

## Apocalypse 1496

### Chapter 1496: Same level battle (3)

The immense power of the attack didn't require the wearer to expend mental or physical energy. The energy had been pre-charged, and the source was the most ordinary form of electricity.

Beyond what was visible to the naked eye, this combat suit provided extraordinary defensive capabilities and enhanced various wearer attributes, including physical shaping, skill attributes, job attributes, bloodline attributes, and more. Essentially, it boosted every aspect related to combat, and the enhancements were significant—at least equivalent to what a Super Strength Potion or similar items would provide. Moreover, these enhancements would increase as the wearer's evolution level improved.

In short, while this equipment didn't grant the user various abilities like wheel equipment did, it excelled in enhancing the user's combat prowess.

Xia Lei had targeted the noble "Mountain Fierce," one of the most formidable beings in the demon monster army. This creature had somehow acquired a massive stone pillar and was using it to smash and sweep through Cloud Peak's formations.

Mountain Fierce possessed immense strength and an incredibly resilient body. Even attacks from seven-star evolved captains struggled to penetrate its defenses, while its simple yet brutal attacks could prove fatal to such evolved. A single hit from it would either kill or severely incapacitate its target.

Ranged weapons like firearms were also largely ineffective against it. Its massive size meant that bullets and arrows had to travel a considerable distance, giving Mountain Fierce ample time to dodge or block them.

This creature was like a war beast, steadily devouring Cloud Peak's evolved. Wherever it went, no Cloud Peak team could maintain a complete formation.

In a situation where numbers were already a disadvantage, chaos often meant death. In just a short time, Mountain Fierce had directly or indirectly caused the deaths of over two thousand Cloud Peak members.

Someone had to stop it!

Liang Chuyin originally intended to step in, but Xia Lei stopped her. Over there, an agile-type level-eight demon was wreaking havoc, making it a more suitable target for the equally agile Liang Chuyin.

Seeing someone dare to challenge it, Mountain Fierce let out a furious roar that shook the entire battlefield, demonstrating its considerable mental strength.

To Mountain Fierce, humans were insignificant in size, which filled it with a deep-seated contempt. It had long been capable of advancing to level nine but had deliberately held itself back at level eight, even remaining at the mid-stage of level eight.

It was well aware of what had happened to the many demons in the Blue Secret Realm who had been on the verge of advancing to level nine.

They had all ended up in the Nine-Winged Crow's stomach, their energy absorbed, and the rest turned into waste.

This had taught Mountain Fierce that to survive under the Nine-Winged Crow's rule, it had to remain obediently at level eight.

But just moments ago, after the intense earthquake, Mountain Fierce had sensed the Nine-Winged Crow's power rapidly increasing, only to plummet shortly after. At the same time, the aura of another level-nine being had also weakened significantly.

A mutual defeat!

This was what Mountain Fierce concluded. It also realized that this might be the best opportunity to advance to level nine in its long life.

Even if the Nine-Winged Crow didn't die, it would surely need time to recover from its injuries, giving Mountain Fierce enough time to complete its evolution.

Having made this decision, Mountain Fierce's next step was to gather enough energy to break through the barrier to level nine.

These humans, especially the high-level ones, were the perfect source of nourishment!

So when Xia Lei appeared, Mountain Fierce, far from being as imposing and invincible as it appeared, was quite pleased.

An eight-star human evolved being was far more nutritious than these lesser creatures.

But what greeted Mountain Fierce was an attack so fierce that it filled the demon monster with fear.

The five floating cannons around Xia Lei simultaneously targeted Mountain Fierce and unleashed a barrage of energy beams.

The impossibly thick energy beams struck Mountain Fierce's abdomen, sending the massive creature tumbling backward and crushing many of its underlings.

Such a dramatic event naturally drew attention. Many evolved and demon monsters were shocked by Mountain Fierce's sudden fall, unsure of what had happened.

Mountain Fierce itself was dazed. How had it been knocked down? Given its size, this should have been nearly impossible.

But Mountain Fierce, having lived for who knows how many years and fought its way up from the lower levels, knew that this was a critical moment. Instead of immediately getting up, it swung its stone pillar toward Xia Lei's position.

Given the length of the pillar and its arm, there was no way the human could dodge, no matter how fast she was!

If it hit, even an opponent of the same level wouldn't be able to withstand its immense strength. Mountain Fierce had already planned its next move.

But as the stone pillar swept through the air, it didn't meet the familiar sensation of impact. Mountain Fierce quickly sat up and saw that the human woman, who should have been on the ground, was now floating in the air, almost at eye level with it.

Mountain Fierce immediately realized why. It saw that the energy hemisphere behind the woman had lit up, likely the reason Xia Lei could now fly.

At this moment, Mountain Fierce still didn't focus its attention on Xia Lei herself but on the six floating cannons around her.

It was these cannons that had delivered the devastating attack earlier, leaving a large wound on its abdomen. While not fatal, it was the most severe injury Mountain Fierce had suffered in thousands of days.

It was wary of these cannons firing again.

But what it received instead was a pair of golden blades from Xia Lei.

The energy hemisphere behind her suddenly acted like a booster, propelling Xia Lei forward.

The blades unleashed a flurry of slashes aimed at the immobilized Mountain Fierce.

The demon's stone pillar couldn't be brought to block in time, but it swung upward from below toward Xia Lei while its other hand raised to shield its head and face.

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This hand was covered in thick keratin layers. Mountain Fierce didn't believe the human woman's thin blades could cut through it. Moreover, if she insisted on attacking, the stone pillar would inevitably strike her. Even if she managed to injure its arm, the pillar would turn her into a pulp.

But Xia Lei didn't dodge.

The twin blades struck Mountain Fierce's arm without hesitation, and simultaneously, the stone pillar hit her.

Compared to the demon's, her small body was sent flying, spinning several times in the air before crashing heavily to the ground. She rolled a couple of times before coming to a stop, leaving a pool of blood in her wake.

Xia Lei coughed a few times, wiped the blood from the corner of her mouth, and stood up. The energy shield behind her was dimmer, with some cracks appearing, but otherwise, she seemed unharmed.

"Next!" the Queen of Cloud Peak murmured, already searching for her next target.

Over there, Mountain Fierce's head and arms had just hit the ground.

Xia Lei had activated her class skill, Triple Blade. Although the skill hadn't been upgraded, she was now an eight-star evolved, with all her attributes significantly enhanced. Moreover, the combat suit further amplified her abilities.

And let's not forget, what kind of weapon had she been using before, and what was she using now? These were two gold-grade weapons!

One of the weapon's skills was Synergy, which increased the attack power of blade class skills by an additional twenty percent!

With all these factors combined, even a level-eight demon monster with high defense was destined to have its defenses breached.

Mountain Fierce was indeed formidable, but its arms and head weren't its most well-defended areas. Under Xia Lei's terrifying Triple Blade, it was instantly killed.

On the battlefield, Liang Chuyin faced off against the agile level-eight demon monster while the Rat King and his wife were attacking another. Most of their Rat Army had entered the underground defenses of Cloud Peak and Ying City, but the cautious couple had brought along a significant number of elite rats, all at levels five or six. Together with the Rat King and his wife, they held off one of the largest groups of level-eight demon monster nobles.

Meanwhile, Jiu Bao was locked in a fierce battle with another level-eight demon monster. Both were massive creatures, and the area within hundreds of meters around them was devoid of other life, as everyone feared being caught in the crossfire.

Little Tiger, Mo Ye (who had already won one battle), and Yellow Ball also had their respective opponents.

The addition of these level-eight beings from Cloud Peak gradually stabilized the situation, which had been perilous just moments ago.

Similarly, Ye Zhongming, Red Hair, and Xia Bai also fought against their peers.

With Yangos, Cloud Peak's air force, and numerous weapons like the Violent Thunder Turrets keeping the demon monster air force occupied, Red Hair and Xia Bai could quickly locate Ye Zhongming, who was in the midst of a fierce fight.

He had found the demon commander, a mental-type monster that resembled a blood-drained elk, standing slightly taller than a human—a relatively small species among demons.

As a level-eight being, its aura was noticeably stronger than others, likely due to its role as an aide to the Nine-Winged Crow, which allowed it to reach the late stage of level eight without being devoured.

The trap it had set for Ye Zhongming consisted of twenty level-eight demons and over a thousand level-seven demons!

Even if Ye Zhongming were a level-nine being, killing all of them would take some effort.

The elk demon monster was confident of its victory.

But as the battle began, Ye Zhongming's terrifying combat power shocked the demon monster. Even now, it looked at its opponent with a mix of fear and disbelief.

Because Ye Zhongming was killing far too quickly.

The demon couldn't understand why there was always an area around this human filled with light and sand. Any demon that entered this area would slow down drastically, and with the human wielding a weapon as sharp as a divine artifact, killing the demon monsters became effortless.

If the Nine-Winged Crow were here, it would have recognized the weapon in Ye Zhongming's hands—it belonged to the old man from the Saint Light Hall, a true divine artifact.

The demon had considered using its mental abilities to interfere with or attack Ye Zhongming, but the human's mental energy seemed endless, rendering its attacks nearly useless!

All it could do was throw its underlings at him, hoping to overwhelm him with numbers.

But what worried the demon monster commander was that this human's defenses were also abnormally strong. While he was indeed powerful, and the light field around him created a deadly zone for demons, the sheer number of demon monsters meant that attacks from all sides—front, back, left, right, and above—still had a chance to land. Many attacks had already struck the human.

Attacks of this magnitude would have killed even a level-eight demon, but this human seemed completely unfazed, continuing to fight without pause.

By now, Ye Zhongming had already killed seven level-eight demons, and the level-seven demons were being slaughtered like vegetables, with over a hundred already dead.

In other words, Ye Zhongming had eliminated roughly a third of the commander's forces.

The situation worsened further when Xia Bai and Red Hair arrived. While these two women weren't as terrifying as Ye Zhongming, they were stronger than their peers. The commander had to use many level-seven demons to keep them occupied, preventing them from joining forces with Ye Zhongming.

But it finally realized something: it might not be able to kill Ye Zhongming.

"Human from another world, perhaps we can talk," the demon monster commander suddenly sent a mental message to Ye Zhongming.

But Ye Zhongming responded by killing another level-eight demon.

"This world is on the brink of collapse. It's not just our king seeking a way out; we are, too. And you hold the key to a new world. We should be able to cooperate."

Ye Zhongming finally reacted, but not in the way the demon expected. He sneered, "You want to talk because you're losing?"

"Yes, you're right. After witnessing your strength, I clearly understand the outcome of this battle. You will win, and there's no denying that."

The demon monster commander's communication was smooth, and it openly admitted that the demon army was on the verge of defeat.

In a war fought on the humans' chosen battlefield, at the humans' chosen time, and in the humans' chosen manner, the demon monster army's defeat was not surprising.

"But what price will you pay to annihilate us completely? What price will your subordinates pay? In terms of numbers, we still outnumber you several times over. In terms of high-level beings, we still have the advantage. Even someone as powerful as you—how badly will you be injured after killing me? What about these two subordinates of yours? If I use low-level underlings to tie you down, how many of their peers can they hold off? If I order all the demons to focus their attacks on a portion of your subordinates, how long can they last?"

The demon commander laid out the possible strategies it could employ.

Ye Zhongming's attacks slowed slightly. He knew this was true. Cloud Peak was destined to win, but ending this battle would still take considerable time, meaning continuous casualties.

"Our king's aura has weakened significantly. It must have fallen into your trap. It may die, which means our freedom. And I will become the new king here. I believe this status allows me to negotiate with you, right?"

#### Chapter 1497: Death Oath

Perhaps to convince Ye Zhongming of its sincerity, the demon monster commander ordered its subordinates to cease their attacks—but only those surrounding Ye Zhongming, Xia Bai, and Red Hair. The rest of the demon monsters continued fighting.

The commander feared that Ye Zhongming might refuse cooperation. After all, it and its subordinates also represented a vast number of demon crystals—it had already learned why these otherworldly beings had come here during the invasion.

Xia Bai and Red Hair hovered behind Ye Zhongming as the three regrouped.

Ye Zhongming stopped his assault. He wasn't afraid of the demon monster commander lying—firstly, the battle was indeed as the commander had said: Cloud Peak was certain to win. Secondly, with Red Hair and Xia Bai by his side, even if twenty more level-eight demons appeared, they could hold out until reinforcements arrived.

"I don't know what's needed to pass through the space gate. Is it... this?" The demon monster commander pointed to the demon crystal on its body. "If so, we can gather enough as payment. Once we reach the new world, we will leave."

It had to be said that demons were rather straightforward—they even offered to pay their own way. But this straightforwardness, in the face of humans, came across as naivety bordering on exploitation.

Did they think paying a toll was enough to pass through the space gate? Did they think this was a highway?

Ye Zhongming shook his head. "You'd better show some sincerity. Otherwise, I won't wait much longer. You know as well as I do that my subordinates are dying every moment. If your next offer doesn't satisfy me, we'll just keep fighting."

The demon monster commander took a deep breath. "We are not of the same kind. Aside from these things on our bodies, I don't know what else you desire. So, you should state your terms. If they're acceptable, I'll agree."

Ye Zhongming raised an eyebrow. This was even better. He immediately said, "First, order your subordinates to stop fighting completely. Then we'll talk!"

The demon monster commander was about to refuse when they noticed Ye Zhongming and the two floating figures behind him preparing to attack. After a moment's consideration, it tilted its head and emitted a series of low, rhythmic growls from the side of its skull.

The sound was faint but spread across the battlefield.

The demon monsters, locked in combat, paused in confusion. But they obeyed the command and began to retreat. Only a small number, already in a frenzied state, couldn't stop—but without their comrades, they were quickly cut down by Cloud Peak.

Within minutes, the massive battle gradually came to a halt until complete silence fell.

The two sides separated, with Ye Zhongming and the demon monster commander at the forefront. Only then did they have a chance to survey the battlefield.

It was a scene straight out of hell—corpses, severed limbs, and blood covered the ground. The massive demon bodies lay where they had fallen, forming hills of death, riddled with gaping wounds and deep gashes.

As modern people, many of the evolved had never truly understood what a battlefield from the cold-weapon era looked like. Today, they saw it firsthand. There was no smoke, but there were scorch marks from fire-based skills, ice mountains left by frost abilities, shattered wood from plant-based attacks, and craters from earth-based strikes...

The diversity of attacks meant there were just as many ways to die—some beyond imagination.

The veterans of Cloud Peak's defensive battles took it in stride, but those who had joined later felt waves of nausea—a sensation they had almost forgotten after five years in the apocalypse.

It was too brutal—not for themselves, but for the demons.

After recalling its subordinates, the demon monster commander suddenly glanced toward the mountain pass and closed its eyes. A strange energy emanated from its body, putting Cloud Peak on high alert. Ye Zhongming waved his hand, signaling his people to stand down.

He could sense that this wasn't an offensive energy—it felt more like... the power of a contract. The kind used when activating contract scrolls from the wheel.

The demon monster commander suddenly opened its eyes, and a stream of light shot from its pupils, forming a peculiar symbol in the air.

Then, its body shuddered, and it spat out a mouthful of blood. Half of the symbol—about the size of a fifty-inch television—was stained crimson.

"Outsider, it's your turn now. This is my Soul Oath. Only after you sign it can we proceed with our cooperation."

Ye Zhongming hesitated. The core members of Cloud Peak, now gathered behind him, urged him not to proceed. No one recognized this thing—who knew if it was some kind of curse? If it latched onto him, the consequences could be dire.

Ye Zhongming's fate was tied to Cloud Peak's rise and fall. He couldn't afford to take such risks.

He studied the demon monster commander's eyes and saw resolve. Clearly, if he didn't sign this so-called Soul Oath, the demon would never trust him.

"Fine." Ye Zhongming focused on the symbol's energy again, sensing no malice. Some risks were worth taking.

He drew Wind and Lightning across his palm and flicked his blood onto the other half of the symbol. The symbol flashed twice, spun in the air, and then extended two translucent red threads—one connecting to the demon monster commander, the other to Ye Zhongming.

Ye Zhongming felt something imprinted on his consciousness—the terms of the Soul Oath. He also realized the demon monster commander hadn't deceived him. As long as he upheld his end, the oath would dissipate naturally.

"State your terms," the demon monster commander prompted. The Soul Oath would record the agreement. Violation would result in eternal torment for the soul.

"First, we want demon crystals—the ones on your bodies. They're useless to you, so gather as many as you can. The quantity must satisfy us."

"Too vague. You must give me a specific number. Otherwise, no matter how many we bring, you'll claim it's insufficient."

Ye Zhongming didn't argue. "Fine. At least... twice the number of demons still alive now."

"You're too greedy." The demon monster commander bristled. The demon army still numbered over 700,000. Twice that would be 1.6 million demon crystals. Since they didn't hoard these, gathering them would take considerable time.

"I'm not finished. All crystals must be level five or higher."

"I can't promise that. I have no guarantee of finding so many... demon crystals."

The demon monster commander stumbled over the term, still unfamiliar.

Ye Zhongming reconsidered. Perhaps he was asking too much. Gathering nearly two million level-five demon crystals would be extremely difficult without deliberate stockpiling.

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"One million. That's the minimum."

The demon monster commander hesitated, then nodded.

"Second, I'll list materials—minerals, herbs, and local specialties. Within a set time, you must gather at least 80% of them for me."

Worried the demon might not understand, Ye Zhongming added, "Don't worry, the quantities won't be impossible. You can just tell us the locations for some items, and we'll retrieve them ourselves. Those will count toward your quota—but such items can't exceed 20%. That means you must personally gather at least 60%."

The demon monster commander frowned. Though highly intelligent, human negotiation styles were still foreign to it. It took a moment to grasp Ye Zhongming's terms fully.

"Both conditions require us to remain here for some time—possibly quite a while. But the battle between our king and your ally has destabilized this place. I'll agree, but if I sense this realm collapsing, no matter how much we've gathered, we leave immediately. Rest assured, I won't deliberately stall. If I do, you're free to break our agreement."

Ye Zhongming agreed. This fell under force majeure. So be it if the Blue Secret Realm collapsed before they could finish.

"Third, once you reach my world, I'll designate an area for you to inhabit. For one thousand days, you cannot migrate. It won't be a wasteland—the environment will be livable. My purpose is to use you as a buffer against local threats, but I guarantee you won't be annihilated. Because... I'll allow up to ten million of your kind to pass through the space gate. You choose who goes. This will help solidify your claim to the throne."

This condition left even Cloud Peak's members puzzled. The demons were even more confused. But the commander understood one thing—it would decide who passed through the gate. That was enough.

As a level-eight mental-type demon freed from the Nine-Winged Crow's suppression, many peers would resist its rule until it evolved to level nine. It had to plan ahead, and nothing would secure loyalty better than controlling passage to the new world.

This human understood it well.

A condition that could shape the demons' future was accepted without hesitation.

The same principle was applied to the demon monster commander—some risks were necessary.

"Fourth, in the future, when I need aid, you must assist me unconditionally three times. I won't use you as cannon fodder—just as allies. The tasks will be difficult, but we'll face them together. I promise."

This was Ye Zhongming's insurance. Ten million demons represented a colossal force. Not leveraging that would be a waste.

"No. Once at most. I've seen your strength. If even you need help, the danger will be extreme. One such mission is already my gratitude for your earlier offer."

The commander referred to Ye Zhongming's proposal about selecting who would leave.

Ye Zhongming pondered. "How about this: If you never evolve to level nine, you help me once. If you do reach level nine, you help me twice. Fair?"

The demon monster commander paused, considering. If it reached level nine, it would possess near-invincible power. Helping this human an extra time wouldn't be an issue.

It agreed.

Seeing Ye Zhongming about to continue, the demon monster commander's expression darkened.

"Outsider, these are already many conditions. How many more will you demand? You should know when to stop."

It didn't know human idioms, but the meaning was clear.

Ye Zhongming wasn't offended. "Fine, one last one."

The demon monster commander exhaled in relief. It had feared endless demands. Though powerful, it wasn't omnipotent. These terms alone would bind it to this human for a long time.

"Perhaps... killing your king yourself would better secure your throne." Ye Zhongming smiled at the commander. "Don't worry, I'll assist you."

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When the battered Deacon Water and others saw the sudden appearance of over a million demon troops at the mountain pass, they nearly died of fright.

The aftermath of the battle between the two level-nine beings had already cost them dearly—lost war machines, mounts, and lower-level or poorly defended evolved. Their combat strength was at most 60-70% of its peak, and even after recovery, it wouldn't exceed 90%.

After all, the dead couldn't return, and some machines were beyond repair.

Facing over a million high-level demons now would mean annihilation.

They lacked Cloud Peak's abundance of ranged weaponry.

But then they saw Ye Zhongming and the entire Cloud Peak force following behind the demons. Their expressions soured.

What was happening? Why were humans and demons together? What was Ye Zhongming playing at?

But with the two dying level-nine beings between them, communication was impossible.

The Nine-Winged Crow and the Armor King were both on the brink of death.

Their final, all-out strikes had been cataclysmic.

Originally, the Nine-Winged Crow should have won. But its clone entering Earth had severed its control, and avoiding a level drop was already a testament to its strength.

Then, it was ambushed and sustained heavy injuries. Its opponent was a tank with devastating offensive capabilities, wielding various skills that showcased the prowess of another world's elite.

Ultimately, it had leveraged space power to attack—only to be wounded.

It lay motionless, seemingly dead, until its subordinates entered the valley. Then its eyes opened.

Seeing its forces aligned with humans, the Nine-Winged Crow's gaze filled with mockery. It understood—its trusted lieutenant had struck a deal with these outsiders. It had been abandoned.

After a glance, the Nine-Winged Crow ignored the subordinates it had never valued. Instead, it fixed its eyes on the Armor King.

Then it did something that sent every being in the valley scrambling backward.

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Its already distorted beak suddenly opened, and a long tongue shot toward Armor King. The Earth's top mutated lifeform, utterly defenseless, had its head pierced through. Then, the Nine-Winged Crow's tongue turned blood-red, and the wounds on its body seemed to be healing.

A Nine-Winged Crow that had regained even a third of its strength was enough to cleanly slaughter every human and monster here.

Though Ye Zhongming and the others had retreated as a precaution, they were still prepared to act, seeing this.

There was no choice. If something unexpected happened now, the entire operation would fail.

"Don't worry about it. It's fine."

The monster commander nearby suddenly relayed this message to Ye Zhongming.

Ye Zhongming didn't understand; his gaze locked onto the commander. If it couldn't provide a reasonable explanation, he would take action against the Nine-Winged Crow.

Cloud Peak had indeed exhausted its ammunition against the millions of monsters, but what they had prepared for a level-nine lifeform hadn't been used yet.

"It's leaving behind its legacy. Give... the King this chance."

The tone conveyed a hint of pleading, making many of Cloud Peak's core members sneer. This same commander had betrayed him the moment things went south on the other side of the mountain and showed no such tenderness.

"I don't want a level-nine legacy constantly seeking revenge on me!"

With that, Ye Zhongming waved his hand.

Cloud Peak was about to strike.

"It won't happen," the monster commander quickly stopped Ye Zhongming. "A legacy is just a continuation of a level-nine lifeform's bloodline. Only the bloodline is passed down. Everything else—consciousness, thoughts, even form—is completely new."

"It's like..."

The monster commander grew anxious, struggling to find the right words. After a pause, it said, "It's like how humans pass down their lineage, leaving behind proof of their existence in this world."

"Let me handle it."

Perhaps fearing it couldn't persuade Ye Zhongming, the monster commander walked toward the level-nine Nine-Winged Crow itself. Cloud Peak held back its attack, observing how things unfolded.

Seeing its once most trusted subordinate approach, the Nine-Winged Crow cried disdainfully. The commander vibrated the appendages on either side of its head, communicating with the Crow in a way humans couldn't understand. Their wariness didn't lessen.

In the end, no one knew how the two monsters communicated, but the Nine-Winged Crow suddenly flicked one of its wings, sending the commander flying far away.

Its strength was immense even when it was near death. The commander, a mental lifeform with a fragile body, was torn open by the blow, dozens of wounds splitting its flesh, and purple blood drenched its entire body.

Yet, the commander stood up and returned to the Nine-Winged Crow's side. This time, not only did its head appendages move, but its mouth also made sounds, seeming frantic.

The Nine-Winged Crow ignored it, pridefully... lifting its body.

Previously lying on the ground, its full state hadn't been clear. Now, standing, everyone could see the massive wounds covering its enormous frame—the smallest larger than a grown man, the biggest spanning half its abdomen, dozens of meters long.

It raised its head, and its entire body trembled. After the commander let out a cry of unwillingness, the Crow tilted its head back and spat out a blood-red pearl.

Ye Zhongming's expression shifted. He roughly understood what was happening.

This pearl was likely the Nine-Winged Crow's legacy—perhaps its bloodline or genes, representing its talent and potential to evolve to level nine. It might even contain its remaining energy.

The commander's final approach hadn't been to "resolve" its King, as it had implied to Ye Zhongming, but to... demand the legacy.

It had failed. The Nine-Winged Crow had no intention of passing its legacy to a traitor.

Who it chose instead was unclear, but it certainly wasn't the commander. Otherwise, the elk-like monster wouldn't have been so furious and regretful.

And the sheer resentment was obvious even to an idiot.

But what exactly was this pearl, now slowly rising into the sky? Was it randomly assigning a monster to inherit the legacy, or had the Nine-Winged Crow already selected a successor through some secret method?

As Ye Zhongming pondered, he noticed the entire monster army growing restless. The few remaining flying monsters surged toward the Nine-Winged Crow. High-level ground monsters also rushed forward.

The trend spread instantly. Monsters from other parts of the valley moved simultaneously, charging toward the Crow.

It wasn't just the monsters. Ye Zhongming noticed the battle beasts in his stronghold growing agitated, especially those bought from Thousand Beast Villa—tamed but not bound by contract. They began stampeding like the monsters.

The same happened with Thousand Beast Villa and Five Ring Money. The former, in particular, relied heavily on battle beasts for combat, most of which were tamed through Beast Pool equipment rather than contracts. Now, herds of beasts ran uncontrollably, dragging down or even attacking handlers who tried to stop them. In moments, significant casualties piled up.

Five Ring Money fared better, with fewer battle beasts, mostly for riding. Their riders jumped off when they saw trouble.

The Resistance Zone and Guang Yao's forces were largely unaffected, having very few battle beasts.

Even high-level contracted beasts showed intense desire. Even Red Hair and Yellow Ball sent clear messages to Ye Zhongming, hoping to compete for the red pearl. Yangos had already advanced a hundred meters, gathering momentum. It would've burned every obstructing monster if not for awaiting Ye Zhongming's order.

Ye Zhongming realized that the pearl held an immense allure for all mutated lifeforms and that consuming it might bring tremendous benefits.

But he also feared risks.

Who could guarantee a dying level-nine's actions were truly a legacy and not a trap? The commander's earlier words might've been truthful, but that didn't mean they still were. Without certainty, Ye Zhongming hesitated to risk his battle beasts.

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Under his guidance, he believed they'd eventually reach level nine. They didn't need to take this gamble.

But... what if it was real? What if this thing could drastically shorten their evolution time or, like Death King Tree, propel them directly into an evolution phase?

This was, after all, the legacy of a veteran level-nine.

After hesitating, Ye Zhongming shared his concerns with his beasts. Yellow Ball, ever loyal, suppressed its desire and lay beside its master, abandoning the pearl.

Red Hair also quieted, obedient as always, deciding against the risk.

Only greedy Yangos insisted.

Ye Zhongming nodded, allowing it to go.

The dragon's unique bloodline might assimilate the energy, even if it was a trap.

"Human, keep your subordinates back!"

Yangos's participation clearly pressured the monster commander, who relayed his displeasure through psychic communication.

Ye Zhongming shrugged, feigning helplessness.

Both monsters and battle beasts had kept their distance from the Nine-Winged Crow. Though coveting the pearl, the level-nine's aura still intimidated them. Many nearby monsters hesitated.

Flying monsters were the exception. Ground-bound ones could only reach the pearl by climbing the Crow's body, but the fliers could soar up.

Yet even a dying level-nine inspired instinctive fear.

Yangos, however, overtook them all. Its massive wings and dragonfire cleared a path no monster could block. At this rate, it would be the first to reach the pearl.

The Nine-Winged Crow watched coldly. Then, with a sudden cry, it unleashed an invisible shockwave.

High-level monsters and beasts sensed danger and retreated. Yangos was quicker. It shot upward, putting distance between itself and the Crow.

Monsters caught in the blast had their heads explode like watermelons struck by hammers. Corpses piled around the Crow, forming a ring of death. Only psychic lifeforms like the commander survived, naturally resistant to the mental assault.

Yangos faltered mid-air, nearly falling. It took two seconds to stabilize, then ascended another hundred meters, circling warily.

It was too close, and even it would've been stunned or worse.

Everyone now understood that a level-nine commanded respect even on death's door.

This was the dignity of a level-nine. Until its last breath, it would not be disrespected!

Ye Zhongming watched solemnly, deeply grateful his plan had involved luring another level-nine rather than a direct assault. Otherwise, even victory would've come at a catastrophic cost, possibly crippling Cloud Peak permanently.

He was also thankful the bait had been Armor King, Earth's top-ranked level-nine, which had slain peers before. An ordinary level-nine might've stood no chance.

Unlike Ye Zhongming, Li Daqi was on the verge of tears.

Most of the casualties had been monsters, but his side lost battle beasts—many high-level, including several level-sevens.

Not all beasts were as obedient as Yellow Ball or the Giant Spotted Bear.

In one strike, half his battle beasts were gone.

Before even fighting, his strength had plummeted to despairing levels. Even if they killed the Nine-Winged Crow and claimed parts of its body, the gains might not offset the losses.

After its final act, the Nine-Winged Crow exhausted its last vitality. Its massive body collapsed, eyes dimming. Following Armor King, another level-nine vanished from the world.

The battlefield fell silent.

The Crow's lingering aura, the still-warm corpses, and the ring of death kept monsters at bay.

The humans, meanwhile, felt genuine respect.

A level-nine must not be disgraced. The Nine-Winged Crow had declared this with its final breath.

But then—movement.

Amid the corpses, a shadow darted forth. Nimbly scaling the Crow's body, it leaped skyward, reaching for the pearl.

Ye Zhongming's pupils contracted. Immediately, he ordered Yellow Ball, Red Hair, and Earth Yellow:

Seize that pearl!

He now knew it might be the most valuable treasure here today.

Because that shadow was Six-Wings, the Nine-Winged Crow's Earth-dwelling clone.

He didn't know why it hadn't died with its main body. Perhaps its time on Earth had altered it, severing some ties.

Regardless, Six-Wings knew its main body best. The Crow and commander hadn't lied, if even it coveted the pearl. This was the legacy of an immensely powerful level-nine, containing unimaginable energy.

And so, it must be claimed.

Six-Wings wasn't Cloud Peak's ally—at best, a transient guest. Faced with such a prize, it and Cloud Peak were now enemies.

In fact, at this moment, every non-Cloud Peak lifeform was Ye Zhongming's foe!

Six-Wings had slipped through the space gate earlier, hiding until the pearl appeared.

But the Crow's final attack was devastating. Though once part of the being, Six-Wings was still severely injured, losing flight capability. Now, it relied on agility to reach the pearl.

It had the advantage of being mere meters away.

If it obtained the pearl, Six-Wings believed it wouldn't be long before it achieved its dream— becoming the main body.

Chapter 1499: Who gets the pearl

How did Six-Wings fare on Earth? One could say it lived well—or very poorly.

Though it resided in Ying City under Cloud Peak's protection, it was never truly part of Cloud Peak. In fact, Cloud Peak's people harbored an innate hostility toward it.

There was no helping it—this thing had previously killed Cloud Peak members.

Moreover, Ye Zhongming's stance ensured that Six-Wings would never be accepted because Zhongming himself never accepted it.

From the beginning, Ye Zhongming had treated this offshoot as nothing more than a tool to be used. And that was exactly how he continued to treat it.

Given that, Six-Wings could hardly live a good life.

Yet Cloud Peak merely monitored it, rarely interfering with its actions.

Six-Wings hunted on its own, and prey on Earth was far more abundant—and weaker than in the secret realm.

It quickly realized that as long as it didn't harm Cloud Peak or Ying City, Ye Zhongming wouldn't intervene in its affairs.

During this time, Six-Wings improved rapidly, its strength soaring.

But in the end, it was just an offshoot. Even though an entire dimension separated it from its original body, the bloodline connection could never be fully severed. It could never achieve its dream of reaching level nine.

That was when it knew—sooner or later, it would have to return to the secret realm and find a way to claim its original body's legacy.

So when it learned that Cloud Peak was finally making its move against the Nine-Winged Crow, no one was happier than Six-Wings.

Now, the perfect opportunity to obtain the legacy was right before its eyes—far easier than killing the original body itself!

Six-Wings struck. It had to strike because it could already feel that it would die if it didn't claim the legacy soon.

After all, it was just a part of the Nine-Winged Crow.

If the original body died, how could it survive alone?

What it hadn't expected was how smoothly the struggle would go. Not only had the original body, weakened and near death, failed to detect it in time, but its attack on the surroundings had also given Six-Wings an opening.

Success seemed within reach.

But a single bullet shattered its dream.

Its body was thrown off course as if struck by a massive hammer. Its fingertips grazed the legacy pearl but failed to grasp it. No words could describe the despair of that moment.

Six-Wings let out a furious shriek, its gaze venomous as it glared at Ye Zhongming.

That shot had come from him. Seeing Six-Wings' hatred, Ye Zhongming didn't flinch. Instead, he returned a cold look of his own.

The message was clear: What I forbid, you shall not touch.

Six-Wings' missed opportunity became a chance for others. Whether it was Yellow Ball, the monsters, or the battle beasts from Thousand Beast Villa—all surged toward the legacy pearl.

Now, there was no level-nine lifeform to stop them.

Chaos erupted instantly.

Men die for wealth; birds perish for food. And right now, the legacy pearl was the ultimate "food."

"Human, are you breaking our agreement?"

The monster commander no longer held any advantage. Its orders were meaningless in this frenzy for a level-nine legacy—no monster would listen.

It could still unleash mental-type attacks, but their effectiveness would greatly diminish. Instinct was now the dominant force, rejecting all external control. If it tried to dominate the higher-level monsters forcibly, they would resist—and turn on it.

For a mental-type lifeform without subordinates, that meant certain death.

All it could do was turn to Ye Zhongming—with threats or pleas.

But Ye Zhongming's gaze never left the floating pearl, as if he hadn't heard the commander at all.

Oh? Do you want my people to stand down? Using that "Soul Oath" as leverage?

Sorry, that oath was about letting you pass through the space gate—not helping you seize the legacy pearl. Try again.

Ye Zhongming's indifference was already more courtesy than the commander deserved.

Seeing his refusal, the monster commander swiftly changed tactics.

"If you help me obtain that pearl, I'll agree to assist you one additional time—at my full level-nine strength. You know how valuable that would be!"

Finally, Ye Zhongming looked at it—but his expression remained cold and indifferent.

Clearly, the offer held no appeal.

At the same time, he made a subtle gesture—one only Xia Lei and a few others understood.

"I'll also double the amount of magic crystals and materials I promised you!"

The commander was desperate now.

But Ye Zhongming didn't believe a word of it.

Magic crystals and materials in the secret realm weren't longer easy to find. The early days of exploration were long gone—now, the untouched lands were either lethally hostile or swarming with powerful monsters.

Ye Zhongming had already surveyed those areas. He knew roughly how many resources remained.

The commander's promise to "double" the amount was a hollow, panicked lie—a last-ditch effort to secure the legacy pearl.

Ye Zhongming smirked.

"If I take the legacy pearl and raise one of my battle beasts to level nine, wouldn't that make securing those resources even easier?"

Now, the monster commander understood Six-Wings' earlier despair.

Ye Zhongming ignored it, instead issuing a command to his forces.

From the rear of the formation, three massive constructs rumbled forward before locking onto the airspace where the legacy pearl floated.

Chapter 1499.5- Who gets the pearl

Three War Fortresses.

One was a simplified model designed for anti-air defense.

The other two were true modified versions—terrifying in their firepower. Even during the earlier battle, they remained unused, reserved exclusively for level-nine threats.

Of course, the preparations for a level-nine opponent didn't end there. There was also the war fortress from Le Dayuan's lab, the gene-enhanced soldiers, and more.

But now, those were unnecessary.

The three War Fortresses opened fire after only a brief charge.

One targeted the airborne monsters on Cloud Peak's side.

Another "cleansed" the Nine-Winged Crow's back of land-bound monsters attempting to leap up.

The third provided covering fire for Red Hair, blasting away those obstructing her path.

The moment the War Fortresses joined the fray, the battlefield shifted. Their attacks were devastatingly precise and rapid. Without the need to contend with hundreds of thousands of ground monsters, the airborne and Crow-bound foes stood no chance against their firepower.

Their objective was clear: two fortresses suppressed the monsters, while the third ensured Red Hair's swift success.

Li Daqian, Deacon Water, and Commander Mu watched from a distance, sighing as they realized the situation was already decided.

Thanks to Guangyao's restored communications, they now understood what had transpired.

They were stunned—first by Cloud Peak's audacious plan, then by the overwhelming strength of Ye Zhongming's faction.

A single organization had not only killed two level-nines but also dared to face nearly six million monsters alone.

What kind of courage—what kind of confidence—did that require?

Everyone knew failure meant annihilation. Yet Cloud Peak hadn't just won—they still had enough firepower to dominate the aftermath.

What did that mean?

It meant Cloud Peak had never even fought at full strength during the earlier battle.

Facing six million monsters—and still holding back?

That level of power was terrifying.

Though slow to react due to their distance, they now understood the significance of that pearl.

Yet none of them dared to compete.

Was the prize unworthy? Of course not. Li Daqian, in particular, craved it more than anything—it could guarantee Thousand Beast Villa its first level-nine lifeform, his greatest dream since the apocalypse began.

But with Cloud Peak making their move, the outcome was inevitable. No one could challenge them now.

Frankly, if Cloud Peak wished, they could wipe out all three allied forces immediately, even after the battle.

That was the difference.

Without comparison, one might never grasp the gap. But now, the truth was undeniable.

Though these forces weren't at their full might, Cloud Peak was not at full strength after such a battle.

Whether they liked it or not, they had to admit: Cloud Peak now held absolute strategic superiority over them.

Saying they could "take on all three at once" wasn't an exaggeration.

"Let's Go. This Trip Was for Nothing." Li Daqian sighed, addressing the other two leaders.

Originally, they had agreed to split the spoils based on contributions after jointly killing the wounded level-nine.

But now, both level-nines were already dead—without them lifting a finger.

That meant no share of the rewards.

They'd sound petty if they tried to argue that Cloud Peak hadn't directly fought the level-nines either.

From luring Armor King to orchestrating the Nine-Winged Crow's injuries to holding back the monster horde—every success was Cloud Peak's doing.

Only Mu Xinfei seemed unwilling to accept it.

"Even if we didn't contribute, we still endured the aftermath of two level-nines' deaths! Look at our losses! Shouldn't Ye Zhongming take responsibility?"

Then, as if realizing how unreasonable that sounded, she added:

"You bring it up with him!"—effectively throwing her best friend under the bus. She knew that Ye Zhongming couldn't control this. If not, he wouldn't have informed them and would have dealt with the two level nine monsters alone.

Bai Sisi could only smile wryly.

Meanwhile, Red Hair had reached the legacy pearl.

A single touch would secure it—but caution held her back.

The delay drove the other creatures mad. Yellow Ball, in particular, unleashed every skill it had to break free from two level-eight flying monsters, inwardly cursing its master's favoritism.

What's the difference between us? Do you discriminate against dragons? Or is it because I'm not as pretty as Red Hair?

Besides, what use does a humanoid lifeform have for a monster's legacy pearl? It'd be wasted on her!

After a moment's hesitation, Red Hair finally grasped the pearl.

Instantly, every monster and battle beast turned toward her, their focus shifting with her every movement.

Ye Zhongming frowned.

Would he have to slaughter every last one?

The monsters were expendable—he could always have the commander select new ones for Earth.

But the battle beasts? Most belonged to Thousand Beast Villa. Killing them would sour relations with Li Daqian.

Yet as long as the legacy pearl remained, these creatures would never relent.

"Yellow Ball, do you want that pearl?" Ye Zhongming suddenly asked his most loyal companion.

If anyone deserved the first pick, it was Yellow Ball.

But Yellow Ball was intelligent—almost human in its reasoning.

Instinct screamed for the pearl, but logic—and Ye Zhongming's concerns—warned of the risks.

For an Earth-born land beast, absorbing it could lead to uncontrollable consequences.

Yellow Ball chose to refuse.

Which aligned with Ye Zhongming's thoughts.

With Cloud Peak's support, reaching level nine was only a matter of time.

What about Yangos?

That was Ye Zhongming's second option. It wasn't a bad choice—as a flying creature, it shared some traits with the Nine-Winged Crow.

Perhaps the side effects would be milder?

Ideally, Ye Zhongming would have taken the pearl back for Liu Zhenghong to study. But time didn't permit that.

Then he remembered—Red Hair had also shown keen interest in the pearl.

Could she use it?

But he didn't want to risk her either.

Just as he wrestled with the dilemma, Red Hair did something unexpected.

She shoved the legacy pearl into her mount's mouth—the undead Dragonfish.

The entire valley fell silent.

Every monster, every battle beast—even Yangos—froze in place.

All eyes fixed on Red Hair... and the Dragonfish.

The pearl's immense energy had been palpable even to non-compatible lifeforms.

But now, neither humans nor monsters could sense it at all.

There was only one explanation.

The undead dragonfish had already digested it.

Chapter 1500: Distribution is a problem

Red Hair descended from the sky. The monsters and battle beasts that had been chasing her lost all interest, their gazes now fixed on the undead Dragonfish still hovering in the air.

Yangos even flew up to it, sniffing with its massive draconic nostrils—only to be met with a ruthless tail swipe from the Dragonfish.

The dragon dodged, its eyes filled with disappointment.

It understood what a legacy was. Different lifeforms manifested it in different ways—the Nine-Winged Crow condensed it into a pearl, while others might leave behind a beam of light or a drop of essence.

But no matter the form, a legacy could only be used once. Once absorbed, it couldn't be stolen—unless the inheritor reached a certain level and chose to pass it on again.

Now, with the legacy pearl assimilated by the undead Dragonfish, there was no way to reclaim it. Even killing the Dragonfish wouldn't help.

With a dissatisfied roar at Red Hair, Yangos sulked back. It truly didn't dare provoke her or her mount. In Cloud Peak's hierarchy, Red Hair and her Dragonfish ranked second on the list of beings it knew it couldn't defeat.

"I sensed something strange in that pearl's energy," Red Hair explained to Ye Zhongming. "I might be wrong, but I think it would've had severe side effects for non-secret-realm lifeforms. But for it... it was perfect."

She had to justify feeding such a precious item to her Dragonfish.

Ye Zhongming nodded.

Earlier, he'd suspected the pearl might be a trap set by the dying Nine-Winged Crow. Otherwise, why wouldn't it directly pass its legacy to one of its kin among the monsters? Why leave it floating in the air, inviting a free-for-all?

Outsiders had caused the Crow's death. It was impossible it hadn't died resentful. Whether intentional or not, its failure to specify that otherworldly lifeforms couldn't take the legacy spoke volumes.

With the legacy pearl gone, the monsters and battle beasts regained their senses. The demon monster commander reasserted control over the monster army, and human evolved retrieved their beasts. The inter-dimensional war was finally over.

The demon monster commander gave Ye Zhongming a long look before retreating with its forces several kilometers away to regroup. Soon, it would begin gathering demon crystals and materials.

It had abandoned all other schemes.

In that brief moment, Cloud Peak's main forces hadn't even intervened—just a few elites and three massive machines had slaughtered countless monsters, reaffirming their absolute dominance.

Cooperation was now its only option.

With the monsters gone, cleanup began.

Two Cloud Peak teams remained on the battlefield to collect demon crystals and valuable materials from the corpses. Given the sheer number of monsters, the process would take days.

Another team and Yellow Ball were dispatched for security. The remaining task? Processing the two level-nine corpses.

When Deacon Water, Li Daqian, and Commander Mu arrived with their forces, they found Cloud Peak already dissecting the Nine-Winged Crow. Their expressions were complex.

Guang Yao briefed Ye Zhongming on earlier events while Deacon Water watched from afar as Liu Zhenghong's team carefully placed Armor King's remains into an ornate metal casket.

It felt surreal.

The top-ranked mutated lifeform in the nation—dead.

The news would send shockwaves across the region. Whether Cloud Peak would claim responsibility remained to be seen, but secrecy was unlikely with three allied forces as witnesses.

Armor King's casket was swiftly transported back to Cloud Peak for study before being refined into top-tier materials.

The Nine-Winged Crow, however, would be dismantled on-site.

Li Daqian, Deacon Water, and Commander Mu approached, hesitation written on their faces.

Ye Zhongming smiled. He knew what they wanted—a share of the spoils.

And he couldn't blame them. He'd do the same.

"Zhongming, about this..." Li Daqian spoke first. His Thousand Beast Villa had suffered the heaviest losses—battle beasts and handlers alike. They hadn't collapsed but their losses were very heavy.

Compensation was only fair. The best solution was from Ye Zhongming.

"I know we didn't contribute much, and we're already grateful for your earlier protection from the Nature Staff. But... our losses are severe. Would you consider selling us some materials from the Nine-Winged Crow? Price won't be an issue."

What was Li Daqian afraid of? He wasn't afraid of spending money. Level nine materials were a market without supply, and however much was worth it. He was afraid that Cloud Peak wouldn't sell any.

Ye Zhongming appreciated the tact. No blame-shifting, just a straightforward offer that made it sound very sincere.

Were you going to say that Cloud Peak wasn't responsible? They called you here to assist, and even if they were going to take a cut based on their contribution, they were to be paid for appearing.

"I'll select premium demon monster breeds for you, plus 1,500 kilograms of level-eight monster meat. Consider it a token of gratitude."

Li Daqi's face fell. While valuable, he wanted more. The young demon monsters could be developed into strong battle beasts, and the meat would provide his battle beasts with enormous amounts of energy.

Chapter 1500.5- Distribution is a problem

But he wanted more.

Ye Zhongming raised a hand. "That's just the thanks. The Crow's materials? We'll negotiate separately."

The trio brightened instantly.

Money wasn't the issue—level-nine materials were priceless. They'd bankrupt themselves if necessary.

Although they didn't have a gene lifeform lab like Cloud Peak, they had smiths like alchemists and blacksmiths. Although the level nine materials won't be as effective as in Ye Zhongming's hands, they would still be elite items.

"Can we choose specific parts?" Mu Xinfei cut straight to the chase.

Ye Zhongming studied her with amusement. The former nine-star powerhouse was committing to her role.

Deacon Water took a subtler approach. "Zhongming, I heard you eliminated many monsters beyond the mountain. Would you sell us some evolution potions?"

She knew about Ye Zhongming's probability-boosting skill. Directly requesting demon crystals would've been futile, but potions were a different matter.

At their level, reliability trumped gambling on wheel spins. Gambling would often mean that you would have losses if you weren't lucky.

Deacon Water was expanding her faction and needed a large amount of potions.

Evolution potion trade was a hugely profitable business in Cloud Peak, so Deacon Water's suggestion was what he wanted.

Ye Zhongming considered. "High-tier potions are limited. No eight-stars, few seven-stars, more six-stars. The rest are plentiful."

The trio froze. They hadn't expected seven-star potions to be on the table. They thought that six stars would be the limited ones. Even most of Cloud Peak's core members were only seven-star!

Ye Zhongming understood why they were so surprised. He smiled, "Evolution potions above five stars must be paid in demon crystals."

"Understood!" Deacon Water agreed instantly.

Deacon Water stretched her hand and made a sign. Ye Zhongming shook his head, "As for the ratio, let's discuss further. Each level's potions are different. The higher the level, the higher the ratio."

"We have similar needs. Why not we set the terms now so we can gather enough crystals?"

Commander Mu wouldn't give up such a chance. Not many factions were selling high-level potions, and Cloud Peak was probably the only one selling a limited seven-star potions. Even Five Ring Money and Cannibal Chains couldn't.

Li Daqian nodded, and he wanted to join in, too.

Ye Zhongming understood why Commander Mu wanted to decide things now. He was afraid the price he gave Deacon Water and Li Daqian was different from his. After all, Cloud Peak was closest to Deacon Water. Li Daqian was next, and Commander Mu was last.

Ye Zhongming laid out his terms.

“All of you won’t need low-level potions. How about this? 20% off five-star potions, 15% for six-stars, and 10% off the seven-star potions. The most five-star potions you can buy are three thousand, 600 six-star potions, and 30 seven-star potions. The three of you will split them, or you can decide how to distribute them yourselves.”

They wanted to speak, but Ye Zhongming interrupted them, “No bargaining.”

The three of them lowered their heads to think.

The discounts weren’t astronomical—wheel spins could yield similar results with luck. The question was whether the certainty justified the cost.

It depended on whether or not each faction had evolved that could raise the luck on the wheel. If they did, was their probability above that of Ye Zhongming’s?

Mu Xinfei bowed out of seven-star purchases—her faction had an evolved who boosted spin success by 10%, making the discount redundant.

Deacon Water and Li Daqian, lacking such talents, accepted eagerly. Deacon Water’s financial might shone. Commander Mu and Li Daqian took up a third of the potions while Deacon Water finished the rest.

Had Ye Zhongming accepted barter, they’d have paid premiums—even 200 seven-star crystal equivalents per vial of seven-star potion—to avoid hunting high-tier mutants, which would have saved many lives.

After the evolution potions, a few of them turned to the Nine-Winged Crow. They thought that with a good start, Ye Zhongming would talk about selling the materials. They were anxious about the price.

But when they made the suggestion and even thought about which parts, Ye Zhongming rejected them.

"Zhongming, didn't you say..." Li Daqian pointed at the crow and asked him why he went back on his word.

"I'm changing the trade method."

He met their confused stares squarely.

"Let's be honest—no matter how skilled your craftsmen are, they can't utilize level-nine materials as effectively as Cloud Peak."

The unspoken "Obviously!" hung in the air. The few of them rolled their eyes.

Your Cloud Peak had the gene lab and Ye Zhongming, an advanced Smith. Of course, others couldn't compete.

Ye Zhongming ignored them, "So instead of selling raw materials, I'll trade you finished products crafted from them."