

U. Warlord 971

Chapter 971: The Frost Spirits' Commander

Zhang Lie commanded, "Bring me toward your camp. I'd like to meet your commander."

The armored frost spirit asked, "You want to see our general?"

"I do."

The frost spirit nodded. "Very well. I'll lead you there immediately."

The frost spirits brought Zhang Lie and the warlords toward the alien encampment, which had been built atop a massive chunk of ground and rock.

Upon witnessing the arrival of Zhang Lie and his forces, the aliens looked toward him in a jumble of intent: some scrutinized him, judged him, curiously looked at him, warily looked at him, stared angrily at him, were cautious around him...

Zhang Lie instructed his troops, "Have a rest nearby for now. I'll meet with the frost spirits' commander."

The frost spirits brought Zhang Lie past the aliens, toward the heart of the encampment, a region sealed by ice. A chilly wind swept across them as the temperature of the air dropped precipitously. Zhang Lie's strength meant that he could bear with the change in the environment without any ill effects.

The frost spirits all lived in igloos. Many of them floated out of their igloos and considered Zhang Lie curiously.

The armored frost spirit beckoned Zhang Lie to the center of the icy region. A glacier lay there, and atop the glacier was a castle carved out of ice.

The armored frost spirit stood at the entrance to the castle and reported loudly, "General, the commander of the Zongming world would like to request an audience!"

A frigid breeze blew by as the gate to the castle opened wide. An authoritative voice spoke, "Enter."

The armored frost spirit brought Zhang Lie into the castle. Just like its exterior, its interior was pure ice, including all decorations and ornamentations. They entered a throne room deep within the castle, where a three-meter tall frost spirit sat on a throne.

Unlike the other frost spirits, the frost spirit commander's body looked solid and physical, rather than ethereal. He wore armor carved out of everlasting ice, with a dragonskin cloak tied around his neck, and he looked intimidating and imposing.

This was the frost spirits' commander, general of the white world.

Zhang Lie and the commander considered each other.

Given the aura of rime and frost the frost spirits' commander was emitting, it seemed as though he was almost at the level of a superior king, much like the four great lords of the xuluo.

The armored frost spirit bowed. "I'll depart and await further orders, Commander."

The commander turned to Zhang Lie "I expect my men treated you politely."

Did a sneak attack count as being impolite?

The commander continued, "Your troops are rather lacking in number, I see."

The white world had contributed a million troops, whereas Zhang Lie had brought roughly 900,000. The difference wasn't particularly significant.

In fact, they had gathered about the same number of alien forces from their respective jurisdictions. The Zongming world's summons had been particularly effective thanks to the scaleman world and its neighbors seeking revenge; the difference in troops came down to what the respective superior worlds could supply.

The frost spirits' general said, "The Zongming world is a newly evolved world, after all, and I understand it might not have too many forces to spare. I didn't expect anything of you in battle, so it doesn't matter."

Zhang Lie rolled his eyes. "The Zongming world might be a newly evolved world, but that doesn't mean our forces are inferior. We've brought less troops not because we can't bring more, but because more would be unnecessary."

"Hoh? It looks like you're rather arrogant, aren't you?"

"There's simply no need to bring more troops than I've already gathered. You don't have to worry about our strength, either—I can beat your million troops by myself."

The frost spirits' commander laughed. "Ha! I'll look forward to the demonstration of your strength in combat, then."

"What's the situation like?"

"On the battlefield?"

"Where else?"

The frost spirit commander shared whatever information he had. After all, they were comrades in battle, and regardless of how much the frost spirit commander looked down on the Zongming world's forces, it didn't make sense to cause any conflict at the moment.

"The death spirit king recently destroyed Blood Heaven and is still in the process of digesting his spoils. This shattered battlefield is the remnants of Blood Heaven, which was destroyed during the fight between the death spirit king and the blood king.

"There are four different factions currently present on the battlefield: the Zongming world's, the white world's, the death spirits', and finally—"

"What's the last faction?" Zhang Lie was quite curious.

"—the remnants of the blood world's forces," the commander replied.

Zhang Lie blinked in surprise. "There are troops who survived the battle?"

"They're partly composed of citizens who managed to escape while the death spirits were attacking, and partly composed of warriors from Blood Heaven. Regardless of their provenance, they've all joined the forces against the death spirits."

The frost spirit commander asked, "Can you share your plans for the battles ahead?"

"I haven't made any special arrangements. At the moment, we're simply waiting for the forces from other worlds to arrive."

Suddenly, there was a hubbub from outside the castle. The frost spirit commander frowned and raised his voice. "What's going on?"

A frost spirit scout rushed into the throne room. "Commander, something's wrong! The death spirits are attacking!"

The frost spirit commander smirked. "It looks like our opponents aren't going to give us time to get ready."

Zhang Lie and the frost spirit commander marched out of the castle to see a hundred black octahedral crystals floating toward them from the skies.

The octahedral crystals looked like two square pyramids joined together at their base, one inverted and one not. Around each octahedral crystal floated three small pyramids. Zhang Lie had seen these octahedral crystals before—they were the battleships that the death spirits employed.

"It's time that we prepare for battle," the frost spirit commander shouted.

Zhang Lie shattered space and emerged at the center of the Zongming world's forces, shocking everyone in sight.

Zhang Lie didn't have time to explain. "Prepare for battle!"

The warlords mobilized immediately, and Hong Xi began dividing the aliens into mobile forces.

As expected, the superior worlds' forces were far more used to such rapid deployment. As they were starting to get ready, the superior worlds' forces had already set off—including a group of limbs without bodies, rolling heads, and struggling kidney-shaped objects with gills.

Waves of these monstrosities poured out from a corner of the battlefield, numbering a million in total. The alien forces that were in front of the monstrosities shrieked as they ran off in fear. The slower among them were devoured directly by the monstrosities, shocking everyone else in sight. It was as though the monstrosities were enemies rather than allies.

Those troops that were devoured by the monstrosities underwent a monstrous transformation themselves, and they also began attacking their allies. The monstrosities swept up everything in their path like a flood as they headed toward the death spirits' battleships...

Chapter 972: Cannon Fodder First

Zhang Lie grimaced. "Ignore the commotion. As I mentioned earlier, don't approach the world of black fog or the unclean worlds' forces. Beware of the death spirits—but also of our allies."

The draconians and various aliens gulped. Although Zhang Lie had warned all of them before, there was a marked difference between a verbal warning and what they were observing before their very eyes.

In the last big war in the third realm, many such aliens had been devoured by the unclean world's monstrosities unknowingly.

The aliens representing the Zongming world breathed a sigh of relief that they were far from the path of those monstrosities, who treated all the aliens like nothing but cannon fodder. Either the aliens would charge into the enemy lines out of fright, or they would transform into monstrosities themselves and bolster the unclean world's strength.

Many would rather die than become such monstrosities.

The monstrosities didn't seem to have a single leader or commander; they dominated the battlefield by sheer numbers.

The frost spirits had also finished their preparations and set off. Compared to the monstrosities of the unclean world, the frost spirits were far more normal.

Snow began to fall over the battlefield, and a blizzard roared. The frost spirits' forces charged forward amidst the blizzard, each riding on a spectral, snowy-white horse. The frost spirit commander followed on a massive chariot. The frost spirits were the vanguard of their forces; the aliens they controlled followed tightly behind.

Hong Xi reported, "Master, our preparations are complete!"

Zhang Lie nodded. "We'll set off immediately! Don't lose out to the other superior worlds' forces and have them look down on you."

Following Zhang Lie's command, the warlords took the lead. Zhang Hanxiang shouted, "Charge!"

The aliens and draconians set off together, the aliens surrounding the draconians, and the draconians surrounding Zhang Hanxiang. This was a formation Zhang Lie had devised.

Zhang Hanxiang wondered, "Hold on, as commander, why am I in the middle of the Zongming forces? Shouldn't I be at the vanguard?"

Hong Xi rolled her eyes. "That's not your role. You need to be thinking about how best to reposition our forces and to deal with unexpected variables in battle, not participating in direct combat."

Zhang Hanxiang gritted her teeth. "I feel like I've been scammed!"

Hong Xi rolled her eyes.

Zhang Hanxiang continued, "Brother said that you'd aid me, didn't he? What if you became the commander and I participated in the vanguard instead?"

"That's ridiculous! Look at the situation before us. Do you think it's reasonable for us to charge forward?"

Zhang Hanxiang scowled. "Isn't everyone doing that? Even Brother and the warlords are right there in front! Why can't we do the same? This is unfair!"

Hong Xi rolled her eyes again. "Those on the frontlines will die first."

"But then, why would the other two superior worlds' forces try to take the lead? If we don't catch up, we're going to lose out!"

"The unclean world's monstrosities are thoughtless, and the frost spirits are overconfident in their strength. They haven't analyzed their enemies carefully."

As Hong Xi and Zhang Hanxiang spoke, the death spirits made their moves. The pyramids that hovered around each octahedral battleship flashed with purple light.

Hong Xi continued, "Whoever rushes forward now will die."

All the battleships emitted purple light at once, dyeing the sky and battlefield a lurid purple.

Xing Ying, who had been scouting at the front, reported, "It's a high-energy attack!"

The death spirits' battleships finished charging up and shot beam after beam of purple lasers toward the vanguard of the allied forces in a wave of screams and shouts.

A number of those beams shot toward Zhang Lie and the warlords. The warlords prepared to defend themselves—only to see Zhang Lie punch forward and dissipate the energy from those lasers.

The warlords looked at Zhang Lie in shock. The purple lasers had a frightening concentration of energy which even they could keenly sense. None of the warlords were confident in being able to shield against such a barrage by themselves, but Zhang Lie had easily done it.

Zhang Lie looked toward the battlefield down below, which was suffering from the laser barrage. He sighed. "Science truly does change war."

The death spirit king was a madman, but he was also the only one in the third realm who could boast of significant research and investment into science.

Compared to the death spirits, the other superior worlds might as well be barbarians. After all, the death spirit king and his research advancements had allowed him to break free of the control of all the other superior worlds.

The charge of the allied forces was completely crushed by the fusillade of purple lasers.

Hong Xi shrugged. "Didn't I tell you? Those people who rushed forward perished because of their haste."

Zhang Hanxiang's eyes widened. "Can you predict the future?"

"No, of course not. I'm simply more careful—more experienced, let's say. You'll understand once you participate in more wars. The death spirits are an enemy that took all the other superior worlds to even handle. How could they fold so quickly? They would surely have some means of dealing with the vanguard."

Hong Xi had had the Zongming forces hold back so that the unclean world's monstrosities and the frost spirits could scout for them and uncover the death spirits' repertoire of attacks.

The frost spirit commander was aware of what the death spirits could do, but he nevertheless had his men charge forward because of absolute confidence in his own strength. He believed that he could handle whatever the death spirits could bring to bear against him—but the moment he saw his troops suffer and perish, he couldn't sit still any longer.

He punched forward as the temperature on the battlefield dropped precipitously. A white glow, like an avalanche, split the sky. A flurry of snow blocked the purple lasers as the frost spirit commander's fist shot toward the death spirits' octahedral battleships.

The pyramids surrounding each battleship began to spin rapidly, forming hundreds of black twisters that coalesced into one, forming a huge barrier against the avalanche that threatened to overwhelm them.

The frost spirit commander scowled. His attack had done nothing to the death spirits at all—at this rate, the situation would spiral out of control...

Chapter 973: Cruel and Unusual

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

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

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

Ripples of energy spread out from Zhang Lie, filling up space and distorting it. Waves coalesced into a flood that enveloped the battlefield and smashed against the death spirits' black twisters.

The black twisters were dissipated by the pale-blue sea, resulting in an explosion of genetic energy that shook the entire shattered battlefield.

The boulders and chunks of land crashed into each other, sending rubble all over as though the land itself were splitting apart. The closest of the death spirits' battleships suffered the most direct impact. They smashed into each other, buffeted by the shockwaves from the impact, and fell from the skies.

Everyone looked open-mouthed at the source of the attack, Zhang Lie.

That was frightening.

The frost spirit commander himself was shocked. Zhang Lie's attack was as strong as that of a superior king—he had only ever seen such destructive prowess from the frost queen herself. In that case, Zhang Lie's own strength...

The frost spirit commander simply couldn't imagine that a newly evolved world could field such a strong troop—it was inconceivable that the Zongming world could be so strong.

From the frost spirit commander's perspective, it was as though a planet that had just developed interstellar travel simultaneously possessed weapons strong enough to annihilate planets—as though a newly founded kingdom somehow had access to nuclear weapons and was using it in battle.

Even the death spirits were perplexed. They didn't know what to do, whether to keep fighting or to turn tail and run.

The battlefield grew even more chaotic than before.

Seizing the opportunity, the frost spirit commander shouted, "Everyone, charge!"

Hong Xi also saw the opportunity to strike, and she too commanded the Zongming troops to charge forward. As expected of a combat specialist, she had gained significant experience in command during the second realm.

The death spirits' octahedral battleships, after a momentary panic, finally reorganized. By that point, however, the allied forces were already closing in on the death spirits.

The death spirits responded quickly. Large quantities of black spirits appeared from the skies, flooding the battlefield like the tide. They charged toward the superior worlds' forces and clashed with them.

The most impactful clash wasn't from the frost spirits or from Zhang Lie's forces, but rather the monstrosities of the unclean world. The troops fleeing for their lives from the monstrosities were corralled toward the black spirits and forced into a confrontation.

Behind them was a horde of monstrosities pushing forward, as though two huge titans were about to crash against each other.

The fleeing aliens either had to kill the black spirits before them to escape the clutches of the monstrosities, or they would be devoured by the monstrosities and transformed into one of their number.

Zhang Lie couldn't help but pity the aliens who were trapped by the monstrosities, unable to escape from the front or the back.

Even so, Zhang Lie didn't intend to lend a helping hand. Cruel though this technique was, it significantly enhanced the aliens' combat ability. They were a ragtag bunch formed from the forces of various worlds, and it was unlikely that they would be able to accomplish much beyond serving as cannon fodder or distractions for the black spirits.

The most important reason the superior worlds had gathered them here was to prevent them from launching a sneak attack on the superior worlds while the war was ongoing.

In truth, the war would be decided by the superior worlds.

Unlike Zhang Lie's past life, the death spirits' forces hadn't expanded all over the third realm, and there was no need for large numbers of forces to combat the death spirits' marauding parties.

The unclean world's unethical methods forcibly united the alien troops: either they charged forward and slaughtered everything in their path, or they would suffer a fate worse than death.

Unethical though it might be, this method was uncommonly effective. The alien forces demonstrated surprising strength, almost on par with that of a superior world's forces.

Of course, Zhang Lie would never make use of such tactics with his own troops. Not only were such tactics unethical and inhumane, there were scoundrels among his troops, ones who acknowledged him as mentor and master to the king.

Zhang Lie had a conscience; he was hardly like the mess of gray fluid or the king of evil, who had concocted such a psychopathic plan.

Although Zhang Lie made no motion to stop the monstrosities' assault, Zhang Hanxiang could hardly remain as calm. "This is ridiculous! It's a strategy right out of the middle ages—they're treating the aliens like slaves!"

The crusades of the middle ages made use of slaves as cannon fodder. Troops followed behind the slaves on chariots, driving them forward with whips and spears.

Of course, there were atrocities beyond even that. One of the most shocking tactics of war was to take civilians as prisoners of war and force them to assault enemy cities. If the enemy city refused to open its gates, the enemy civilians would be killed right before their eyes. If the enemy city opened its gates, then the allies would be able to take down the city without doing anything.

Zhang Hanxiang was enraged. The draconians had been at peace since her entry into the third realm, and the human forces had focused on outward expansion. There was little inward strife, and the draconians and humans got along well. Zhang Hanxiang had a number of friends among the draconians and cordial relations with the aliens of the draconian world...

Chapter 974: Rules of Combat

Upon witnessing the unclean world's atrocities, the young Zhang Hanxiang couldn't sit still.

Zhang Lie noticed his sister's unease, but he wasn't too concerned.

The superior worlds of antiquity treated everyone else as lower-class citizens, though the king of evil was the most extreme even among the superior kings. In essence, the king of evil and the king of black fog were both one step away from becoming the next death spirit king—they simply hadn't done anything that would warrant equally harsh censure yet.

Zhang Hanxiang clenched her fists, cursing at her powerlessness, unable to do anything to change the aliens' plight.

The other aliens sighed upon witnessing what the unclean world's monstrosities were up to. Weakness was original sin.

Hong Xi rolled her eyes at Zhang Hanxiang. "You're wrong."

Zhang Hanxiang criticized, "Don't you think these monstrosities are truly monstrous? All life should be respected—the ends don't necessarily justify the means!"

"No, you're wrong."

Zhang Hanxiang was so infuriated she began to laugh. "And where am I wrong? Surely you don't think what they're doing is just, or moral, or right!"

Hong Xi responded calmly, "From an ethical standpoint, you're quite right. However, you're mistaken about two points. First, this isn't a tactic aimed at slaves. In ancient China, one tactic of war was to tie a torch to a bull's tail, then to light it on fire. At that point, the bull will charge straight ahead, dealing as much damage as if it had a rider on it."

"Then you're simply treating these aliens like livestock!"

These aliens were intelligent lifeforms too. How could Hong Xi justify treating them in such a manner? Zhang Hanxiang was stupefied.

"I'm not discussing tactics of war with you, Hong Xi! You—it's like you're turning into my brother!"

Zhang Hanxiang was looking at the situation from the perspective of morality, and Hong Xi was treating it like a discussion of war tactics. It was as though one party had brought up love, and the other principles of physics.

Hong Xi sniffed. "You're mistaken again. If your brother were here, he wouldn't even bother pointing out these mistakes—he'd just ignore you."

Hong Xi frowned at herself. Even she felt as though she should have been more affected by the scene.

"I expect the pressure and stress I'm suffering from having to command such a large group of forces is taking its toll on me," she analyzed calmly. "My thoughts and emotions have changed."

Zhang Hanxiang asked, "What's the second mistake I made?"

"Those aliens are warriors, not slaves."

Zhang Hanxiang:...

Hong Xi wasn't wrong, but even so, the unclean world's actions were too inhumane.

Hong Xi shook her head. "I won't comment on others' tactics. At the very least, if it means that my teammates and companions will be saved, as the commander, I'll use the dirtiest tactics I know of."

"I can't say I agree with the unclean world's tactics, but it is effective, and it benefits the rest of us. Don't you think so?"

Zhang Hanxiang didn't know what to think. It was true that the unclean world's underhanded tactics would prevent the death of some of their own forces. But was she to pity those warriors chased by the monstrosities, to get angry, or to be relieved?

Hong Xi shrugged. "Victory in war is built on the bodies of the dead. Being overly merciful to others is equivalent to being cruel to ourselves."

These monstrosities, which had been birthed by the king of evil, possessed near-limitless regenerative abilities. The black spirits were unable to kill the monstrosities, but the monstrosities could easily devour the black spirits.

The only problem was that the monstrosities would also devour all allied forces in the vicinity. Of course, it was hardly as though they were invincible on the battlefield—the death spirits' battleships had purple lasers which would evaporate the gray fluid that constituted the monstrosities.

At the start of the fight, before Zhang Lie could do anything, the purple lasers had wiped out a large swathe of the monstrosities.

The frost spirit commander screeched shrilly, summoning a blizzard as he did so. The sound waves seemed able to penetrate the souls of those who heard it, allies and enemies alike. Large patches of the black spirits were frozen solid. Alien fighters rushed forward and shattered the ice.

Compared to the unclean world's tactics, the white world's tactics were far more ordinary. The frost spirits and the alien fighters they commanded acted in harmony to take down the black spirits.

Whether the superior worlds' forces behaved largely like those of the unclean world or those of the white world remained to be seen.

The death spirits unleashed another barrage of attacks.

The warlords rushed forward, stepping through the air as they swept aside horde after horde of black spirits.

Whenever a death spirit battleship fell from the skies, it cracked open to unleash a new tide of black spirits. As black cloth bandages covered the battlefield, a group of death spirits, wearing black cloaks, with black masks over their faces and scepters in their hands, emerged from their battleships.

"Are you cowards finally emerging from your shells?"

After the death spirit king swallowed the will of his world, the death spirits grew far less populous than before. That, combined with the fact that they waged endless war, led Zhang Lie to suspect that each battleship was commanded by just a single death spirit.

The death spirits wore unusual masks, which gave off an unknown light. Affixed to the forehead of each mask was a mysterious tablet.

The scepters in their hands were shaped like ankhs. They raised those scepters high into the air. Purple light gathered around the scepters and shot out through the eye of each ankh, straight at the heart of the allied forces.

The allied forces continued charging forward, only to be blocked by black bandages from the battleships.

The death spirits looked toward Zhang Lie, hovering in the sky. Their eyes, like those of a cobra, seemed to pierce his soul.

Zhang Lie ignored the death spirits. The pale blue genetic energy around his body turned black and rose from his body like black fog.

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

The death spirits floated into the air. Three black pyramids revolved around each one as they flew toward Zhang Lie.

Gold Comet whizzed to Zhang Lie's side, its wings whirring in a threatening fashion.

Zhang Lie asked, "You want to participate in the battle?"

Gold Comet held up its two scythes in the shape of a cross, nodding seriously.

Zhang Lie patted Gold Comet's back. "You're my secret weapon, and I hadn't planned on revealing your talents just yet, but if you want to participate, go right ahead!"

Chapter 975: The Reinforcements Arrive

The pyramids that revolved around the death spirits activated their protective protocols and spawned transparent shields around them.

The death spirits looked around, perplexed by what was going on, when long scars suddenly appeared on the surfaces of the pyramids, causing them to fall from the sky.

The death spirits began to sweat. Gold Comet had moved so quickly that none of the death spirits had been able to react. If not for the pyramids' automated protective systems, the death spirits would have died.

While the death spirits shook in fear, Gold Comet turned back and brandished its scythes in preparation for a second assault. Just as the death spirits raised their scepters, sparkling with purple light, their heads fell from their necks.

After the slaughter of the death spirits, Gold Comet flew toward the death spirits' battleships. Scars began to appear on the surface of those ships, which likewise began to fall from the sky.

Gold Comet whizzed through the air, criss-crossing the domain of the death spirits' battleships. Where it flew by, a battleship would fall. It dominated over the battlefield, moving so quickly that no battleship could catch up to it. A banquet of slaughter unfolded.

The frost spirit commander was likewise in a heated battle, but he didn't shine in comparison to Zhang Lie and Gold Comet. Although he was close to the level of a superior king, that difference was a steep boundary he had yet to cross.

As the scales of victory tipped toward the allied forces, something unusual occurred.

More and more octahedral battleships appeared in the sky, so densely packed that they appeared to be a black cloud. Zhang Lie didn't count them carefully, but there had to be at least a few hundreds of thousands of them.

Even Zhang Lie couldn't help but praise, "As expected of an existence that can destroy superior worlds—they have the power to back up their invasion."

Even after destroying Blood Heaven, the death spirits were still able to keep fighting against the allied superior worlds.

If any other pair of superior worlds were to fight with each other, they would both suffer massive losses and be unable to do anything for the short term. The death spirits, however, retained much of their power.

It was evident that the death spirits had long since possessed power beyond that of an ordinary superior world. Furthermore, the death spirit king, who wielded the most power among the death spirits, had yet to make his appearance.

Zhang Lie was getting a headache—the war against the death spirits was playing out completely differently compared to in his past life.

In his past life, the death spirits' war had spread throughout the realm. Zhang Lie hadn't participated in the initial assault, only in the subsequent resistance against the death spirits.

If he remembered correctly, in his past life, the allied superior worlds had waged a particularly large battle against the death spirits. They had won, but it was a Pyrrhic victory, particularly for the alien forces. Only one in ten survived the mythical battle.

The death spirits didn't have an easy time, either. After the allied superior worlds suffered a tremendous defeat, they were forced to source more cannon fodder from the rest of the third realm.

It was difficult for Zhang Lie to deal with so many battleships by himself. The pyramids that floated around the battleships merged into a cohesive whole, sparkling with purple light.

Just then, behind the death spirits, wormhole after wormhole opened up.

Blinding sunlight illuminated the shattered battlefield as thousands of suns appeared from one wormhole. On closer inspection, these suns turned out to be giant sunbirds, flaring with golden light. Tens of thousands of chariots emerged, like a flood composed of solar flares.

The horses tethered to the chariots themselves gave off golden light. Their mane looked like golden flames. They galloped through the air, leaving a trail of flame behind them. Within each chariot were mighty warriors dressed in golden armor. Despite the solar king's odious personality, Zhang Lie had to admit that his troops had outstanding flair.

The solar corps—these were the elite troops of the solar world, comparable to the frost spirits' army of the white world.

During the meeting between the superior kings, Zhang Lie had destroyed fifty of these sunbirds in one fell swoop, but this was no major accomplishment. They were elites of the solar king, but just that—they didn't represent the forces that the solar king could truly bring to bear.

In fact, the solar king had tens of thousands of such sunbirds—the larger part of which was currently present on the battlefield.

Zhang Lie had fought with the solar corps in his past life, and he had at least a basic understanding of them, though much of what he knew had been learned from his comrades-in-arms.

The frost spirit commander gritted his teeth. "They sure picked a good time to appear."

The suns in the sky burst with piercing light, creating a solar storm twenty times the size of the one Zhang Lie had experienced. The blinding light covered up the sky and illuminated the depths of space.

The shattered battlefield trembled. Boulders were melted by the intense heat and light. Space was shot through. The golden storm swept through everything in sight like a disaster.

The death spirits immediately shielded themselves with a barrier of black twisters, which absorbed the power of the solar storm and turned golden. Tens of thousands of battleships stood firm against thousands of sunbirds. The battleships, thanks to their massive numerical advantage, were able to defend against the onslaught of light and heat.

The frost spirit commander sneered. "For the good of the realm, brothers, we'd better help these weaklings!"

The frost spirit commander laughed shrilly, summoning a blizzard and staggering the enemies with a combination of bone-chilling frost and soul-piercing pain. A layer of frost formed over the shattered battlefield, and the blizzard swept over the barrier formed by the death spirits' battleships.

The barrier was incapable of handling the simultaneous antipodal attacks, which exploded in a burst of heat and a wave of cold. Snow began to fall from the skies, but it melted and turned to rain before it could land on the ground.

The frost spirits' combined attack, in conjunction with the thousands of sunbirds, was as strong as Zhang Lie's [Fists of the Silent Sea: Soar]. However, there were far more of the death spirits' battleships to contend with here—tens of thousands of them, as opposed to the hundreds that Zhang Lie had obliterated.

The solar corps arced across the air in a stream of flames, leaving behind a glowing trail. The solar warriors held long spears, killing groups of black spirits with every thrust.

Any spirit struck by the spear would be burned by golden solar flames.

A second wormhole opened, unleashing a huge group of aliens fleeing from something behind them with identical looks of terror on their faces. Behind the aliens was an outpouring of black fog, which covered up half the battlefield near-instantly.

Chapter 976: Ugly Giants

Zhang Lie frowned. "We have a problem."

Hong Xi, noticing the black fog and recalling what Zhang Lie had said about it, immediately commanded the troops to stay far away.

Zhang Hanxiang asked, perplexed, "What's the matter?"

Hong Xi rolled her eyes. "You haven't forgotten what your brother told you before the start of the war, have you?"

Zhang Hanxiang still seemed confused. "Told me about what?"

Hong Xi clutched her face and sighed. "That black fog is pretty much the same as those monstrosities we saw."

Zhang Hanxiang finally came to her senses. "There's another king who treats these aliens like slaves?"

Hong Xi shrugged. "I'm not sure about that, but your brother specifically warned us about the monstrosities and the black fog. I'd assume they behave similarly."

Shadowy figures emerged from the black fog. Whenever the black fog swallowed up an alien, a shadowy figure would be birthed from the fog. The fog spread across the battlefield like a flood, continuously devouring more and more black spirits.

Those black spirits that were swallowed up initially struggled and resisted the fog's advance, but they quickly succumbed to whatever mysterious power underlay the fog. The black fog swallowed up the death spirits' battleships, dragging them toward the ground as though it were a conscious, living mass.

With the inclusion of the world of black fog, it seemed as though the allied forces were bound to be victorious.

Just then, the third wormhole opened up. A humongous group of aliens emerged from within, the largest group that Zhang Lie had seen.

The aliens surged toward the black spirits. One of them floated in the air. Just one glance was enough to reveal the unusual nature of this alien. Its thick lips; pale yellow skin with large pores; coarse, curly hair; and thin, unusual ears gave the impression of a mountain goat. The lower half of its body was a mess of feelers and a tail.

This strange alien gave off the same aura as the king of keys.

The aliens it commanded rushed into the enemy formation like a group of wild beasts, slaughtering whatever enemy was in sight.

Quickly behind them followed the fourth group of forces.

A huge pile of skeletons tumbled out of the wormhole in a wave. Black worms crawled through the bones, and countless aliens charged toward the black spirits from above the sea of bones. Suddenly, the sea of bones itself seemed to swell, forming giants composed of white bones.

The giants waved their arms, smashing a death spirit battleship to pieces.

The death spirits shot out their signature purple lasers at the giants, who keened in pain. Holes perforated their bony bodies, only to be repaired by the sea of bones that flowed below them. With their bodies whole again, they continued taking down the death spirits' battleships.

A titanic figure appeared by the wormhole, but it was so massive it couldn't pass through—despite the fact that the superior kings' wormholes had a radius of hundreds of meters.

A huge arm extended from within the wormhole and forcibly widened the opening. It was a pitch-black figure with no defining characteristics to its body. On its back, it carried an equally large coffin.

The frost spirit commander's face turned alarmed. "A coffin-carrier!"

The commander of the solar corps was equally surprised. "The decaying king's bringing out a coffin-carrier? It looks like he's adamant about killing that fellow..." The commander of the solar corps glanced toward Zhang Lie.

As the pitch-black figure strode forward, the aliens underneath its feet all scattered. Any black spirit who dared to bar its path was stomped flat. With the wave of its hands, the figure easily knocked aside the death spirits' battleships, which exploded in the air in a shower of purple light.

The remaining battleships in the vicinity all shot out their purple lasers at the figure, but it didn't seem to damage it at all. The coffin-carrier ignored the battleships and kept trudging forward.

Meanwhile, a fifth wormhole opened up, revealing a group of monsters, ugly giants who howled relentlessly. Where their faces should have been was instead a thick tentacle. They were four- or five-armed, with claws instead of fingers.

Their howls struck at a spiritual level, and all the aliens on the battlefield clutched their heads in pain, as though there were countless bugs crawling through their brains, filling their heads; as though their brains were host to a group of cockroaches devouring them from the inside out.

Zhang Hanxiang saw feelers emerge from the eyes, ears, and nostrils of those around her. Noticing what was happening, Zhang Lie hurriedly shouted, "Cover up your ears—with genetic energy or by any other means! Avoid listening to these howls!"

The giants' howls were somehow able to affect the genes of biological lifeforms. Hunters as strong as Zhang Lie were immune to the effects, but the forces that he commanded weren't uniformly as strong.

Zhang Lie found that even the frost spirits fighting alongside him were affected by the howls.

The frost spirits were spiritual in nature, and it was almost inconceivable that they could be affected by the giants' howls as well. Even more shockingly, the shadowy figures in the black fog suffered the same effect. Feelers grew out of many of their heads, and an ugly, howling giant emerged from the black fog.

Many of the monstrosities from the unclean world likewise grew feelers and turned into ugly, howling giants.

"Does this count as a food chain...?"

The monstrosities and the black fog devoured aliens, only to be countered by these giants. In that case, the giants were at the top of the food chain.

However, Zhang Lie didn't understand the mechanism by which their howls affected others. It was shocking that even the frost spirits were affected.

This was the first time the draconians had faced these giants, but the superior worlds' forces were far more experienced. The commanders in charge of the allied forces immediately motioned for their fighters to seal their hearing.

The sudden appearance of the giants caught all the forces by surprise, but the commanders' rapid response saved the majority of their forces, with only a few of them turning into giants.

On the other hand, hundreds of aliens from the draconian world turned into giants. The moment one of them transformed, it began to howl, causing all those around it to transform as well.

Zhang Lie sighed. "As expected, our 'allies' might as well be our enemies. Fending everyone off simultaneously is a huge danger and a struggle..."

A million giants emerged from the wormhole, accompanied by not a single alien.

Chapter 977: Zhang Hanxiang in Battle

Thinking back to the giants' frightening howls, Zhang Lie instantly understood what was going on. He sighed in commiseration for the aliens in the territory of the king of chaos.

It was clear that, while passing through the wormhole, all the aliens had been affected by the giants' howls and transformed into giants themselves.

In some sense, the world of chaos was worse than the unclean world and the world of black fog. In the latter two worlds, the aliens were treated like nothing more than slaves, but they at least had a

chance to save their lives. No such possibility was afforded those of the world of chaos; the king of chaos treated the aliens of his jurisdiction like ants, whose lives were entirely irrelevant.

Zhang Lie was certain that, if not for the fact that lower worlds had the possibility of advancing into superior worlds and fueling these superior worlds of antiquity with rare and precious superior world's energy, the third realm would look entirely different than it currently did.

The giants howled as they charged forward, but the black spirits were immune to their howls. Either the death spirit king had been on guard against the king of chaos' abilities and had prepared preventive measures accordingly, or the black spirits themselves were immune because the giants' howls were only effective to living beings, and the black spirits didn't count as alive.

Zhang Lie was even more perplexed.

Wouldn't the frost spirits count as non-living beings too? Their bodies were ethereal, not corporeal—and the monstrosities composed of gray fluid and shadows in the black fog, were those alive too?

Zhang Lie's gaze turned to the white bones that the decaying king controlled. Those bones were unaffected by the giants' howls. However, those bones were surely dead. They were all simply being controlled by the decaying king's powers.

In that case, the giants' howls wouldn't have any effect on items. Were the black spirits considered items?

In the end, Zhang Lie settled on the conclusion that the death spirit king had done something to the black spirits to immunize them from the giants' howls, likely because he had suffered against them in the past.

None of the death spirits' battleships, or the death spirits inside, seemed to be affected either.

Zhang Lie was speechless. The most danger he had faced on this battlefield to date had come not from the enemy, but from a purported ally. If these giants' howls weren't affecting the death spirits, why would they continue howling? Were the giants deliberately trying to weaken their allies?

Zhang Lie had to admit that the giants possessed astonishing physical strength, each of which was on the level of a peak-grade lifeform.

A million peak-grade lifeforms represented overwhelming strength, especially compared to the ragtag groups of aliens that the other kings fielded. The army of giants was fit to be the forces of the strongest superior king, the king of chaos, whose howls could mass-produce forces on the level of peak-grade lifeforms.

Suddenly, Xing Ying pointed at the sky. "What's that?"

At some point, a black crescent moon had appeared in the sky. The tips of the crescent curved steadily up, as though someone were mocking the entire realm.

Black blood dripped down from one tip of the crescent. Zhang Lie looked more carefully—no, that wasn't a moon at all, but a grinning bat on the level of a superior king!

"As expected of the strongest king..." Zhang Lie could identify the bat's strength based solely on its aura.

It opened its sole fiery-red eye, which split into three. Just seeing those eyes made one's body shudder. Even Zhang Lie was overcome by a split second of fear, whereas everyone else on the battlefield who looked at the bat suddenly froze.

What had caused that sudden sensation of fear? Zhang Lie understood instantly. The bat had to have some special fearmongering ability. He immediately shouted, "Don't look up!"

Those whose minds were easily manipulated were shocked stiff the moment they caught sight of the bat in the sky. Some were so scared that they began to urinate or defecate—and the weakest even fell dead on the spot.

As the black bat terrorized the battlefield, the death spirits' battleships began to explode in the air.

"We can't just sit here and do nothing. It'd ruin the name of the Zongming world." The other superior kings would look down on the Zongming world's forces.

Pitch-black genetic energy emanated from Zhang Lie, coalescing into a black serpent that coiled around him. Its scales turned blood-red and horns protruded from its forehead as it morphed into a dragon of blood.

"[Fists of the Silent Sea: Fade]!" As Zhang Lie punched forward, the blood dragon roared in rage and launched itself at the death spirits' battleships, tearing them apart with its teeth and claws. The dragon shot all the way into the center of the formation of battleships.

With a snap of Zhang Lie's fingers, a wave of annihilation exploded around the dragon. Pitch-black energy swallowed everything in the vicinity like a storm at sea, covering up the sky.

The explosion swallowed up the majority of the death spirits' battleships, forming a black hole that sucked in everything in sight.

Once the black hole reached a critical threshold, it shrunk down to the size of a pinhole and vanished from sight, leaving a vacuum behind. A storm manifested as the air itself cavitated. A hemispherical hole was left behind on the battlefield, as though a bomb with a few megatons of energy had just been detonated.

The coffin-carrier, black bat, frost spirit commander, and captain of the solar corps—the strongest troops that the various superior kings had sent out—all looked toward Zhang Lie, the source of the destruction, with a variety of gobsmacked expressions on their faces.

Zhang Lie smiled.

The death spirits, having lost such a large fraction of their forces, didn't dare to keep fighting. They released a large number of black spirits to cover their trail as they fled. The frost spirit commander and captain of the solar corps simultaneously shouted, "Don't let these fellows get away!"

The aliens rushed forward, Zhang Hanxiang foremost among them. She waved her hands in complicated patterns, freezing the black spirits and turning them into ice sculptures, which splintered and turned into crystalline flecks of ice.

"Hey, don't rush so far forward!"

Hong Xi activated [The Elusive Moon], then followed swiftly behind Zhang Hanxiang with a superior-grade illusory leopard soulshard.

Subsequently, she activated all her combat-oriented soulshards in one fell swoop. A fan of feathers materialized in her left hand, and a moonlit sword in her right.

Behind her, multicolored light flared. The domain of [Eclipse] spread out beneath her feet. She walked forward, moonlight radiating from her every move. A black sun appeared behind her, sparking where it touched the moonlight at her feet.

Wind howled. The sword in her right hand gleamed like the radiant moon. As she waved her fan, she summoned a silver twister in the air, cutting apart large swathes of the black spirits.

Zhang Hanxiang ignored Hong Xi's shouts. Her hands shone with ice-attuned genetic energy as she shot into the midst of the black spirits. "I have to show my worth in a battle of this magnitude—it makes no sense for me to remain in the center of the army, protected and coddled!"

Chapter 978: Suppression and Repression

A blizzard formed around Zhang Hanxiang. Her hands glowed brightly in blue, freezing heaven and earth and sending the battlefield into the deep of winter. A burst of icy energy emanated from her, freezing large patches of the black spirits.

"Didn't I tell you already? You're the commander, and I'm your subordinate! Our role is to command the army from beyond the midst of battle. If something happens to either of us, the entire army will cease to function!" As Hong Xi spoke, she formed a silver sword in her hand out of genetic energy. "[The Hidden Moon]!"

The sword, imbued with moonlight, seemed to cut apart a silvery veil in the sky.

"You can stay back and command!" Zhang Hanxiang skated over the frozen ground, her body as limber and agile as an acrobat's. Blades of ice formed by her feet, which she shot at Zhang Lie.

"I can't! Captain told me to protect you, so don't fool around!" Hong Xi waved her fan. Her sword glinted with moonlight, and she shot forward once more.

"Ha! I rather think you want to demonstrate your prowess on the battlefield as well. Admit it!" Zhang Hanxiang waved her hand, sending out a flurry of ice spikes.

If Zhang Lie were paying attention to the two women, he would surely have shot down toward them and teach them a lesson, but he had other things on his mind at the moment.

"[Fists of the Silent Sea: Hundred Dragons Soaring]!" Zhang Lie cocked back his left arm, channeling his genetic energy into the attack, and sent its full force at the black spirits.

Howling with the force of thunder, a horde of over a hundred black dragons flew into the air. They were fierce and domineering, their trajectories criss-crossing as they formed a black flood across the sky.

Just then, a group of blood-colored figures appeared in sight, emerging from the flanks of the death spirits' battleships and blocking their retreat.

"Those are..."

Zhang Lie frowned.

The commander of the frost spirits remarked in shock, "Those are the remnants of Blood Heaven's forces! What opportune timing."

Coincidentally or otherwise, those forces blocked the death spirits' retreat.

"Charge forward! Take revenge for our destroyed world!"

"Don't leave even a single death spirit alive!"

"Kill them all!"

Their successful sneak attack prevented the death spirits from escaping and caused them to incur significant losses. A titanic figure of blood stood tall and firm, dyeing the entire sky blood-red.

With a wave of its hand, it knocked aside a large portion of the death spirits' battleships and held them off long enough for Zhang Lie and the others to catch up. Zhang Lie's black dragons exploded in mid-air, buffeting the battleships with the black energy of annihilation.

The death spirits' forces, surrounded by the forces of the nine other superior worlds, were slaughtered to the last.

Zhang Lie secretly kept a few battered death spirits' battleships in his extra-dimensional storage, intending to analyze them carefully after the war was over.

The leader of the solar corps commented, "I thought that all of Blood Heaven's forces would have been converted into black spirits, but it looks like there were a group of you who managed to avoid their grasp."

Zhang Lie scanned the remaining forces of Blood Heaven. The blood demons were tall and muscled, blood-colored all over, with ferocious expressions on their faces. The iron tang of blood surrounded them.

Just like in Zhang Lie's past life, Blood Heaven had been destroyed by the death spirits before the war began in earnest. However, in the past, there was no mention that a group of forces had survived and participated in the offense against the death spirits.

"Could they have been on this battlefield in the past, too? In the past, the allied forces had won this battle, and there were no survivors, but now..."

Clearly, things had changed because of Zhang Lie's participation. In his past life, despite the allied forces' victory, they had suffered great losses in this confrontation, but in this life, they had barely lost any troops. Zhang Lie's arrival had transformed the direction of this battle.

The captain of the solar corps continued, "And I could never have expected your survival, blood lord."

The titanic, bloody figure shrunk down into the size of an ordinary, dark red blood demon.

The blood lord replied, "If not for the blood king sacrificing his life to defend against the death spirit king and blocking his forces, I couldn't have escaped with these blood demons."

The captain of the solar corps frowned. "Are the death spirits so strong that even you and your men can't stand against them?"

The blood lord nodded. "They're stronger than you can imagine."

Zhang Lie interrupted, "We're still on the battlefield, and we shouldn't be discussing such matters right now."

The other leaders nodded.

The blood lord asked, "I've never seen your face. Who are you?"

The blood lord couldn't identify from which of the superior worlds Zhang Lie had come.

"You're certainly very strong. The only ones who would send subordinates on the level of a superior king to the battlefield are the strongest king, the king of chaos, or the most ancient king, the king of keys. The other superior kings don't have such deep pockets, but it's evident that you're a subordinate of neither king. I can't imagine which king you serve..."

When he noticed Zhang Hanxiang and Hong Xi behind him, chasing after the rest of the black spirits, Zhang Lie couldn't help but frown. "I'll talk to you later. I have some affairs to take care of immediately." Zhang Lie brusquely ended the conversation and flew off toward his own troops.

The frost spirit commander suggested, "Once we're done cleaning up the battlefield, let's meet up and have a chat."

The blood lord nodded. "I have important news to report to you all."

The combined forces of the nine superior worlds, along with the aliens of the three thousand worlds, easily dealt with the remnants of the black spirits.

After the end of the battle, Zhang Lie didn't praise Hong Xi or Zhang Hanxiang. Instead, he sternly confronted them both. "Well done, my dear sister. As the commander of the draconian world's forces, you charged forward all by yourself into enemy territory, slaughtering the black spirits in your path and displaying your prowess for all to see."

Zhang Hanxiang smiled. "Ah, Brother, if you keep praising me like that, I'll get embarrassed!"

Zhang Lie glared. "Do you think I'm praising you?!"

Zhang Hanxiang lowered her head and wrung her hands as though she were a child who had made a mistake.

Zhang Lie sighed. "Hanxiang, you're a woman. Why are you so absorbed in battle, so much more rash and rambunctious than even most men?"

Zhang Hanxiang seriously considered her brother's words for a moment. "It must be because I was deprived of such things in my childhood, so I craved them more as an adult..."

Chapter 979: The Creation of Life

In the past, Zhang Hanxiang had been incapable of becoming a hunter. She had been trapped in a wheelchair, and now that she was free, all her pent-up emotions were slowly bubbling forth.

Zhang Lie earnestly advised, "As the commander, you should stay behind your troops. If anything were to happen to you, it'd be a devastating blow to the warriors you command."

Zhang Hanxiang replied, "But Hong Xi's there to help me! I might as well be a vase, just there to look pretty—but I'd much rather be like you, Brother, and fight against the death spirits with you!"

Zhang Lie turned to Hong Xi. "Why didn't you stop my sister? You even joined her!"

"I tried, Master, but I couldn't stop her."

Zhang Hanxiang raised her head. "Brother, I want to fight as a hunter. When will I ever get the chance to participate in such a mythical war again? It would be pointless for me to be a vase on the battlefield, surrounded and protected by the draconian world's forces. You surely want to see me develop as a hunter, don't you?"

Despite himself, Zhang Lie was starting to be convinced by his sister's arguments. It was true that his sister would need to develop as a fighter, or she really would become nothing more than a pretty vase.

"If you insist, I won't deny you this opportunity. Make sure to be careful, and don't go too crazy," Zhang Lie warned, sighing.

He couldn't spend too much time speaking with Zhang Hanxiang and Hong Xi—he had many affairs to take care of.

"Hong Xi, deal with the troops. I'll be meeting with the other commanders of the superior worlds' forces." Zhang Lie soared through the air and vanished from sight.

Hong Xi nodded as she began to make arrangements for the alien forces.

After the battle, the shattered battlefield was destroyed to such an extent that it couldn't even be described as 'shattered' anymore—more like 'obliterated'. This was the result of the might that the superior worlds had displayed.

Zhang Lie stood still before a patch of void. Shortly afterwards, the frost spirit commander, who had finished delegating his own responsibilities, arrived. "I didn't expect you would be the first one here."

Zhang Lie shrugged. "I left everything to my trustworthy subordinates."

Not long after the frost spirit commander's arrival, a figure glowing in gold, with shining armor and glittering golden hair, floated toward them. A golden blaze followed his every step, as though his path had constructed a bridge arcing toward the void from far away. Zhang Lie recognized the figure as the captain of the solar corps.

The captain scrutinized Zhang Lie. "You must be from the newly evolved superior world. Aren't you going to introduce yourself?"

Zhang Lie spread his arms. "Why don't you introduce yourself first? It's basic courtesy, I should think."

The captain of the solar corps chuckled coldly. "Didn't you read up on your allies in battle before participating in the war?"

Zhang Lie remained unperturbed. "I'm familiar with the various superior kings, but who are you?"

The frost spirit commander chuckled to himself from the side.

The captain of the solar corps clasped both hands behind his back and puffed out his chest. "I'm the solar god's right-hand man. You can call me the warlord of sun."

"A warlord?"

"Indeed!" The captain of the solar corps nodded proudly.

Zhang Lie tutted to himself. "The world of blazing sun must have rather low requirements for being deemed a warlord, then. I'd expect even my dog could be considered a warlord."

The frost spirit commander commented idly, "I feel the same way. Can't anyone from the world of blazing sun become a warlord?"

"A warlord, you say? You must have used your connections to get this position. Just how are you related to the solar king?"

The captain of the solar corps immediately grew incensed. Golden light blazed from his body, spreading to and concentrating in his hair, which extended down his body like radiant golden flames.

A sun manifested behind him. He extended his left hand, and a golden greatsword appeared in his grip. It was a construct of energy, but it looked and felt as though it were formed of gold.

The frost spirit commander warned, "Warlord of Sun, I'm warning you now, we're allies at the moment. If you strike your allies, you're ignoring the truce that stands between us all—and I won't side with you when your reckoning comes."

The frost spirit commander made his attitude clear. If the captain of the solar corps were to do anything, he and Zhang Lie would ally against him.

"Oh? What's going on here to make our dear warlord of sun so mad?"

An alien figure approached. Its thick lips; pale yellow skin with large pores; coarse, curly hair; and thin, unusual ears gave the impression of a mountain goat. The lower half of its body was a mess of feelers and a tail.

The captain of the solar corps snorted as he stowed his weapon away. If he were to strike now, he would be branded a traitor, an ally of the death spirits—and he certainly didn't think he could survive against the combined assault of the other commanders.

Zhang Lie asked, "Your aura feels like that of the king of keys. You must be his subordinate, aren't you?"

The captain of the solar corps sneered. "You know nothing at all, don't you? You were simply lucky to have evolved your world right before this calamity—otherwise, you would never have succeeded. You don't even recognize his highness."

"His highness?"

The frost spirit commander explained, "He's the son of the king of keys."

"The king of keys can produce heirs?!" Zhang Lie was stupefied.

The king of keys wasn't a biological lifeform—at its heart, the king of keys was a manifestation of a will of the world.

Either the will of the world had somehow gained intelligence of its own, or that intelligence represented remnants of the king's mind upon fusing himself to the will of the world. No matter what, after meeting the king of keys for himself, Zhang Lie was confident that it was no living

being. It could be considered the amalgamation of a million worlds, or even a gate or portal to those worlds—but it wasn't alive.

For such an entity to produce a son, especially one who seemed like a chimera of various alien species, was undoubtedly shocking to Zhang Lie. How could such an event take place?

The captain of the solar corps frowned. "What are you trying to imply? Your words show great disrespect to the king of keys. Don't make me report you!"

Zhang Lie didn't care. The king of keys was strong, but not so strong that Zhang Lie feared it.

Fighting against the king of keys would be interesting, at least...

The captain of the solar corps grew even more angry upon seeing Zhang Lie's unperturbed expression.

The king of keys waved a hand. "It's not an issue. After all, he's not my birth father."

"An adopted son?"

Zhang Lie didn't expect to be able to hear such juicy gossip during this meeting.

The captain of the solar corps hurriedly said, "Your highness, there's no such thing! The king of keys itself acknowledged your status as prince, which makes you equivalent to its biological son. It doesn't matter how you were birthed."

Zhang Lie turned toward the frost spirit commander with an inquiring look in his eyes.

The frost spirit commander sighed and explained, "His highness Wilbow was created as part of the king of keys' attempt to understand the meaning of life."

Zhang Lie was shaken once more. The king of keys was able to create life? Wasn't that in the territory of gods?

The frost spirit commander continued, "In order to understand the origin of life, the king of keys molded his highness from flesh and blood, then lit his spark of life using a superior world's energy."

Zhang Lie's astonishment receded.

The king of keys hadn't created life out of nothing, but instead of flesh and blood. The former was the domain of gods, but the latter wasn't too difficult to accomplish with arcane knowledge.

Chapter 980: An Unusual Strategy

Molding life out of flesh and blood was certainly an impressive feat, though not an overwhelming one. Even if the king of keys hadn't created life from nothing, it was clear that it had superior knowledge and resources.

Wilbow smiled, but his appearance was so strange that his smile looked somewhat grotesque.

Black fog drew close toward the various commanders, coalescing roughly into the shape of a man.

Zhang Lie hedged, "This representative from the world of black fog is..."

The frost spirit commander and the others were used to this curious sight.

Wilbow shrugged. "This is the nature of the world of black fog, mysterious and ethereal."

The frost spirit commander explained, "Even in the past, the world of black fog never sent any men to participate in battle, only black fog. We've all been curious as to the structure of their world."

Were there other living lifeforms in the world of black fog? It was likely that there weren't—and even the king of black fog itself might not be a biological lifeform.

The captain of the solar corps added, "This black fog is a physical manifestation of the king of black fog's strength, as well as a clone of its body."

The corpse-carrier didn't participate in the meeting. It listened only to the decaying king's orders and wouldn't act on its own. The king of evil's monstrosities were likewise incapable of communication, and just about all the commanders who were going to come had come—save one.

The moment Zhang Lie recalled his existence, the black bat appeared. The frost spirit commander and the others hastily bowed. "Welcome, your majesty."

The black bat folded its wings and transformed into a man in a white coat, wearing silver glasses.

The frost spirit commander pulled on Zhang Lie's arm. "What are you doing?"

Zhang Lie was bewildered. "What majesty?"

The frost spirit commander cried, "He's the clone of the strongest king, the king of chaos!"

The clone smiled. "I prefer not to associate myself with chaos. We clones each have the capacity for independent thought, and it would be easy to confuse us. You had better address me as Nightdemon."

Zhang Lie was curious as to why the king of chaos' clone took on a human form. Upon recalling that the king of keys' puppet had appeared as a blonde, blue-eyed loli, he turned to the frost spirit commander and asked, "What does Nightdemon look like to you?"

The frost spirit commander understood what Zhang Lie was getting at. After all, the first time he encountered Nightdemon, he had asked the ice queen if the clone were a frost spirit, only to be made fun of by the ice queen herself.

He replied, "The king of keys' puppets and the king of chaos' clones all possess the special ability of being recognized as members of the same species by whoever comes into contact with them.

Nightdemon must look like a human to you, and he looks like a frost spirit to me."

To the frost spirit commander, Nightdemon was a shaman of the frost spirits, likewise draped in a white cloak.

Nightdemon seemed to have noticed Zhang Lie's curious expression. He explained, "I've transformed my appearance so that we can converse more easily."

After all, Nightdemon's original form was a bloodsucking bat surrounded by an aura of fear, which would discomfit the other commanders needlessly.

It seemed that the most ancient and the strongest superior kings shared the same characteristic: they couldn't be seen or witnessed directly.

Looking directly at the king of keys would confound the mind, and looking directly at Nightdemon would produce a sense of innate fear. There were quite a few aliens on the battlefield who had looked directly at Nightdemon and gone crazy as a result.

The king of keys and the king of chaos were the two most exceptional superior kings, and they boasted characteristics that no other superior king possessed.

The other superior kings were just somewhat stronger than kings of large worlds, just like Li Zongming. They hadn't changed dramatically as a result of their worlds' evolution.

For one, Li Zongming was still yet unfamiliar with the strength that a superior world possessed, and for another, the remaining superior kings were far from the level of the two exceptional kings.

It was as though the king of keys and the king of chaos had surpassed some formless threshold of being.

As Zhang Lie pondered these questions, the blood lord finally arrived.

Nightdemon spoke up. "I believe we're all gathered, then."

The blood lord began, "I'm very curious as to just who this newbie is. What king would send such a strong subordinate directly onto the battlefield? Excepting the king of chaos, of course. The king of chaos could certainly afford it—he has dozens of clones, each on the level of a superior king."

Fighters as strong as superior kings were exceptionally rare even on superior worlds—except the world of primordial chaos. The strongest king also boasted the strongest world.

The blood lord continued, "Even if the king of chaos were to field a few dozen fighters on that level, I wouldn't be surprised—but other kings don't have so much power to throw around."

Fighters on the level of superior kings were existences equal to those kings. It was difficult to command them, and the kings generally kept them close to their sides in case of danger. They were like trump cards to be wielded jealously, not sent to the battlefield—and this wasn't a battle important enough to warrant such an exception.

The frost spirit commander explained, "He came from a newly evolved superior world."

The blood lord frowned. "A newly evolved superior world? I think I may have heard about it from the blood king—a world that destroyed the xuluo world! So you must be from that world? It looks like it's far stronger than I had anticipated."

For Li Zongming to be able to send a subordinate on the level of a superior king to such an unimportant battle—he had to possess multiple such forces.

Zhang Lie's smile grew wider. This was a beautiful misunderstanding. He suggested, "Let's start the meeting immediately. Blood Lord, I heard that you had an extremely important piece of news to share. Could you tell us about it?"

The blood lord nodded. "The remnant forces of Blood Heaven have recently discovered a shocking truth, a frightening plan concocted by the death spirits."

"What plan?" Zhang Lie asked.

"You all know of the death spirit king's ambitions, don't you?"

Zhang Lie nodded. "To absorb more and more wills of the world to grow stronger on his own?"

"That's right. The death spirit king is aware of the allied forces that are prepared to challenge him. Strong though he might be, there's only one of him and eight other superior worlds he has to face—and the king of keys and king of chaos, mysterious and ancient existences, among them."

Zhang Lie felt as though there was something strange in what the blood lord was saying, but he couldn't pinpoint it immediately.

The blood lord continued, "The death spirit king can't guarantee that he'll be able to wrest victory from the king of keys and king of chaos, so he's come up with a new strategy instead."

Nightdemon glanced toward the blood lord with interest. "What strategy?"

"To start by absorbing the lower realms!"