grown larger by a third again of its volume, and the radiant gem-like scales studding its body were even more eye-catching. It looked like a phantasmagorical creature, glowing in all the colors of the rainbow. Its large wings covered up the sky, and the crown of light that had condensed over its head had gained a rainbow-colored corona.

The disaster-grade multicolored dragon was just a step away from monarch-grade, but the threshold would be a difficult one to cross.

The warlords stepped into the palace atop the multicolored dragon. As its wings flapped, the dragon took to the air, far faster now than he had ever been before. It didn't take long before they returned to the Zongming world anew.

The moment the disaster-grade dragon landed in the Zongming world, Li Zongming sensed it. Overjoyed by his son-in-law's return, Li Zongming immediately teleported to the palace on the dragon's back, causing the warlords to look at each other warily.

Zhang Lie waved a hand, calming them down. "Don't worry, it's an ally."

Li Zongming sighed in relief, "Zhang Lie, you're finally back! We've been waiting for you."

"Are you ready?"

Li Zongming shrugged. "There's nothing much I have to prepare. I'm just waiting for the envoys to return."

Li Zongming noticed the warlords gathering behind Zhang Lie. "These are your reinforcements?" he asked.

"These are warlords from the third realm, yes, the strongest hunters from my dimension. They're among the top three of the most powerful forces under my command."

The most powerful force was undoubtedly Team Zenith, but the second-most powerful wasn't the warlords. Rather, it was the genetic lifeforms that Zhu was taking care of. The third-most powerful force was the band of warlords. However, the genetic lifeforms in his farm were difficult to corral and command, and the warlords were superior in that regard.

Li Zongming nodded. "Very good."

"Where's Qianlin?" Zhang Lie asked.

"In her room." Li Zongming dipped his head with a knowing smile.

Zhang Lie turned around. "Prepare for the upcoming meeting. I have an important task to take care of."

He had to go spend some time with his girlfriend—there was no more important or sacrosanct task than that.

Zhang Lie continued, "I'll let all of you know when it's time to set off."

He ran off into the distance, making his way into Li Qianlin's room. When she saw him, she asked, "How are things in the draconian world?"

"I assigned them some tasks to accomplish before the war starts in earnest. Did you miss me the last two days?"

"A litt—no, of course not! I'm not one of those vixens who'll stick to you after being away from you for a single day," Li Qianlin corrected herself hastily.

Zhang Lie smirked. "So you admit you miss me?"

Li Qianlin blushed. "Who would be interested in a fellow like you? It's just that I feel a bit less safe without you around..."

Li Zongming coughed politely outside the door, dispelling the heated atmosphere that was starting to form around the couple. Li Qianlin's cheeks turned redder.

Zhang Lie turned and called out, "What's the matter?"

"The superior worlds' envoys are here!"

"I'll be setting off with your father, then."

Li Qianlin frowned in worry. "Take care of Father, please, as well as yourself."

"Don't worry—I'm hardly a weakling. I can take down a few superior worlds even if they decide to go against me," Zhang Lie reassured her. "Even if not, I can at least run away."

The superior worlds' envoys were drenched in pride so thick Zhang Lie could almost see it oozing off them. Disdain was written in their every action and expression.

"I'll praise you for not running away, at least. You might be a new king of the realm, but you're not stupid. It'll save me some time."

Li Zongming asked, "Where will the meeting be held?"

The envoy snorted. "You don't need to know that—just follow behind us. You're just here out of formality—or do you really think you can compare to the other eight kings of the realm?"

Zhang Lie very much wanted to punch the arrogant envoy in the face.

"Bring all of your men along. The kings are interested in inspecting the forces that your world can bring to bear."

Zhang Lie beckoned the disaster-grade multicolored dragon over, whereas Li Zongming summoned his golden-winged roc. The warlords had all gathered within the palace on the dragon's back.

The envoy smirked at the disaster-grade dragon. "Is this all you've got?"

Zhang Lie rolled up his sleeves and was about to smash a fist into the envoy when Li Zongming suddenly pulled him back. "Tolerate it for just a bit longer, please," he hissed.

Punching the envoy now would only complicate matters.

The envoy ignored Zhang Lie's actions and pulled out a rock, from which Zhang Lie could sense the energies of at least five kings of superior worlds. The rock itself bore traces of heaven's might.

"This is—the product of combining the power of multiple kings of superior worlds?" Zhang Lie asked, frowning.

The envoy had no intention of answering. He smashed the rock apart.

Shards of rock fell into the void, whereupon they interacted with arcane runes and snippets of natural law. Subsequently, those laws began to morph and shift as Li Zongming's forehead beaded with sweat. A tunnel appeared before them, its entrance ringed by nine different colored energies.

Scarlet flame, blood-red clouds, an ancient mystery, death and desolation—all these concepts, wrapped around each other, formed a mysterious tunnel at its center.

"Let's go." The envoy stepped through the tunnel without looking back.

