

Apocalypse 1476

Chapter 1476: Country's top battle beast

Pfft!

The person sitting next to Li Daqian spat out the wine in his mouth, drawing everyone's attention.

Although everyone was looking at him, no one laughed. They all felt the same way—shocked and momentarily at a loss.

Killing a level-nine lifeform? They had been prepared for that when they received Ye Zhongming's message. Although he hadn't explicitly stated it, he had hinted at a battle against mutated lifeforms.

A battle that Ye Zhongming would describe as "high-level" could only mean a fight against a level-nine lifeform.

When each received the message, they felt a mix of anxiety, excitement, and nervousness, followed by anticipation of making history.

Sure, the Beast Villa had already achieved the first kill of a level-nine lifeform, but everyone knew the specifics. That had been a weakened, pregnant level-nine lifeform—essentially a lucky break for humanity.

Facing a fully-powered level-nine lifeform? Honestly, no faction dared to try that yet.

If Ye Zhongming had gathered so many experts and high-level battle beasts to attempt a kill, they could understand and even support it. It was dangerous, but the potential rewards were enormous.

But facing two level-nine lifeforms at once? No, thank you. That was a step too far.

Relationships were one thing—they were allies and partners—but they weren't about to give up their lives.

Looking at the person who had spat out his wine, everyone quickly made up their minds. When they turned back, their decision was clear.

"Hey, how did you even get to your current position? Pure passion? And you guys, do you realize you're following a leader who's a bit of a fool?"

The first half of Mu Xifei's sentence was directed at Ye Zhongming, while the second half was aimed at the core members present.

"Xifei, watch your tone," Commander Mu scolded his daughter, then apologized to the core members, who looked displeased. He then turned to Ye Zhongming. "Mr. Ye, perhaps we are all powerful evolved in the nation, and the forces we command are among the strongest in this land. But... that doesn't mean we can take on level-nine mutated lifeforms, especially two. This..."

Commander Mu shook his head, leaving his sentence unfinished, but the meaning was clear.

They couldn't defeat two level-nine lifeforms even with all of them combined.

"Brother Ye, maybe you should reconsider?" Li Daqian coughed awkwardly. He had initially planned to support Ye Zhongming unconditionally, especially after Ye Zhongming had saved his son. But taking on two level-nine lifeforms at once was just too outrageous. He had to think of himself, too.

Deacon Water didn't say anything, but her expression made it clear she disagreed as well.

Ye Zhongming smiled. This was all within his expectations.

"I didn't explain clearly enough."

He stood up and looked around the room. "Level-nine lifeforms are indeed powerful. Their strength may not be world-destroying, but it surpasses our highest imaginations."

Many of the core members in the room recalled their encounter with the Saint Father in the secret realm, and they still felt a lingering fear.

"But that doesn't mean we can't kill them."

Ye Zhongming's tone shifted, and his eyes gleamed as he looked at everyone. "Don't worry. We only need to deal with one injured level-nine lifeform. How about that? Any concerns now?"

The group exchanged glances, and Commander Mu spoke again. "Mr. Ye, while we shouldn't doubt your words, your lack of clarity leaves us uneasy. Could you explain more clearly so we can make an informed decision?"

"Exactly, Zhongming. If it's just one injured level-nine lifeform, we'd naturally help. But you mentioned two earlier, and now you're saying one. We're confused," Deacon Water added, looking at Ye Zhongming. Li Daqian didn't say anything, but his expression suggested he agreed.

Ye Zhongming pondered for a moment. "In short, our target is indeed two level-nine lifeforms. But Cloud Peak will handle one of them. The other, we'll take down together. Cloud Peak will handle the rest. Everyone is free to withdraw if anything unexpected happens or the situation becomes untenable."

These people were all elites of the nation. Although Ye Zhongming still hadn't explained everything clearly, they could read between the lines. It seemed Cloud Peak had a method to kill one and severely injure the other. If that was the case, then it was doable.

"Even brothers should settle accounts. How will the level-nine lifeforms be divided?" Mu Xinfei was determined to play the tough role today.

"That depends on the specific situation and each person's contribution. Those who contribute more will naturally get more. If contributions are similar, we'll divide the level-nine lifeform's body based on valuation. We'll discuss whether you take your share or trade among yourselves later."

Everyone thought about it and agreed that the plan was fair. They all knew dishonesty wasn't an option—their reputations were at stake, and Ye Zhongming's integrity was well-known. He wouldn't allow any underhanded dealings.

"Now, Mr. Ye, can you tell us which level-nine lifeforms we're dealing with? We're all itching to know," Commander Mu said with a smile, his eyes shining with interest. The man who had hidden in the shadows, even as his own zone was infiltrated and torn apart, was clearly intrigued by the challenge of facing a level-nine lifeform.

Ye Zhongming thought for a moment. "The Nine-Winged Crow and... the Armor King."

"You're insane!"

Deacon Water shot to her feet, glaring at Ye Zhongming.

Mu Xinfei, her father, and Li Daqian looked at Ye Zhongming with disbelief.

The reason? The name "Armor King" was all too familiar.

Since the country rankings were established, the Armor King had firmly held the top spot on the list of mutated lifeforms.

Not only was it a zombie—once human like them—but it was also one of the first to reach level nine. To this day, it was the only confirmed level-nine lifeform to have killed another level-nine being!

Chapter 1476.5- Country's top battle beast

Killing another level-nine, especially a marine lifeform in its own territory, spoke volumes about its overwhelming power.

They had agreed to target a level-nine lifeform, feeling it was time to aim higher. But setting their sights on the Armor King, the top-ranked level-nine in the nation? That seemed overly confident.

Why not target a newly ascended level-nine lifeform? Or even one of the other top-ten level-nine lifeforms in the nation? Why the Armor King?

As the creator of the country rankings, Deacon Water knew more about the Armor King's capabilities than anyone else. She and the others stared at Ye Zhongming, waiting for an explanation.

"Our battlefield will be in the secret realm."

Ye Zhongming's words calmed Deacon Water's anger somewhat.

Everyone knew Ye Zhongming controlled a Secret Realm—it was no secret. He was, in fact, the only person in the nation to have fully controlled a secret realm.

Others who had opened secret realms had either been wiped out or were barely holding on, too afraid to venture deeper.

The idea of entering such a place and witnessing the wonders of another world was enticing to the leaders. Perhaps this journey into the secret realm would also reveal the secrets of Cloud Peak's control over it.

"Fighting there? What does that have to do with the Armor King?" Mu Xinfei asked. Beside her, Bai Sisi, who had been silent and rarely looked up, also gazed at her former lover, waiting for an answer.

"It's hard to explain right now," Ye Zhongming said, disappointing everyone. "Our target will be an injured Nine-Winged Crow or an injured Armor King. That won't change."

The atmosphere grew awkward and silent. Everyone felt uncertain. Facing the Armor King, even with all of them combined, seemed like a long shot.

"Like I said, if anyone feels it's too risky, I won't force you," Ye Zhongming said. "But please believe me. None of us are the type to throw ourselves into danger recklessly. If I hadn't had some confidence, I wouldn't have organized this operation so publicly."

"One, injured, level-nine lifeform. If it's not, everyone can withdraw. How about that?" Ye Zhongming punctuated each word, bringing the conversation to a close.

As for how the three factions present would decide, that was up to them.

If even one of them agreed, Ye Zhongming was willing to give it a try. The information he could reveal at this point was limited. Cloud Peak's interests would inevitably be affected if he explained too much. Once they knew the details, these people would undoubtedly want a share of the spoils. Ye Zhongming wasn't about to let that happen.

Even if it meant Cloud Peak had to bear some risks, it was worth it.

The banquet ended, and the leaders returned to their accommodations, but none could sleep.

Back in her room, Deacon Water paced for a while before calling someone in. She wrote a note and had it delivered to the Cloud Peak guards outside.

A moment later, the note returned. Deacon Water opened it to find two additional words:

Feasible.

The woman, who harbored ambitions of establishing her own faction, sat down and thought for a long time before finally relaxing.

"I'll trust you this once. If anything goes wrong, I'll take over your goods!" Deacon Water shook her fist at the air, trusting the person who had written those two words.

With her decision made, her attention turned to the plate of exquisite fruits on the table, kept fresh by the ice in the layer below.

She picked one up and popped it into her mouth. The sweet and tangy juice immediately burst, and Deacon Water closed her eyes, savoring one of the rare moments of relaxation since the apocalypse began.

Meanwhile, Li Daqian had also returned to his quarters. Unlike Deacon Water, he didn't do anything else. Instead, he calmly sipped the fine wine Ye Zhongming had prepared for him.

"Daqian, what should we do? It sounds... unreliable."

A cousin who had come with Li Daqian asked uneasily.

No matter what others thought, he felt Ye Zhongming's plan had too many holes and should be cautiously approached.

The others also looked at Li Daqian, waiting for his final decision.

Li Daqian smiled.

"You all, like me earlier, are making the mistake of underestimating him."

The group looked puzzled, exchanging glances but failing to understand.

Li Daqian tilted his head back, drained his glass, then poured another, adding ice and savoring it slowly.

"We've all seen Ye Zhongming's strength. When we arrived today, you saw Yellow Ball and the dragon in the sky. Xia Bai goes without saying. The only top-tier figure in Cloud Peak we haven't seen yet is the mysterious Red Hair."

Everyone listened, waiting for the leader to continue.

"What's confirmed is that five of Ye Zhongming's closest companions are currently evolving to eight stars. Once they wake up, Cloud Peak will have twelve level-eight beings, including humans and battle beasts."

Hearing this number, the group instinctively shuddered.

"And don't forget, the Nine-Winged Crow is likely a lifeform from the secret realm. The secret realm isn't just home to level-nine lifeforms—it also has native inhabitants who are at least friendly even if they haven't allied with Ye Zhongming. Among them, there are at least several level-eight beings."

"In other words, Ye Zhongming alone could muster twenty level-eight beings! Add in his combat teams, crystal weapons, and gene lifeforms, and I'd say Cloud Peak could handle one level-nine lifeform on its own. Any objections?"

The others nodded repeatedly. They couldn't deny it. They hadn't done the math before, but now that they had, it was terrifying. Had Cloud Peak really grown this powerful?

They had been confident, even when facing Ye Zhongming and Cloud Peak because they had the nation's top-ranked battle beast, the Spotted Giant Bear, Li Daqian, and a massive battle beast army.

But compared to Cloud Peak, they seemed to fall short.

Li Daqian sighed softly, perhaps lamenting the gap he had long been aware of.

"Now, with us, Deacon Water, and the S1 Zone, we have five or six more level-eight beings, plus three powerful combat teams and Ye Zhongming's hidden trump cards. So why not take on two level-nine lifeforms? Why not target the top-ranked level-nine in the nation?"

The group suddenly understood. Thinking about it, it made sense.

"Let's just wait for the big show," Li Daqian said, swirling his glass before downing it.

This wine really was excellent.

Chapter 1477: Start of the big plan

Commander Mu stood by the window, listening to his biological daughter and his adopted daughter converse behind him.

"Sisi, based on your understanding of Ye Zhongming, is he the type to go crazy and risk his life?" Mu Xinfei asked, holding her best friend's hand and frowning.

Ye Zhongming's demeanor today had completely changed the impression she had of him. She didn't know which version of the King of Cloud Peak was real—the rational man who had negotiated with her in the past or the one who had announced this crazy plan today.

Bai Sisi smoothed her hair, her eyes filled with nostalgia, but in a flash, they were clouded with confusion and... a hint of pain.

"Xinfei, I don't know. It's been so many years, and with the apocalypse, I really don't know what he's become," Bai Sisi said apologetically, patting her friend's hand. "But the old him wasn't like this. Ever since the apocalypse began, he... became someone I didn't recognize."

Mu Xinfei looked at her friend, feeling deeply guilty. Bringing Bai Sisi to Cloud Peak this time had been her father's idea. The intention was the same as when Mu Xinfei had brought Ye Zhongming's ex-girlfriend to negotiate with him in the past—to see if old feelings could be used to influence him.

Although this plan wouldn't involve selling out Bai Sisi's interests, at most it was just trying to see if Ye Zhongming still had some lingering affection, it still made Mu Xinfei feel guilty.

"But this plan is just too insane. Wanting to kill the Armor King? Is this something a normal person would even think of?" Mu Xinfei said angrily, frowning as she thought. Then she added, "I'll go talk to him alone. Maybe I can get some useful information."

With that, she stood up. Bai Sisi also stood, unsure whether to follow or not.

"No need."

Commander Mu suddenly spoke, stopping Mu Xinfei in her tracks.

"Dad?"

Commander Mu turned around, waved his hand, and sat down on the sofa.

"No need to ask. We're joining."

"Why?" Mu Xinfei anxiously sat beside her father, ready to persuade him to abandon the idea.

Having experienced everything firsthand, she knew how hard it had been for her and her father to accumulate their current resources and how much they had sacrificed. Aside from political marriages, she and Commander Mu had given everything they could.

Now, she couldn't bear to see this powerful combat unit destroyed meaninglessly here.

"Regardless of how much Ye Zhongming has changed, he's not a madman. At least, when it comes to strategic decisions outside of life-and-death situations, he's not a madman. At his level, every decision has to consider too many factors. Even if he were to go mad, his subordinates wouldn't follow him blindly."

"Dad, you don't understand Cloud Peak. They're all fanatics who worship Ye Zhongming. They'd follow any order for that man."

Mu Xinfei had seen Cloud Peak's combat teams in action. Their fanaticism and intensity had left a deep impression on her. It seemed like no other faction in the apocalypse could fight like Cloud Peak, unleashing 120% of their combat power. Even the Resistance Zone couldn't match that.

She believed it was entirely due to their personal worship of Ye Zhongming.

But Commander Mu shook his head.

"Daughter, Ye Zhongming might be a kind of faith for Cloud Peak, but this faith isn't like religious. It's not something that would make post-apocalyptic evolved trust him unconditionally. This faith is more like heartfelt admiration. The latter is more rational. Cloud Peak's soldiers might be willing to die for Ye Zhongming, but they wouldn't let their sacrifices be meaningless, nor would they follow Ye Zhongming's orders if he lost his mind. Otherwise, Ye Zhongming wouldn't have reached his current position, and his combat teams wouldn't have such formidable combat power strength."

Their positions and experiences were different, and so were their perspectives on issues and people. Commander Mu was looking at this from a completely calm, third-party perspective.

"Did you notice earlier? When Ye Zhongming was talking to us about this, the other Cloud Peak members showed no surprise. There was no fear, no anxiety in their eyes—only excitement and enthusiasm. They know everything and want to do this."

Mu Xinfei listened to her father's words, feeling lost, but she had to admit this was true.

"Also, whether it's Li Daqian or Deacon Water, they're both very quiet now."

This statement made Mu Xinfei pause.

Commander Mu smiled and ruffled his daughter's hair.

His precious daughter had plenty of drive and was decisive enough to act when necessary, but she was slightly lacking in analyzing people's hearts.

"If I were unsure, I'd go discuss it with the others involved—not you or Sisi, but those who are on equal footing in this matter. Even if we ultimately decide to join this plan, we should see if we can work together to pressure Ye Zhongming and gain more benefits."

"But they didn't come." Commander Mu smiled. "Is it because their relationship with Cloud Peak is so good that they'd follow orders without question? Obviously not. It's because they've either analyzed the situation themselves or received private assurances from Ye Zhongming, confirming that this plan is feasible. That's why they're so silent. Since that's the case, the answer is already clear. So why should we worry or hesitate?"

"But, Dad, I'm still worried..."

Commander Mu leaned back on the sofa. "Even if we fail, won't we have Thousand Beast Villa, Five Ring Money, and Cloud Peak with us? They're stronger than us now."

The proud Mu Xinfei snorted in dissatisfaction at her father's show of weakness, ending the conversation about their decision.

Chapter 1477.5- Start of the big plan

After the three factions made the same decision, they settled in at Cloud Peak and soon began to reap the benefits.

First, in terms of food, drink, and training, they experienced a significant difference.

In the future, they would fight alongside Cloud Peak in a battle that, if not historic, would certainly be remembered by evolved. Ye Zhongming treated them equally, providing the same logistical support that Cloud Peak's own teams received.

The water they drank was from a spiritual spring in the secret realm, which had the effect of cleansing the body and mind, making their energy more pure and thereby increasing the power of their skills. The water also contained a mental energy potion made by Candy, which sharpened the mind and sped up recovery. As for food, they were served high-level mutated lifeform ingredients cooked in Water and Fire Pot, which were delicious and highly beneficial.

These benefits weren't immediately obvious, but that didn't stop the three factions from recognizing their value.

In terms of training, the machine wasn't in high demand since Cloud Peak's soldiers had already trained extensively with the mutated lifeforms in the Extreme Light Training Platform's database. After deciding to open it to the three factions, even though they charged based on level, the factions were thrilled. They formed long lines outside the training platform, operating it 24/7 without pause. Even Deacon

Water, Commander Mu, and Li Daqian personally tried it, choosing the highest level available in the Extreme Light Training Platform's database—level seven!

Yellow Ball was the strongest among the more than ten level-seven entries, and the three leaders all chose to battle the level-seven version of Yellow Ball.

No one knew the outcome, but their expressions were strange when the three leaders emerged and saw Yellow Ball lazily lying on his back in the sun within the mountain villa.

After that, the Extreme Light Training Platform was even busier, with conflicts even breaking out among the three factions' soldiers over training slots. This showed just how much they loved the machine.

Second, there was trade.

Whether inside Cloud Peak Mountain Villa or at the Puxing Town trading market, the three factions were able to acquire many good items.

Cloud Peak's soldiers were famously wealthy. With a top smith like Ye Zhongming as their leader, they didn't need to spend their own money on equipment—it was provided as part of Cloud Peak's benefits. Evolution potions were also provided free of charge. During hunts, they earned points based on their contributions, which could be exchanged for job scrolls, skill scrolls, bloodlines, and more at the logistics department at ridiculously low prices. Although most of their earnings were handed over, the remaining amount, with their needs already met, accumulated enough to fill their pockets.

At Puxing Town, Cloud Peak's soldiers were the most popular traders. Everyone wanted to do business with them—they had money and were generous.

Now, the three factions had brought specialties and personal treasures from their regions. After expressing their desire to trade, Cloud Peak designated a section of their base for them to set up stalls. Cloud Peak's soldiers flocked to the area, showing the factions what big spenders looked like.

Basically, everything could be sold for 10% more than the market price.

After making money at Cloud Peak, they went to Puxing Town to exchange for what they needed, turning their earnings into tangible combat power.

In just one week, the overall strength of the three factions had improved, delighting the three leaders.

Finally, there was Cloud Peak and Ye Zhongming's 'generosity' toward their allies.

Some things were provided for free, such as equipment maintenance and upkeep, material appraisal and preservation methods, vitamin supplements, and Bug Emperor Honey cultivation spots.

Other items were sold at cost or discounted, such as some Cloud Peak-made equipment, Cloud Peak delicacies, crystal weapons, battle beast eggs, and young battle beasts.

Of course, these weren't the premium items, and the crystal weapons were outdated stock. But don't underestimate these—the three factions scrambled to buy them, almost clearing out the stock. The three leaders even specifically approached Ye Zhongming to negotiate, hoping to gain access to higher-level items.

In the end, Cloud Peak maintained a significant trade surplus with the three factions.

Eventually, the three leaders realized their coffers were empty.

But looking at what they had gained, they felt it was worth it. They were now filled with confidence about the upcoming operation.

During this time, Commander Mu requested that Cloud Peak help them modify their War Fortress, but Ye Zhongming declined, citing Le Dayuan's busy schedule.

Later, Commander Mu compromised, asking Le Dayuan to provide relevant guidance to their technicians. After paying a high price, Ye Zhongming agreed. Le Dayuan gave the Resistance Zone technicians a two-hour lecture, avoiding core secrets but still leaving them in awe, plunging them into a frenzied research state.

Twenty days after arriving at Cloud Peak, the three factions began taking turns entering the secret realm to familiarize themselves with the environment. Combat plans were distributed, and battlefield rules and discipline were detailed to the point of having over a hundred entries.

Only then did the three factions realize that Cloud Peak's success wasn't due to luck. They weren't professionally trained, but they were more professional than those who were.

For the three factions experiencing the secret realm for the first time, every moment was novel, and they spared no effort in collecting information through various means.

Later, Cloud Peak's teams occasionally conducted joint drills with them. The methods felt strange and awkward to the three factions, but Cloud Peak didn't explain, and asking was futile. This was the only unpleasant aspect of their time here.

As the five core members of Cloud Peak gradually awakened, the atmosphere in the mountain villa grew increasingly intense, waiting only for Little Tiger, the last one to awaken.

After studying the situation, Liu Zhenghong concluded that the reason for Little Tiger's prolonged evolution was likely due to the top-tier equipment Lucy's Tear he had used.

However, they didn't have to wait long. Little Tiger successfully completed his evolution and awakened.

From that day on, the three factions noticed a noticeable change in Cloud Peak. It was as if the villa had transformed into a war machine, rumbling into action. Many things they didn't understand were happening, but the tense atmosphere had already put them on edge.

Finally, one day, the three leaders and their factions received notification that the battle was officially beginning. They passed through the space gate and arrived on a small plain between two mountain ranges in the secret realm. Their position was halfway up the mountain, facing a long and wide 3,000-square-kilometer area.

Seeing that only Guang Yao, the seven-star captain who had defected from the Resistance Zone, and his team were accompanying them, with no other Cloud Peak higher-ups in sight, the three leaders frowned. They approached Guang Yao to ask for an explanation.

Facing the questions of the three eight-star evolved, Guang Yao smiled calmly. "Please rest assured, our people will appear when the battle begins."

The three were about to press further when suddenly, at the end of the small plain, a terrifying energy fluctuation made their souls tremble.

A level-nine lifeform... had arrived.

Chapter 1478: Space Crossing Challenge

Whether it was Deacon Water, Li Daqian, or Commander Mu, they had always been at the forefront of human evolution. Now, they were also the highest level evolved. Beyond their own strength, they each controlled immensely powerful factions. In the post-apocalyptic world, few could be considered their rivals.

This gave them strong confidence and a sense of pride.

Even when facing Ye Zhongming, who was an outlier, they acknowledged the gap but were not afraid.

But at this moment, they felt the blood in their bodies freeze. Despite believing they could no longer fear, their legs involuntarily trembled, sending signals to their brains.

They had occasionally heard their subordinates mention feeling suppressed in their presence. They had always laughed it off, thinking their subordinates exaggerated to flatter them, attributing it to psychological fear.

Now, they realized that suppression truly existed. Although this lifeform had not yet shown itself, its mere presence made their souls tremble.

The mutated lifeforms under Deacon Water and Li Daqian—the Pegasus and the Spotted Giant Bear—were now restless, constantly urging their masters to flee through their mental connections. The lower-level battle beasts of Thousand Beast Villa lay on the ground, trembling uncontrollably, some even losing control of their bodily functions.

Only a level-nine lifeform could cause such an effect!

Despite the three factions' earlier bold declarations about killing a level-nine lifeform, now that they were truly facing one, they all simultaneously regretted their decision.

This aura was too terrifying!

"I... I've faced a level nine before. How... how can this one be so... so terrifying?" Li Daqian's voice was stiff and dry as he spoke.

As the only person present who had encountered and even killed a level-nine lifeform, he pointed out the difference between that one and this one. It was like comparing heaven and earth. Li Daqian even wondered if this powerful lifeform nearby had already surpassed level nine.

"It's the Nine-Winged Crow, the most powerful lifeform in the Blue Secret Realm. So far, it's the only level-nine here," Guang Yao said, his forehead sweating. As a seven-star evolved, he felt even more pressure. However, because he had some understanding of this level-nine lifeform and was somewhat prepared, he had a slight psychological advantage.

Still, his confidence was shaken. He began to worry whether the battle plan would proceed smoothly.

"Are we... supposed to fight it?"

Commander Mu was already mocking himself, wondering if he was just unlucky. His first battle after coming out of hiding had to be against such a terrifying being. It was as if he hadn't checked his fortune before coming.

Guang Yao shook his head, then nodded. "Maybe not, or maybe yes. But even if we do, it will be an injured version of it, not what we're seeing now."

"At this point, can you just tell us the truth?!" Mu Xinfei couldn't hold back anymore, almost roaring at Guang Yao.

The others didn't mind her bad attitude either; their eyes were also red.

Guang Yao was momentarily unsure of how to respond because he didn't know the plan's specifics either. That was all in Ye Zhongming's hands.

But just as he was struggling to explain, a space gate suddenly appeared on the plain. A figure rushed out, teleporting repeatedly, covering hundreds of meters in the blink of an eye before disappearing into a special device. The next second, the device exploded with a boom, shaking the ground.

Li Daqian and the others turned to look. They hadn't paid much attention earlier, but now they realized a teleportation device was there. The figure was Ye Zhongming, who had been absent all day.

But they didn't focus on the King of Cloud Peak as usual. Instead, their eyes were locked on the still-open space gate.

Because from within, another terrifying presence was emerging.

A 'small' black shadow slowly extended its body from the gate, curiously looking around.

It was only 'small' in comparison—its actual height was over three meters, making it a giant among humans. However, because of the distance, it appeared similar in size to Ye Zhongming.

"The... the Armor King?!"

Deacon Water had access to images of many high-level mutated lifeforms in the nation, and the Armor King, ranked first, was naturally among them. She recognized it immediately.

The others looked at the Armor King, now standing on the secret realm's soil, and then at the massive black cloud that had already swept over the distant mountains. They began to understand—Ye Zhongming wanted the two level-nine lifeforms to fight each other?

It was a good idea, but how could he be so sure the Armor King would follow him through the space gate into the secret realm? And how could he be certain the two level-nine lifeforms would ignore everyone else and fight each other?

Ye Zhongming, of course, knew.

When he heard the name 'Armor King' during the Bright Water Feast, it triggered memories from his past life.

Before his rebirth, the Armor King had already been killed, contributing its demon crystal and body to human evolution. Some of its legends were also known to people. The Armor King Ye Zhongming knew had obvious weaknesses.

First, it was prone to rage. Second, it was competitive and combative.

These traits were common among many mutated lifeforms and couldn't be considered weaknesses. But the Armor King took these characteristics to the extreme. Perhaps this was why it had evolved to level nine so early. Later, it was also why it was surrounded and killed by evolved.

Of course, there was also an unconfirmed... hobby, if you could call it that. The Armor King loved to eat marine life.

A love for seafood—perhaps a habit left over from its pre-apocalypse life as a human.

Ye Zhongming hadn't been sure if this rumor, often treated as a joke, was true. But he was almost certain when he heard that the Armor King had challenged a same-level lifeform in shallow waters shortly after evolving.

No land-dwelling lifeform would casually venture into the ocean to fight a same-level lifeform for no reason. Most likely, the Armor King had gone to the sea to hunt, encounter or attract that level-nine marine life, or perhaps it simply wanted to eat that level-nine 'seafood.'

Knowing these three points, Ye Zhongming formulated his plan to kill the Armor King, gradually developing this bold battle plan.

The high-quality 'seafood' brought back by the Little Peng's team, Ye Zhongming's personal appearance to provoke, and... the Nine-Winged Crow formed a seemingly simple yet indispensable chain of events.

Now that the Armor King had revealed itself, it had completely forgotten the level-eight pest that had enraged it earlier. Instead, it was fixated on the black cloud in the sky not far away.

After a long moment, the Armor King let out a deafening roar!

The strongest lifeform from Earth had challenged the strongest lifeform from another world!

Chapter 1479: 5.5 million

Beyond the plain was a grassland backed by a massive hill. In front of the grassland was a rocky beach and, beyond that, an even more extensive swamp.

Several landforms, from the small grassland to the vast swamp, formed a trumpet-shaped terrain, with the massive hill at its center.

On the small grassland, over 100,000 Cloud Peak warriors were lined up in formation. The entire formation exuded a silent yet chilling killing intent.

Every single one of them knew exactly what they were about to face, yet none of them showed any fear. Rather than fighting for their lives, they felt they were making history. This was how the warriors of Cloud Peak felt.

In peacetime, most of them were ordinary, unremarkable individuals. They had lived within history but had never created or changed it. In the long river of time, they had been insignificant specks of dust.

But in Cloud Peak, here, today, they all knew that even if they died in battle, their names would be engraved on the Monument of Heroes that Cloud Peak would soon erect.

That was history.

Xia Lei's Flower Thunder Squad, Mo Ye's Night Battle Squad, Liang Chuyin's Wind Dance Squad, Little Tiger's Vanguard Battle Squad, Shengyuan's Bolder Squad, Tong Hu and Xiao Li's Couple Squad, Young Master Yun's Cloud Squad, Ah Yang's Soaring Squad, Xiao Peng's Linhai Squad), Gan Lan and Mei Na's Sound Battle Squad, Tang Tian's Ask Heaven Squad, Parrk Xiuying and her Midstream Support Squad, Ah Tao and his Blue Squad, Liu Zhenghong and her Gene Battle Squad, Le Dayuan and his Crystal Weapon Squad... Along with Guang Yao's combat unit on the other side, Cloud Peak had dispatched sixteen complete teams! If you included Xia Bai's Female Guards and Ye Zhongming's Battle Rat Army, that made eighteen fully organized combat units!

Within Cloud Peak, only Sister Rong's team remained to guard the home. To ensure Cloud Peak's safety, even Chameleon and the Posthumous Tribe entered Cloud Peak to defend it just in case.

The main forces of Sha Sha and Bai Feng's battle squads had also entered Ying City to assist in defense, temporarily taking over the positions Young Master Yun and Ah Yang left vacant.

Beyond that, Cloud Peak's top-tier fighters- evil dragon Yangos, Yellow Ball, Three-nosed Elephant, Jiu Bao, Death King Tree, Red Hair, the twins, and even the recently evolved Rat King couple, all of them had entered the Secret Realm.

In other words, Cloud Peak had gone all out, revealing almost all of its strength.

The fully assembled Cloud Peak, the newly renamed teams, an impending battle... Every warrior of Cloud Peak felt their blood boiling just thinking about it.

This was a battle destined to be remembered—no, a war!

Together, these forces were fully confident in challenging a level-nine lifeform.

At the very center of the formation was the mother platform of the Nether Bone Demon Platform. At this moment, it rippled, and Ye Zhongming appeared within it.

"Boss!"

"Boss!"

"Zhongming!"

The core members who had been waiting immediately gathered around him upon seeing Ye Zhongming.

"Are you okay?" Liang Chuyin and Xia Lei asked, concerned, after seeing Ye Zhongming's pale face and the large cracks in his armor.

Ye Zhongming removed the armor, which had basically lost its function, and replaced it with another set. He shook his head, indicating that he was fine.

He had been responsible for luring the Armor King into the secret realm, a task that required extensive preparation.

Li Daqian and the others had thought Cloud Peak's delay in taking action was due to waiting for the core members to complete their eight-star evolution and familiarize themselves with the secret realm's environment and battle rehearsals. But in reality, Cloud Peak had also been using a large number of people to track the Armor King's movements. Several skilled assassins from the Chameleon had even risked their lives to skillfully install a teleportation device in the Armor King's territory without being detected, allowing Ye Zhongming to appear.

After that, Ye Zhongming used high-level marine lifeform corpses to lure the Armor King into chasing him through the space gate.

This was a meticulous and dangerous task. He had to ensure the Armor King took the bait while minimizing interference from other mutated lifeforms and keeping himself alive.

The Armor King was the top-ranked mutated lifeform in the nation, with top strength. Even Ye Zhongming could only endure its attacks. During their brief encounter, Ye Zhongming had to use two trump cards to survive and complete the mission.

If something had happened to him, everything else would have been meaningless. Yet, this luring task could only be done by him. In truth, Mu Xinfei's words weren't entirely wrong—the premise of this plan was insane. Ye Zhongming luring the monster alone wasn't something a normal person would do.

Fortunately, though injured, he had succeeded.

A beam of white light fell on Ye Zhongming. It wasn't Park Xiuying who had cast it but another healer from the Midstream Support Squad she led, using an intermediate healing spell.

After drinking an intermediate healing potion, Ye Zhongming's injuries were mostly healed.

"Has it arrived?"

Ye Zhongming glanced at the black cloud that had already crossed the nearby mountain peak and was now over the plain. He suppressed the joy in his heart and asked.

"It's here. The vanguard is about five kilometers away and will arrive soon," Xia Lei said, having just reviewed the information from the Exquisite Floating Ball.

"What about the rest? How does the number compare to our estimates?"

Ye Zhongming asked again. This battle plan wasn't just about preparations on Earth; it also involved the secret realm. Cloud Peak's warriors had been constantly scouting the secret realm, with a much higher casualty and disappearance rate than on Earth.

There was no other way. They were responsible for monitoring the Nine-Winged Crow and its demon monster army.

Xia Lei hesitated slightly before answering, "About ten percent more than we expected."

Seeing Ye Zhongming frown, Mo Ye explained, "Our intelligence personnel were not inaccurate. We just had bad luck. A demon monster group that had split off earlier happened to wander nearby and was reabsorbed into the main force about two hours ago."

Ten percent might not seem like a large proportion, but in terms of actual numbers, it meant a full 500,000 more!

Yes, this was another part of the battle plan!

Ye Zhongming wasn't just aiming to take down two level-nine lifeforms in one go—he also wanted to eliminate the powerful demon monster army following the Nine-Winged Crow as it searched for the space gate.

Over time, as the Nine-Winged Crow continuously changed its direction of travel across the secret realm, many of the originally endless demon monsters had fallen behind. The scale of the army was no longer what it had been at the beginning. After careful scouting and estimation by Cloud Peak, the number of demon monsters still following the Nine-Winged Crow by the time of this operation was around five million. But now, a demon monster group of 500,000 had coincidentally appeared during Cloud Peak's scouting gap in the past two days, increasing the number of demon monsters Cloud Peak needed to deal with to an unprecedented... 5.5 million!

Chapter 1480: Annihilation final form

Even Ye Zhongming, who had conceived the idea and formulated the plan, found the number jarring.

Previously, many core members had estimated the maximum number of demon monsters Cloud Peak could handle. However, the outcome was uncertain since many things were being used in battle for the first time. They only had a rough estimate, and that number didn't exceed four million.

In the past two days of monitoring, they had learned that the number was five million. Ye Zhongming hadn't been without hesitation. If the battle proceeded as previously estimated, they might still suffer significant losses even if Cloud Peak could handle five million demon monsters.

He had to weigh the gains and losses.

In the end, Ye Zhongming's choice was clear to everyone.

But now, with an additional 500,000, this number could turn victory into defeat.

"Let's fight."

Liu Zhenghong's voice came from behind. The Sister Hong of Cloud Peak had rarely swapped her lab coat for an Earth Set specially crafted for her by Ye Zhongming. She was accompanied by Sheng Yuan and walked in from the rear of the battle formation.

"Don't blame Shengyuan and the others. You know they can't stop me from doing what I want," Liu Zhenghong said, seeing the flicker in Ye Zhongming's eyes. She knew exactly what he was thinking.

Originally, neither she nor Le Dayuan had been allowed to participate in this secret realm operation. But she had dragged Le Dayuan to Ye Zhongming, arguing that if Cloud Peak lost this battle, it wouldn't matter whether they stayed in Cloud Peak or not. If they won, there would naturally be no risk. Moreover, many of the new gene warriors and crystal weapons required their personal command to achieve maximum combat effectiveness.

This was how she had convinced Ye Zhongming to let her and Le Dayuan come here.

Now, instead of staying behind the battle formation under the protection of Shengyuan and the Boulder Battle Squad, she had once again disobeyed orders and come here. This would undoubtedly make Ye Zhongming very unhappy.

Normally, she could treat Ye Zhongming however she wanted, but now they were on the battlefield. Ye Zhongming still carried the lingering aura from facing a level-nine lifeform. His decisive personality in critical moments made the King of Cloud Peak exude a powerful suppression even when standing still.

Liu Zhenghong sensed Ye Zhongming's displeasure. While he might spare her face, Shengyuan, who was responsible for her protection, might be held accountable.

Without rules, there could be no order. This was undeniable. Even Shengyuan, whom Ye Zhongming had always treated differently, was no exception.

So Liu Zhenghong quickly took full responsibility.

"I just checked. The number isn't just 5.5 million. It's probably between 5.6 and 5.7 million."

Liu Zhenghong possessed a visual-based job. She had just used it.

Another nearly 200,000?

The hearts of many core members also tightened.

"It's dangerous but worth it," Liu Zhenghong said, squinting at the distant sky. At the horizon, black dots had appeared—visible only to visual-based evolved like her. These were flying demon monsters, and perhaps in just over ten minutes, they would be the first to reach Cloud Peak's defensive line.

Liu Zhenghong retracted her gaze, her entire being becoming extremely fervent.

"You've been sitting at the highest position in Cloud Peak for too long, so you're used to considering things from an overall perspective. But this is the apocalypse, a chaotic world where people die every moment. Within the mountain villa, the only irreplaceable person is you. Even if Le Dayuan and I die, everyone else can be replaced. It's just a matter of how well they can be replaced. But Cloud Peak will always exist and keep moving forward."

As she spoke, she raised her hand and pointed at the black lines on the distant ground. "If we kill them all, Cloud Peak will take a huge step forward. We can gain half a year or even a year's worth in one go. So what if some people die?"

"So let's fight. Hesitation on the battlefield is already a major taboo. Besides, Zhongming, you've gone to great lengths to gather all sorts of good items for these guys. They're not so easy to kill."

Without waiting for Ye Zhongming's direct response, Liu Zhenghong left with Shengyuan.

The others exchanged glances and let out light laughs. Only Sister Hong dared to speak to Ye Zhongming like that.

But there was no denying that Sister Hong truly had Ye Zhongming's best interests. She had preemptively taken on the potential infamy that might come.

If too many people died this time, there would inevitably be grievances. After all, the warriors also had friends and family within the mountain villa.

These resentments would naturally be directed at the person who issued the orders—Ye Zhongming.

But if word of what just happened spread, the narrative would shift to Liu Zhenghong pressuring Ye Zhongming, forcing him to agree. Then, the resentment would fall on her.

All the core members, including Liu Zhenghong, knew what kind of status Ye Zhongming held in the hearts of all Cloud Peak warriors. Cloud Peak's combat teams could habitually exceed their combat potential largely due to their worship and reverence for Ye Zhongming. That's why any things done in the dark were always shouldered by Xia Lei and Xia Bai.

This time, Liu Zhenghong stepped up to take the blame.

"Boss, the first wave of monsters—around 70,000 in the air and on the ground—will enter the green swamp in one minute!"

A scout evolved relayed the information, drawing everyone's attention to the front. The black lines in the sky and on the ground had thickened, surging toward them like a tide.

On the battlefield, Cloud Peak had divided the area into three zones: the swamp, which was the farthest and marked with green; the gravel ground, marked with white; and finally, the grassland beneath their feet, marked with red.

The three colors represented the danger levels. It would be time for close combat once the demon monsters stepped onto the grassland.

Ye Zhongming nodded and said in a deep voice, "Begin."

With his command, all Cloud Peak teams sprang into action. Various weapons covered in black cloth were unveiled at the forefront, revealing their true forms.

"Thirty seconds to entry!"

"Twenty seconds to entry!"

"Ten seconds to entry!"

"Entering now!!"

As the messages kept coming, at a certain moment, the vanguard of the demon monsters officially stepped into the green swamp.

Ye Zhongming stared ahead as if waiting for something.

At the rear of Cloud Peaks's battle formation, halfway up the mountain, voices were also constantly reporting positions. However, their reports were directed at Le Dayuan.

"First marker covered!"

"Second marker covered!"

"Third marker covered!"

Hearing this, Le Dayuan's face suddenly flushed with excitement, and he roared, "Begin!"

In front of him were over a hundred massive crystal cannons, each as large as a small hill. With his command, they simultaneously emitted a deep yet earth-shaking sound!

The Annihilation Final Form Crystal Cannon made its official debut, kicking off the prelude to this battle.