

## **Apocalypse 1591**

### Chapter 1591: Thread Ghost

"What's going on?"

Ye Zhongming looked toward the only one here who could give him answers—the black cat.

Today's events were truly bizarre.

Before coming to rescue the Talking Lady, he had assumed she was under attack.

Given that she and the black cat—both level-eight beings—along with countless zombie subordinates, couldn't resolve the situation, he figured the threat had to be either overwhelming numbers or a level-nine enemy.

That was why Ye Zhongming had been so cautious. He had prepared thoroughly before setting out, with the mindset of helping if possible but not risking his own life if the situation was hopeless.

At one point, he had even considered the possibility that Talking Lady was already dead. In that case, he would simply continue north toward the Bering Strait to seize the Mountain King Crown.

Now, seeing Talking Lady in this state, he realized his assumptions had been wrong, at least partially. Talking Lady was trapped in a condition he couldn't yet comprehend. This so-called "rescue" might not be the traditional kind—there could be deeper implications.

"Silk Ghost."

The black cat raised a paw, pointing toward Talking Lady—but Ye Zhongming understood it was referring to the white filaments.

"It... has trapped my master."

Ye Zhongming pieced together what had happened through the black cat's fragmented explanations.

He didn't know why Talking Lady and the black cat had left the Chinese region for this frozen wasteland, but he now understood that Talking Lady had suffered what might be the most severe setback of her evolution so far.

The black cat said that things had initially gone smoothly after arriving here. Their strength and ability to control zombies quickly made the Talking Lady the dominant force in the city.

Some time ago, after meeting the conditions for evolution, Talking Lady and the black cat began the process of advancing to level nine.

Talking Lady took every precaution for safety—stationing hordes of zombies as guards (including some at level eight) and hiding deep underground in this secluded cavern. Even if something breached the entrance and fought through the undead hordes, locating this exact chamber would take forever.

So, the pair began their evolution in peace.

But then, disaster struck.

These white filaments appeared.

At first, they merely wove a web around the area. Talking Lady and the black cat, already deep in their evolution, noticed nothing. Once the web was complete, the filaments began creeping onto their bodies.

Both awoke from their evolutionary trance when the threads first pierced their flesh.

Normally, this would mean evolution had failed—an interrupted process.

At that moment, both the Talking Lady and the black cat were terrified.

The best-case scenario for a failed evolution was losing the chance to reach level nine forever. The worst? Being torn apart by the accumulated energy meant for their advancement.

But soon, they realized something strange—the evolution hadn't stopped. It had only slowed.

The energy was still transforming their bodies, but at a reduced pace.

Why?

Because the energy was being sucked away.

The culprit? These white threads.

Talking Lady faced a dilemma:

End the evolution actively, guaranteeing failure but possibly preserving a slim chance for future attempts.

Do nothing—hoping they could break free as their bodies grew closer to level nine.

She chose the second option, too afraid to risk the first.

But soon, she realized this wouldn't work either. While being drained, neither she nor the black cat could complete their evolution, and their chances of escape dwindled by the minute.

The threads were evolving faster than they were. Every second wasted made their situation more hopeless.

So, Talking Lady made a decision.

Unwilling to abandon her shot at level nine but unwilling to gamble everything, she freed the black cat from the threads' grasp. Thankfully, this didn't sever their symbiotic bond or the black cat's own evolutionary potential.

It was the best she could do.

Freed, the black cat attacked the threads frantically—but even its level-eight claws, famed for their sharpness, couldn't damage them. The threads were indestructible, driving both to despair.

They tried everything:

Commanding subordinate zombies to attack with skills or toxins.

Using fire, ice, and other elemental assaults.

All failed.

Finally, before losing consciousness, Talking Lady gave one last solution:

"Get Ye Zhongming."

Hearing this, Ye Zhongming couldn't help but roll his eyes internally.

Let's be real—Talking Lady and the black cat coming here to rule the roost definitely had something to do with distancing themselves from him.

But couldn't they have committed fully? Now that they were in trouble, they remember him? Wasn't that a bit too opportunistic?

Still, he kept his thoughts to himself. While their actions rubbed him the wrong way, Talking Lady and the black cat had helped him and Cloud Peak Mountain Villa in the past. So, he quickly shifted focus to the white filaments.

The black cat claimed nothing could harm them. Ye Zhongming wasn't convinced.

Drawing Wind and Thunder, he prepared to slash at the threads—but the black cat leaped in his way.

"Look!"

It swiftly explained why it had stopped him, darting nimbly through the web until it reached the cavern wall. Its claws scraped at the stone, uncovering a hidden recess covered in grayish material. When brushed away, it revealed—

A demon crystal.

From this crystal, countless white filaments extended, clearly the source of the entire web.

But what shocked Ye Zhongming most was the crystal's color, mostly silver.

Silver. The mark of level nine.

In that instant, things clicked.

Red Hair had mentioned an obscure energy that pressured her, possibly level nine. Could this "Thread Ghost" be it?

"Don't touch it. It will drain your energy. Master... can't sustain it anymore. It's about to reach level nine!"

The black cat's warning was urgent.

Ye Zhongming nodded. Talking Lady's energy was no longer enough to fuel the filaments' final evolution. This thing needed a new power source.

But how could he save Talking Lady without touching the threads?

After a moment's thought, he stepped back and swung Wind and Thunder, activating his job skill. He aimed to test whether the energy slash could sever the filaments.

But the moment the blade's energy touched the threads—

Something unexpected happened.

Chapter 1592: Clueless

The blade's edge touched the white filaments, and in that instant, these threads began to move.

The entire cave was filled with white filaments, and their movement made the whole cavern seem alive. The web vibrated back and forth, causing Talking Lady within it to sway like driftwood—much to the black cat's alarm, which instinctively tried to reach its master.

However, the white filaments moved with incredible speed. The black cat failed to dodge in time and was immediately struck, letting out a pained yowl.

Originally positioned near the cave wall, the cat had rushed into the web of white filaments. After the first hit, it lost its balance and was battered repeatedly within the net. By the time it was flung out, its body was covered in wounds.

Ye Zhongming knew just how strong this black cat—which seemed no different from a house cat aside from its extra demon crystal—truly was. Even he couldn't have inflicted so many injuries on such an agile creature in such a short time.

Yet these white filaments had done it.

While the black cat suffered, Ye Zhongming wasn't faring much better. As the instigator, the white filaments didn't spare him either. After his blade strike, the threads shot toward him at a speed completely unlike their earlier stillness. Fortunately, Ye Zhongming was near the entrance and retreated swiftly upon sensing danger, causing most of the attacking filaments to strike the stone wall instead. The hard rock was pierced like tofu, leaving deep holes in its wake.

Soon, everything settled, and Ye Zhongming stepped back into the cave.

He wiped his left cheek, where a small wound had appeared. It wasn't serious—only a trickle of blood, already clotting.

But the Cloud Peak King's eyes now held a newfound caution.

The white filaments' attack had come without warning, their speed leaving almost no time to react. Ye Zhongming didn't know how sharp the threads piercing Red Hair's body were, but the ones that had struck at him felt comparable to a purple-grade weapon.

He was also puzzled. These white filaments had allowed the black cat to peel away the gray substance to expose their magic crystal, yet wouldn't tolerate any attack on their threads?

This behavior—freely revealing their core while fiercely protecting peripheral parts—was bizarre.

The black cat limped to Ye Zhongming's feet, badly wounded but alive.

Neither the cat nor Ye Zhongming looked at each other. Both were fixated on the white filaments.

After the earlier assault, the threads were gradually calming. Some retracted their protruding tips, others slowed their vibrations, and even Talking Lady's movements gentled.

It seemed everything was returning to normal.

But on the threads that had struck the black cat, and on the one that had pierced Ye Zhongming's cheek, their blood remained.

As the filaments settled, small bulges formed where the blood had touched, slowly absorbing it.

Within seconds, the blood vanished entirely. The cave's filaments returned to stillness, and in the hollow the black cat had exposed, the magic crystal took another step toward becoming fully silver.

Ye Zhongming used a healing crystal on the black cat, then frowned at the scene ahead, searching for a solution.

A direct assault seemed impossible. Given how the white filaments reacted earlier, his strongest attack would likely fail.

So, how could he free Talking Lady?

After being healed, the black cat felt slightly better, though as a mutated creature, the healing crystal's effects were weaker on it than on evolved humans.

It lay on the ground, licking its wounds, occasionally glancing at the still-unresponsive Talking Lady with deep concern.

Ye Zhongming sat down as well. He took items from his spatial storage one by one, examining and then returning them, searching for anything useful.

But nothing seemed viable.

During this time, he tested further. He had the black cat retreat, then tried attacks with the hammer from the Blue Secret Realm and his demon crystal weapon. Both attempts only provoked counterattacks, yielding no progress.

Ye Zhongming had hit a dead end.

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While Ye Zhongming searched underground in Yakutsk for a way to save Talking Lady, another battle between humans and mutated creatures erupted on the surface. Once again, the humans were the aggressors, launching a four-pronged assault—three feints to scatter the enemy, with the main force concentrated in the east.

The fight lasted hours before ending with the humans' voluntary retreat.

Though brief, it was the largest engagement in the past week. While the human forces suffered over a thousand casualties, they inflicted nearly ten times the losses, including several level-seven and one level-eight creature—a substantial haul.

This was why the human army refused to leave despite the freezing wilderness: such a rich hunting ground was too rare to abandon.

Daily yields of tens or even hundreds of thousands of magic crystals and materials kept everyone invested.

Thus, deployment rotations among the allied forces were hotly contested, sparking frequent arguments between factions.

But in the rear camp, this issue seemed irrelevant. Since Pei Jia and his squad were assigned guard duty, they'd been stuck there. Though provisions were steady and they received occasional shares of spoils from the front, it wasn't enough to sustain the entire squad, fueling growing discontent.

Pei Jia listened to his subordinate's report with a faint smile.

"Let them vent. After such harsh conditions, don't our people deserve an outlet? Even in the pre-apocalypse, men and women fooled around—now? It's nothing."

His dark face curled into a knowing grin.

"Besides, dear Adair, don't you think these Easterners are loaded?"

Adair's eyes flashed with greed, quickly replaced by worry.

"But their group is strong. Their leader's likely an eight-star evolved, with capable subordinates and high-level combat beasts."

Pei Jia laughed heartily.

"Alone, we wouldn't stand a chance. But remember where we are—and what's happening! Would these Easterners dare fight all of us?"

He paused, then added, "That redhead's quite the catch, don't you think, Adair?"

Outside, the sounds of unrest grew louder. Pei Jia could almost see the demon crystals piling up before him.

Chapter 1593: You are the solution (1)

"How long have they been missing?"

Xia Bai's face was terrifyingly dark. The moment she heard Xiao Min's report, a trace of bloodlust seeped into her voice.

"About fifteen minutes."

Though Xiao Min was the de facto commander of the Female Guards, when it came to major incidents, she still had to follow Xia Bai's orders—like now.

Two Female Guard warriors had taken two youth soldiers to collect snow for drinking water an hour earlier, but they hadn't returned on time. Now, they were fifteen minutes late.

Fifteen minutes might not seem like much, but the Female Guards were nothing like the undisciplined, chaotic mercenary teams of the post-apocalyptic world. Cloud Peak had always operated under strict

management—Xia Lei, Xiao Hu, and Mo Ye had brought state-level organizational methods here, and after Guang Yao joined, military discipline tailored to the apocalypse was perfected.

This was one of the key reasons Cloud Peak remained powerful, united, and combat-ready.

The Female Guards were even more stringent. These women adhered to every rule with near-fanatical discipline, far more rigid than Cloud Peak's other forces. Being fifteen minutes late wasn't just a violation—even five minutes was unacceptable.

This was the rear of the human alliance's camp, where mutant lifeforms were rare. The chances of an attack were slim. Even if some suddenly appeared, the missing team consisted of two seven-star evolved and two six-star youths. To subdue them silently would require at least two level-eight creatures, a level-nine, or a swarm of lower-tier mutants.

But if creatures of that level appeared, Xia Bai, Red Hair, and the others would have sensed them.

That left only one possibility: humans did this.

And here, the only humans were Pei Jia and his mercenary team.

"Everyone, search. Find them, no matter what."

That morning, the evolvers in the alliance's rear camp witnessed something unexpected. The previously quiet Eastern squad suddenly burst out of their camp, teams of warriors rushing in every direction.

Soon, the entire human settlement was in an uproar.

Safrashenko was a squad leader in Pei Jia's mercenary team, a trusted subordinate tasked with guarding an equipment warehouse—stockpiled gear for evolved to replace damaged weapons during battle.

Of course, not for free.

The highest-grade items here were ten pieces of blue-grade equipment, brought by the alliance's leader, Akinas. Rumor had it he had an exceptional craftsman among his ranks, the source of these high-quality weapons.

Safrashenko guarded this place fiercely, especially those ten blue items—he'd have slept with them if he could.

He was cautious, but realistically, no one dared cause trouble here. Not only was Safrashenko a powerful seven-star evolved, and Pei Jia an eight-star—both men you didn't want to cross—but those ten blue items belonged to Akinas. Who'd be stupid enough to steal from him?

So Safrashenko had it relatively easy.

Until today.

A squad of Eastern warriors stormed into the warehouse.

Literally stormed.

The gates and guards didn't stop these women and teenagers.

Fifteen of them—ten women, five youths.

Safrashenko was furious. If not for the fact that these were Pei Jia's "guests" (who paid daily protection fees), he'd have ordered his men to attack.

His face darkened as he barked at them to leave their gear and get out.

But the fifteen ignored him, scanning the warehouse, searching every corner as if looking for something.

That was the last straw. Safrashenko drew the twin shortswords at his hips and pointed them at the intruders, issuing a final warning.

"We're looking for someone. Stay out of our way, or we'll kill you."

A woman spoke coldly in English.

Safrashenko understood—his past job at a foreign trade company had taught him the language.

Looking for someone?

"There's no one here!"

He swung a blade to block a woman from entering his private quarters—a non-lethal move, but it provoked an extreme reaction.

"Scram!"

Her voice was sharp as a blade. The animal hides covering her burst apart, revealing sleek armor underneath. A slender, paper-thin sword flashed with blue light and sliced through Safrashenko's weapon.

His green-grade twin blades shattered.

For a moment, he just stared at the remains of his beloved swords in disbelief.

The Female Guard warrior didn't stop. She kicked him aside like trash.

Had Safrashenko aimed to kill instead of block, she wouldn't have used her foot—she'd have used her sword.

With their leader down, the guards should've attacked. But none of the hundred men moved.

Because they saw it, this woman was clad in over ten pieces of blue-grade equipment.

The entire warehouse only had ten blue items.

And she'd just effortlessly defeated their strongest fighter.

So they stood frozen, letting the Female Guards search and leave unhindered.

Once they were gone, Safrashenko scrambled up and sprinted to Pei Jia's command post.

He had to warn his boss—these Easterners were not to be trifled with.

Similar scenes played out across the settlement. The Cloud Peak forces, previously passive, now moved with deadly purpose. They tore through every corner, searching for their missing comrades.

Those who merely obstructed them—like Safrashenko—were spared with a warning.

Those who attacked? They were cut down without mercy.

The scent of blood thickened in the air.

When Pei Jia got word and rushed out, he found Xia Bai, Red Hair, and Old Man waiting in the town square.

As an evolved, he could smell the blood. Even without a full tally, he knew—he'd lost a lot of men today.

Rage burned in his chest. He cracked his neck—a prelude to violence.

Xia Bai and Red Hair watched coldly, utterly unfazed.

Only Old Man stepped forward nervously, unsure of Cloud Peak's true strength.

"Our people are missing. We're searching. We paid your protection fees, Mr. Pei."

He hoped to de-escalate things. If a fight broke out, even if Cloud Peak was strong, Pei Jia's forces weren't weak either. And behind him stood the entire human alliance—including the infamous Akinas.

Pei Jia knew exactly what had happened. He'd allowed it. These Easterners were rich, and he wanted a piece.

But he didn't attack immediately. Instead, he feigned outrage.

"There may be a misunderstanding, but your actions have enraged me. Today, you will answer to me and my mercenaries. Otherwise—"

He smirked, pressing a hand to the ground. The earth cratered under his palm, leaving a perfect imprint.

Old Man's men paled—the instinctive fear, weaker evolved felt toward the strong.

"Otherwise, what?" Xia Bai's face was calm, but her hands itched for her scythe.

She was already worried about Ye Zhongming in Yakutsk. Now her people were missing. Patience wasn't her strength.

"Otherwise—" Pei Jia's eyes narrowed, but before he could finish, an explosion of combat erupted in the distance.

Both sides sprinted toward the commotion.

They arrived at a camp where nearly a hundred Female Guards and youth soldiers were besieging a barracks, battling over three hundred enemy evolved.

"Commander! Our sisters must be inside!"

A squad leader pointed to two mutilated mutant corpses nearby—the battle beasts of the missing warriors, their demon crystals gouged out.

Xia Bai's vision turned red.

She was cold, but not heartless. This disappearance brought back painful memories—ones she refused to relive.

Her eyes darkened, her aura surging. Black wings burst from her back, shredding her hide to reveal sleek obsidian armor.

A scythe materialized in her grip. She shot into the air, aiming to bypass the fight and storm the barracks.

"Get back here!"

Pei Jia, startled by her transformation, lashed out—but before his elongated arms could reach her, a chill shot toward his neck.

He barely dodged as a crimson spear grazed his throat.

Red Hair stood behind him, silent, her weapon poised for another strike.

Chapter 1594: You are the solution (2)

At Pei Jia's level, he had long since experienced countless life-or-death battles. The moment he was attacked, his body reacted instinctively—dodging, pivoting, and striking in one fluid motion. His massive hand transformed into a blade, slashing toward Red Hair's grip on her spear.

This reaction alone proved Pei Jia had earned his evolution through sheer combat prowess. Even against Red Hair's ambush, he countered with precision, blending defense and offense seamlessly.

Red Hair released her grip, evading Pei Jia's strike, then pushed the spear's butt with her palm. The weapon's tip whistled through the air, whipping toward Pei Jia's head.

Pei Jia kicked off the ground, his body arching backward with unnatural flexibility. The spear tip grazed past his chest, missing by a hair's breadth.

At the same time, his hands ignited with energy—a skill was coming.

Red Hair reclaimed her spear, her hair—unnoticed until now—lengthening and spreading around her like a living net. In an instant, it lashed out like crimson needles.

Pei Jia's expression finally cracked.

He abandoned his half-formed skill, slamming his palms forward in desperation. Even rushed, his combat instincts shone. His left hand generated a shimmering barrier, shielding his torso, while his right unleashed a wave of energy that scattered outward in a radiant arc, clashing with the red tendrils.

Crackling explosions filled the air.

When the light faded, Pei Jia staggered back. The barrier and energy rays had dissipated, and Red Hair's hair retracted momentarily.

But thinking this would stop her was pure delusion.

Her spear had already realigned. This thrust carried far more power than before, so much that the air itself ruptured, forming a visible vortex. The crimson spearhead seemed to teleport, appearing before Pei Jia's eyes the instant she struck.

"Hah!"

The eight-star evolved spat out a black orb, which splattered against the spearhead like viscous sludge, halting its momentum for a critical second. Seizing the opening, Pei Jia crossed his arms before his face.

The spear pierced clean through his palms.

Yet no blood flowed—only a thick, pitch-black liquid oozed from the wounds.

Behind his shield of hands, Pei Jia's lips curled into a cruel smile.

His body seemed to liquefy, the same tar-like substance seeping from the gaps in his armor. Instead of dripping, the revolting fluid hovered midair, then—at Pei Jia's smirk—shot toward Red Hair like bullets.

With her spear trapped, Red Hair appeared to have only two choices:

Abandon her weapon and retreat.

Tank the attack head-on.

Either way, the initiative would shift to Pei Jia.

Pei Jia's mercenaries were already swarming the area, their numbers dwarfing Cloud Peak's. Though skirmishes erupted everywhere, this was the focal point. If Pei Jia seized control here, the entire battle would tilt in his favor.

Red Hair chose the first option.

With a soft chuckle, she sidestepped, evading the black projectiles—and leaving her spear behind.

Pei Jia's grin widened.

He was certain this spear constituted the bulk of Red Hair's strength. Its sharpness, its speed—it had to be at least gold-grade, possibly purple.

Today was his lucky day.

But his triumph shattered instantly.

Instead of reclaiming her weapon, Red Hair plunged into the fray where the Red Guards battled his men.

Despite outnumbering Cloud Peak's forces, Pei Jia's mercenaries were already barely holding on—casualties mounted by the second. Now, with Red Hair unleashed, their formation buckled.

Even unarmed, she was a nightmare. Every punch, every kick, every lash of her crimson hair claimed a life.

Five elites fell in as many seconds.

The rest broke ranks in terror.

"RAAAAH!"

Pei Jia roared, snatching up the spear and charging after her. Her cunning infuriated him—he'd never abandon such a weapon.

Though he couldn't replicate Red Hair's spatial-piercing thrusts, the spear in his hands was still deadly. He vaulted high, driving it downward with a shriek of splitting air.

Red Hair, having thinned the enemy ranks, turned to meet him.

Instead of dodging, she threw a punch directly at the oncoming spear tip.

Pei Jia's smile turned savage.

Even without mastering the spear's full potential, he knew no flesh could withstand a purple-grade weapon's strike.

This woman was overconfident.

He poured more strength into the thrust.

The spear tip met her fist—

—and vanished.

Poof.

Gone.

Red Hair's fist plowed into Pei Jia's wide-eyed face.

The eight-star evolved catapulted backward, black ooze spraying from his body like ruptured veins.

Before he could rise, Red Hair was upon him. The spear had reappeared in her grip. With a chilling smile, she drove it through his shoulder blade, pinning him to the frozen earth.

Pei Jia's defeat collapsed his army's morale.

Within half an hour, every surviving mercenary surrendered.

Cloud Peak's casualties:

1 youth soldier dead.

300+ wounded (including a seven-star female guard and five youths severely injured, sidelined for a week).

The missing warriors were found ambushed by foreign evoked using debuffs and binding skills. Even unconscious, they'd killed several attackers in their last stand.

Their battle beasts had been butchered for cores and spite.

Luckily, Cloud Peak's swift retaliation—and the captives' conspicuously high-grade gear—had deterred further abuse.

Pei Jia's forces fared worse:

Hundreds dead.

Hundreds more incapacitated.

The rest stripped naked, shivering in the snow at gunpoint.

Xia Bai executed every kidnapper personally before regrouping with Red Hair and Xiao Min to discuss damage control.

Meanwhile, news of the massacre had already reached the alliance's frontlines, carried by fleeing mercenaries.

The storm was just beginning.

Chapter 1595: You are the solution (3)

Achinas was a Greek man with captivating golden locks and deep blue eyes. His fair complexion and striking features made him the object of many foreign women's desires.

Add to that his formidable strength, and he became nothing short of the perfect dream lover.

Originally, Achinas had been in high spirits these past few days. Finding such a prime hunting ground was nothing short of a godsend.

Given a little more time, he could completely devour the creatures of Yakutsk. By then, his hands would hold millions of demon crystals—soon to be transformed into evolution potions, propelling his forces to become the strongest not just in Europe, but the entire world.

Perhaps then, he could even rule the planet and join the cosmic races in this grand wheel feast.

When a subordinate rushed in with a report, he was studying a map, strategizing how to lure out more mutants for annihilation.

"What? Pei Jia?"

Achinas frowned. Pei Jia was one of his closest affiliated forces—practically his own faction. That was precisely why he had entrusted them with the rear camp. It was supposed to be foolproof.

While the allied forces handled their own basic logistics, the rear camp was less of a supply depot and more of a private warehouse for Achinas and his powerful collaborators. Weapons, equipment, potions, scrolls, and cards—all were part of their lucrative trade, sold to combat units for massive profits.

So if trouble broke out elsewhere, he might not care. But the rear camp? That was his treasure chest.

"Send Opudo to investigate. If necessary, conduct a full purge."

No matter how charming Achinas' smile was, the shadow of bloodshed lingered at the corners of his lips.

A man who climbed to such heights in the apocalypse was no stranger to slaughter.

To those who dared challenge him, Achinas spared no thought—kill first, ask later. Only then would future troublemakers think twice.

Pei Jia might be close, but he was still an outsider. Opudo, however, was one of Achinas' top three enforcers—an eight-star evolved with an equally formidable battle beast, a mutated European bison. The title "Blood Ox Knight" was feared across Eastern Europe.

With Opudo on the case, Achinas was confident. His orders granted full authority—even if Pei Jia had to die.

After issuing the command, Achinas refocused on drafting the next offensive plan.

But less than an hour later, the same messenger returned—this time, pale-faced.

"What now?" Achinas felt a twinge of unease.

"Sir... Opudo's squad entered the rear camp and... has gone silent."

"Silent?" Achinas' perfect brows arched as he stood abruptly.

If Pei Jia's failure could be chalked up to carelessness, Opudo's disappearance spelled real trouble.

This meant the Eastern squad that defeated Pei Jia wasn't a fluke—they were genuinely formidable.

"George!"

A voice boomed through the tent flaps before a hulking figure entered—thick red curls, a bushy beard, and a frame like a fortress door. A veritable barbarian.

"Donis, you're here!"

The giant nodded, his voice thunderous. "I heard about the rear camp. Pei Jia captured? How are you handling it?"

This was Donis, one of the alliance's most influential figures and a co-owner of the rear camp's inventory. Few dared call Achinas by his first name.

If anyone thought this "barbarian" was as crude as he looked, they'd be dead wrong. Donis was shrewd, calculating, and razor-sharp—a true strategist.

His strength matched his intellect. Though not quite Achinas' equal, he surpassed Opudo by a wide margin.

"Worse. I sent Opudo to clean it up, but he's gone dark."

"That serious?!"

Donis scratched his scalp, sparks flickering in his eyes.

"Hmm." Achinas considered going himself.

"I'll handle it."

Donis turned to leave. Achinas nearly called him back but held his tongue.

Donis and his men far outclassed Opudo's squad. If anyone could resolve this, it was him.

Achinas decided to wait.

But this time, his earlier nonchalance was gone. Restless, he abandoned his plans and stepped outside, staring toward the rear camp.

Minutes ticked by. The unease gnawing at Achinas grew unbearable. As the alliance's leader, he had to project unshakable confidence—yet his instincts screamed disaster.

When the intelligence officer reappeared, his dread peaked.

"Speak!"

Achinas strode forward, his voice betraying tension. He knew—if this news was bad, the situation was dire.

The officer lowered his head, whispering: "Sir... Donis entered the rear camp and... no contact. We sent ten scout teams from all directions—all silent!"

Achinas inhaled sharply, forcing calm. For a few seconds, he gazed blankly at the Arctic sky before uttering, icy:

"Mobilize the entire alliance. Surround the rear camp."

The human war machine surged toward the rear camp.

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When Ye Zhongming returned to camp, the first person he saw was Old Man squatting gloomily nearby. Before he could ask, Red Hair and Xia Bai noticed his arrival.

After a brief debrief, Ye Zhongming's gaze fell on the three men pinned to the ground by spears—Pei Jia, Opudo, and Donis.

His first thought wasn't about the impending storm.

But rather... a desperate, high-risk plan to save Talking Lady.