

## **Apocalypse 1596**

Chapter 1596: You are not going anywhere

The rear camp was not too far from the front lines, so when Achinas led his troops to surround it, the Cloud Peak members had not yet left.

Of course, they had no intention of leaving either.

Achinas sat atop his war beast, the Swiftwind White Fox, gazing gloomily at the small town before him.

There were no guards, the gates stood wide open, and a few youths and women stood at the entrance. Watching their massive army of over 100,000, their expressions didn't change in the slightest.

Holander and Rustig walked behind Achinas. Like Donis, they were among the strongest warriors of the human alliance.

Hearing that Donis had been trapped inside, both had eagerly rushed over, curious to see just what kind of formidable force in this rear camp town could have detained three Eight-Star evolved and their entire teams!

It wasn't that they underestimated the enemy—even after three consecutive defeats, they knew they still held an overwhelming advantage.

Not only did they have over ten Eight-Star evolved here, but the 100,000 evolved they brought were more than enough to flatten this small town instantly.

Their arrival also made Achinas reconsider his initial plan of mobilizing the entire army—this force was more than sufficient.

"Destroy the walls!"

Achinas was methodical. Over a hundred stone-throwers were wheeled out from the formation at his command.

These stone-throwers resembled the catapults of the cold-weapon era, with the difference that they were wheel-based weapons, mostly produced from level 6 or 7 wheels. Though ungraded themselves, the stones they launched had devastating power against solid defensive structures like fortified walls.

It was said such weapons were rare in the China but relatively common in the Europe, where many wheels produced them.

The sight of a hundred stone-throwers firing in unison was spectacular. The town was never a sturdy fixed camp—just a crude wall originally built by the previous occupying squad, later refurbished by the alliance after taking over. While it looked decent, it was far less stable than the specially treated walls of large strongholds. Within minutes, the town's surrounding walls were completely demolished.

Yet the Cloud Peak team inside remained eerily silent.

Achinas and his two companions exchanged glances, sensing something strange.

After a pause, the alliance decided to charge into the town.

With such absolute superiority, there was no reason to hesitate just because the enemy was silent.

Still, for caution's sake, Achinas ordered the ranged troops to bombard the town first.

As for the lives of Pei Jia and the others, they weren't a concern. If they died, their legacies, especially Donis's, would belong to Achinas and the rest.

Twenty minutes of relentless skill attacks nearly leveled the town, leaving vast ruins in their wake.

However, it was clear Achinas had shown restraint—the warehouse area remained untouched.

"Charge in. Kill anyone who isn't one of us."

Achinas didn't need prisoners. He only wanted to make it clear that his alliance was inviolable.

The 100,000-strong force stormed into the small town from all directions, while Achinas and his elite guards stayed outside.

"Perhaps we should've done this from the start," Holander remarked, rubbing the centimeter-thick calluses on his knuckles as he observed the town.

He didn't pity Donis but regretted that even though the ranged attacks had deliberately avoided the warehouse, the troops entering the town would inevitably damage or loot some supplies. For him, even the slightest loss was unacceptable.

"Take half of Donis's team," Achinas said bluntly, still watching the town.

Though the warehouse contained ten blue-grade equipment belonging to him, most of the materials and scrolls were Holander's.

"Rustig gets 20%. Agreed?"

Rustig shrugged. "Your call."

Holander chuckled. Having gotten what he wanted, he dropped the subject and pointed at the town. "I'll wager a green-grade equipment—our men will finish this in under ten minutes."

Achinas and Rustig laughed, refusing the bet. The outcome was obvious.

But before their smiles faded, a deafening explosion erupted from the town, followed by a series of smaller blasts.

From their vantage point, the three saw their soldiers' limbs torn apart and sent flying. Torrents of blood stained the pristine northern ground.

What was happening?!

This was the question flashing through every witness's mind.

They were certain it wasn't explosives—but if not, what could it be?

After the explosions, a blade light swept through their ranks. Every evolved and war beast in its path was bisected. Rough estimates put the death toll at several thousand in that single strike!

With the alliance's forces densely packed, all charging toward the warehouse at the center, and combined with the earlier mysterious explosions, a tenth of their 100,000 troops were wiped out in an instant.

The alliance was stunned. The sudden bloodbath left them dazed.

"Immediately—" Achinas's eyes burned with fury as he prepared to issue orders to stabilize the situation. But intense energy fluctuations in the sky forced his gaze upward.

First, he saw two giant white birds descend through the icy mist, spewing frost breath. Every lifeform touched by it instantly froze into statues.

Next came an undead creature, trailing black mist as it glided over the alliance troops. Those touched by the mist collapsed, screaming, their bodies reduced to bones within moments.

Most shocking of all was the appearance of a fiery dragon. Without a sound, it flapped its massive wings, descending like death itself. Each breath of dragonfire ignited swathes of alliance evolvers, leaving nothing but ashes in its wake—a sight that made even the bravest tremble.

Skill lights flared, and battle cries unmistakably not from the alliance rose from the center. Their Eastern enemies had launched a countercharge!

"Hold them back! Stand your ground!" Achinas roared, his handsome face twisted with rage. Turning to his companions, he said, "We'll handle these level 8 creatures. Send orders—all troops must attack! Annihilate them!"

Before his words faded, a rumbling came from underground. The frozen earth split apart as a colossal worm burst forth, accompanied by three figures.

"You're not going anywhere," Ye Zhongming said amidst the flying debris, swinging the Undead Sand Moon Blade toward Achinas!

Chapter 1597: Nutrition Body (1)

Achinas had not truly fought with anyone for a very long time. At his level, there were too few people who could pose a threat to him, let alone confront him directly.

In all of Europe, such individuals numbered no more than ten.

Seeing the allied forces under attack and those powerful battle beasts wantonly slaughtering his subordinates, Achinas was anxious.

His responsibility was to ensure the survival of this team, as it represented his status throughout Europe.

Yet when someone ambushed him, Achinas felt not a trace of anxiety or fear—only excitement.

Anyone who dared attack him after knowing who he was would surely be formidable, likely the leader of this Eastern combat team. Defeating or killing him would solve everything, immediately reversing the battle situation in the town.

Facing the sweeping blade light coming toward him, Achinas summoned a jade torch in his hand, from which a white flame shot out and collided with the blade light.

Energy erupted instantly, forcing the surrounding air outward and creating a vacuum zone.

Afterward, both sides clearly saw each other's faces.

"In a few minutes, you'll realize that today's decision was the worst you've ever made—and the last one of your life."

Achinas glared at Ye Zhongming and said viciously, "My Wind-Chasing White Fox and I will send you to hell."

He lightly patted the war beast beneath him as he spoke and charged straight at Ye Zhongming.

Ye Zhongming responded with a cold smile, remaining silent as he leaped lightly into the air. A golden streak rushed up behind him—Yellow Ball, using its body to catch its master.

The two sides were already close, and with their rapid approach, they collided in an instant.

Among war beasts, the Wind-Chasing White Fox lived up to its name, moving with extreme speed and agility. It executed a small drift just before meeting Yellow Ball, avoiding a direct collision. Instead, it exposed its flank, where two massive white tails lashed out.

One of the tails bristled with needle-like spikes, transforming into a weapon that swung toward Yellow Ball's head.

Yellow Ball was slightly slower. By the time the white fox attacked from the side, it could only tilt its head in response.

With a thud, the tail, now resembling an enhanced spiked club, struck Yellow Ball's head. The impact sent the enlarged war beast's head snapping backward, blood splattering from the wound.

A slow-motion close-up would reveal Yellow Ball's bloodied, punctured cheek as it opened its previously closed eyes, revealing a gaze growing increasingly ferocious.

Yellow Ball was famously good-tempered in Cloud Peak. Usually, people saw only a lazy dog napping belly-up in the sun, occasionally playing with children or bullying other war beasts it found amusing.

But against enemies, Yellow Ball's ferocity and fearlessness were strikingly similar to Xia Bai, Red Hair, and others.

It seemed that all who followed Ye Zhongming—whether human or beast—shared this trait, one that both terrified and envious other factions.

Getting hurt and not retaliating was not Yellow Ball's style.

Almost the moment its head was struck, Yellow Ball's claws thrust forward.

As fellow level eight beings, the Wind-Chasing White Fox might have had the advantage in speed, but Yellow Ball surpassed it in other areas. Just consider the company it kept daily—Yangos, Nine Treasures, Three-nosed Elephant, Undead Dragon fish, Icebird, Death King Tree—all top-tier war beasts. Even if they weren't truly fighting, just sparring provided experience unmatched by others.

Not to mention the enemies Yellow Ball had faced before: the Snow Wolf King, the Human Bear King, even the Holy Father...

So even if it couldn't match the fox's speed, experience compensated.

This claw strike landed squarely on the Wind-Chasing White Fox's rear, drawing an immediate spurt of blood.

In that brief exchange, both war beasts were wounded.

And their masters clashed at the same moment.

Achinas swung his jade torch, leaving trails of white flame in its wake. These trails formed strange, intricate curves.

It was worth noting that these curves were created while blocking Ye Zhongming's relentless rain of blade strikes—a fact that made the Cloud Peak King's expression grow graver than before.

Achinas's eyes traced these patterns, and the corner of his mouth lifted at a certain moment.

The preparations were complete. Now, all that remained was killing this opponent.

His torch suddenly flared with purple light—this was a purple-grade weapon!

Then, the white flames burning atop the torch connected with the lingering trails in the air!

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Xia Bai's opponent was Hollander.

This was no compatriot, but a true European.

Xia Bai's black-winged, demon-god-like appearance unsettled Hollander.

He had seen many evolved learn jobs or bloodlines that mutated their bodies for power. But those bodies always looked unnatural, grotesque.

Xia Bai's wings—even the patterns that surfaced on her skin during battle—were flawless and exquisite, as if there existed a race of humans meant to look this way.

He knew evolved blessed like this by the gods were invariably formidable.

So the moment the ambush began, he activated his bloodline.

Hollander's bloodline was hardly rare in Europe—it even existed in China. It was the Werewolf bloodline, but Hollander's had advanced to a high grade.

The burly man transformed into a white-furred, bone-armored lycanthrope!

The bone armor protruded from his very body!

His height and frame expanded, making Hollander appear ten times more savage.

Crouching low, he took a short sprint before leaping at Xia Bai in midair. Once airborne, his razor-sharp claws lashed out in a flurry of slashes aimed at her.

This was his bloodline skill—Kiss of the Frenzied Wolf.

Xia Bai, clad in her self-generated battle skirt (far more elegant than Hollander's skeletal armor), watched the nearly thousand claw streaks flying toward her without the slightest intention to dodge. Her body simply grew slightly hazy.

Hollander was first stunned, then ecstatic.

No one—not even Achinas—had ever been so arrogant as to face his Kiss of the Frenzied Wolf without evasion. At this distance, the Eastern woman had no chance to avoid it now.

The claw streaks struck Xia Bai's body, the sound of rending flesh echoing in the air.

Chapter 1599: Nutrition Body (3)

Earlier, Red Hair's attacks had never ceased. Her spear and long hair worked in tandem, forcing one of the Allied Forces' leaders into constant defense. He had already activated both his job and bloodline abilities, even resorting to two trump cards just to hold his own against her.

Even with the help of his trusted subordinates around him, it was useless—let's not forget, Nine Treasures was still nearby, along with that bizarre spherical lifeform Ye Zhongming had summoned last time, whose defensive power was so absurd even level nine beings struggled against it.

A momentary lapse in focus caused Rustig to make a mistake. Though he threw out a crystal necklace-like piece of equipment to shield himself, Red Hair shattered it in a few strikes, then whipped her spear across his head. The eight-star evolved was instantly knocked unconscious.

Meanwhile, Achinas had just unleashed one of his ultimate moves. The flames from his torch drew a pattern in the air, forming a colossal fire beast. He had hoped to use this beast's power to reduce Ye Zhongming to ashes, but a graceful water-energy barrier blocked it.

Then, under the storm of Ye Zhongming's blade strikes, Achinas found himself scrambling to defend, far from the composed demeanor the Easterner had shown earlier when under his assault.

At this moment, the leader of the human alliance finally realized: he was outmatched.

But he wasn't about to surrender. Raising the torch above his head, he seized an opening created by his Wind-Chasing White Fox mount, allowing a cascade of white flames to pour down and envelop him. Under his breath, he muttered incantations—clearly preparing a high-powered skill.

With one comrade dead and another injured, Achinas was now unleashing his full strength.

Ye Zhongming's blade strikes slashed into the flames, but to little effect. Though the fire dimmed slightly, breaking through would take time—time Achinas would use to complete his skill.

So Ye Zhongming simply sheathed his blade and drew the Harvester Mimicry Shooter, switching to sniper mode and activating the "Pierce" skill—the best ability in this purple-grade weapon for breaking defenses.

He loaded a freshly crafted blue-grade bullet.

On top of that, he employed a gun technique, attempting to make the bullet bypass the flames entirely upon firing.

But it didn't work.

The bullet was still blocked by the flames, creating a surreal scene as the two forces clashed.

The bullet came to a standstill before the fire, though "standstill" was relative. The projectile itself spun furiously, while the flames formed an energy vortex that rotated around it.

It was a contest of strength, each side waiting to see who would break first.

Ye Zhongming was surprised after firing this shot.

He knew exactly how powerful an attack from a purple-grade weapon enhanced by gun techniques and micro-engraved bullets could be, let alone one specialized in breaking defenses.

For the first time, he regarded this torch—capable of both offense and defense—with newfound respect.

Anything that could impress a super craftsman like him had to be among the best.

The stalemate between bullet and flame energy lasted only briefly. About two seconds later, the fire energy exploded—soundlessly, with only a shockwave of force that even Ye Zhongming had to step back to withstand.

On the other side, the bullet emerged victorious, drilling into Achinas's lung mid-incantation. The eight-star commander of the human alliance let out a bloodcurdling scream, bleeding from all seven orifices as his body crumpled to the ground.

His injuries were severe, but not just from the bullet. Ye Zhongming could clearly see that it was already spent by the time the projectile broke through the flames. It hadn't even fully penetrated Achinas's body, merely piercing his armor and lodging in his lung. Most of the alliance leader's damage came from the backlash of his interrupted skill.

Achinas's sudden defeat caught his mount and allies completely off guard. At this point, the battle's outcome was all but decided.

When Ye Zhongming's blade touched Achinas's neck, the entire Allied Forces ceased fighting.

The battle hadn't lasted long, but the casualty ratio was staggering thanks to the absolute strength of Cloud Peak's high-level war beasts, the female guard, and the Youth Army, plus their prior preparations.

Cloudtop suffered zero deaths, with only a hundred or so injured, none critically. These wounds would heal within days for a faction with healing crystals and all manner of restorative potions.

But the human alliance? One eight-star evolved dead, five captured, and over fifteen thousand casualties.

Many among the Allied Forces couldn't comprehend how such a lopsided casualty ratio could occur when their numbers so vastly outmatched the enemy's?

"The army... will come... and you... will all die."

Achinas, now held aloft by Ye Zhongming, had lost all traces of his former imposing demeanor.

"We... we have enough... enough to drown you."

Ye Zhongming shrugged, utterly unfazed. "Your army won't even see us."

Achinas coughed, spitting two mouthfuls of blood, though, being an eight-star evolved, even injuries this severe hadn't killed him.

"I don't understand... why you're doing this."

He truly didn't. What did these Easterners want? They had arrived and attacked without the slightest warning.

Of course, Achinas had no way of knowing that his trusted Pei Jia had tried to extort them, only to get slapped down instantly.

Ye Zhongming glanced toward Yakutsk.

"It's simple, really. I just needed some nutrient bodies... and you all happened to be perfect for the job."

Chapter 1600: Demon Thread Dance

It was still the underground cavern beneath Yakutsk, but Ye Zhongming had Xia Bai by his side this time.

They carried several individuals in their hands—Achinas, Pei Jia, Donis, Rustig, and Hollander's corpses.

The black cat glanced at Ye Zhongming as he entered, its eyes revealing a trace of relief.

Earlier, when Ye Zhongming had left, it hadn't known what he was planning. If he had simply abandoned them, there would have been nothing it could do—except stay here with its master, clinging to the faintest sliver of hope.

When Xia Bai saw the situation inside the cave, even her perpetually expressionless face showed a flicker of emotion.

Even though Talking Lady was a zombie, she had previously fought alongside Cloud Peak. Seeing a former comrade imprisoned in such a manner didn't sit well with her.

Ye Zhongming first surveyed the cave, confirming nothing had changed, then tossed Hollander's corpse toward the white filaments in the corner.

The body bounced a few times on the threads before settling on the ground.

The two humans and the cat watched from the entrance.

At first, the white filaments didn't react, as if they had no interest in dead matter. But after a moment, a single thread extended from the vicinity of the demon crystal, slowly creeping toward the corpse. After prodding it tentatively, it coiled around the body.

The same protrusions that had pierced Red Hair's flesh now gradually penetrated Hollander's corpse.

A few seconds later, the entire network of white filaments in the cave began to tremble faintly.

Ye Zhongming, Xia Bai, and the black cat took a step back.

This thing was on the verge of evolving to level nine. After absorbing nutrients, who knew if it might attack them?

Hollander's body was quickly drained. The white filament seemed unsatisfied, moving back and forth over the now-desiccated corpse as if searching for any remaining morsels.

Ye Zhongming kept his eyes fixed on the demon crystal, noting that its silver hue had deepened slightly.

At the same time, he observed Taling Lady's condition, watching for any opportunity that might arise.

Having witnessed what just happened, the black cat seemed to grasp Ye Zhongming's intentions. Its eyes gleamed as it looked at the other severely wounded but immobilized captives.

Aside from the unconscious Apudu, the other prisoners were fully awake. Seeing this horrifying lifeform beneath the city, witnessing Ye Zhongming cooperating with a level eight mutated black cat, and realizing they were trying to rescue a level eight zombie, their minds reeled, unable to process such complex relationships.

But one thing was clear: they were nutrient vessels, meant to feed these white filaments.

Fear gradually consumed them.

Perhaps they weren't afraid of death. When killing others, they had all imagined, to some extent, that they might one day be killed as well.

From the very first day of the apocalypse, they had been prepared to die.

But! That didn't mean they were willing to die like this!

Being drained into withered husks, enduring unimaginable agony before death—the mere thought was unbearable.

They struggled, but their broken limbs allowed only feeble movements. They stared at Ye Zhongming, pleading with their eyes.

After resetting his jaw, Achinas spoke weakly, "Perhaps... we can offer many, many things... in exchange for our lives."

This wasn't an uncommon practice in medieval Europe. Faced with such a horrific death, the leader of the human alliance just wanted to survive.

"We... we have things you couldn't even—"

"You mean these?"

Ye Zhongming cut off Rustig, holding up several spatial accessories.

They had been looted from these men—after defeating them, it was only natural to take everything of value.

Spatial accessories bore the mental imprints of their users. It sounded impressive, but it was merely an application of mental energy—a small, exclusive contract between the user and the item, preventing others from opening it.

When mental energy was weak at lower evolutionary levels, spatial accessories could be forcibly opened by those with higher strength or stronger mental power. However, the spatial gear of the high-level evolved could generally only be accessed by its owners.

That was the bargaining chip they had hoped to use.

At their level, they undoubtedly possessed some valuable items.

Yet, under their stunned gazes, Ye Zhongming effortlessly opened their spatial accessories, retrieving items that had once belonged to them.

"Seems... unimpressive."

Their faces turned ashen. They couldn't fathom how this man had easily bypassed their mental locks. It also meant they had lost any leverage for negotiation.

Valuable items were always kept on one's person.

"We—we're faction leaders. We can give you... many, many benefits."

Donis forced out the words with difficulty.

Ye Zhongming remained expressionless, his attention fixed on the white filaments and the Talking Lady.

Nothing had changed after all this time, at least to the naked eye.

He was disappointed.

"You're an Eastern leader, too. You should—"

Donis was still speaking when Ye Zhongming suddenly kicked him into the cave, sending him crashing onto the white filaments.

This time, the reaction was far quicker. Almost the instant Donis landed, several filaments lashed out, coiling around him. Donis screamed in terror, thrashing with what little strength he had left—but it was useless. Soon, the protrusions extended, piercing his body.

Gradually, his cries weakened, and he slipped into unconsciousness, just like Talking Lady.

A living eight-star evolved was clearly more appealing than a dead one. Five filaments eventually latched onto him, almost all of the remaining threads near the demon crystals did.

After a moment's thought, Ye Zhongming grabbed Pei Jia and hurled him as well. Mid-flight, he used a healing crystal on him.

As expected, the white filaments ensnared Pei Jia, too.

Ye Zhongming then used another healing crystal on Donis.

"You... you devil!"

By now, Achinas fully understood why Ye Zhongming was healing them. He let out a hoarse, almost tearful roar.

Annoyed, Ye Zhongming kicked out, shattering the handsome man's jaw before tossing him into the cave as well.

Naturally, he used a healing crystal on Achinas, too.

And so, Ye Zhongming methodically hung each "nutrient vessel" on the white filaments, continuously healing them to sustain their bodies—but with their limbs broken and bound by the threads, escape was impossible.

All that remained was to observe the filaments' reaction.

Then, at last—

One of the threads wrapped around Talking Lady... loosened.