

Apocalypse 1631

Chapter 1631: Who to send

Apocalypse Gachapon

"Are you sure?!"

Ye Zhongming lowered his head, staring intently at the child.

"I... I'm not sure!"

The King of Cloud Peak's facial muscles twitched. He was utterly speechless.

One second, the kid was adamant about choosing the Elite Duel. The next, he suddenly changed his mind. Even in the apocalypse, this was far too childish.

How could such an unreliable child lead a team that had survived three high-difficulty trials in the Mountain King Wheel space?

The people behind the child burst into laughter, as if witnessing something extraordinary.

Normally, if a supposed leader was mocked like this by his subordinates, it would mean he had lost control, not just his dignity, but his authority.

Yet, the child showed no embarrassment. Instead, he looked smug.

"Hah, you actually believed me?!" He grinned at Ye Zhongming. "This is the apocalypse! Who's dumb enough to duel you one-on-one? TEAM, teamwork, got it? You look like some clueless Korean—how'd you even make it this far? Got some secret trick?"

The child's mood shifted like ocean weather—one moment laughing, the next suspicious.

Ye Zhongming had never considered himself socially inept, but facing this brat, he found himself at a loss for words.

"Remaining selection time: three minutes."

The space's prompt echoed again, urging a decision.

"Let's choose the Arena Duel."

Ye Zhongming steadied himself and spoke solemnly to the child.

His reasoning was sound. Since neither side would willingly withdraw, Method Three was the most mutually beneficial option.

Method One was out of the question. Methods Two and Six—Selection Trial and Luck Trial—left the initiative to the Mountain King Wheel space. Choosing either risked unpredictable chaos. Only a mentally deficient evolved would pick them.

That left three: Elite Duel, Arena Duel, and Team Battle.

Elite Duel was Ye Zhongming's preferred choice. Against another evolved, he was 100% confident. Whether it was this golden-armored brat or anyone else in their faction, he feared no one.

Victory in the Elite Duel would grant superior rewards—not the best, but it avoided the inevitable losses of other methods.

Every member of Cloud Peak here was elite. Ye Zhongming didn't want a single casualty.

But the child had outright rejected the Elite Duel, leaving only Arena Duel and Team Battle.

Between these two, the Arena Duel meant fewer participants. Even if there were sacrifices, the numbers were controllable. Rewards weren't Ye Zhongming's priority.

Team Battle, however, was a full-scale clash. While confident in victory, casualties would be unavoidable.

He could dismiss these opponents as lunatics, mock the child's fickleness—but one fact remained: if the first three trials were the same for everyone, this team's strength couldn't be underestimated.

Underestimating them wasn't an option. Team Battle meant uncontrolled losses. He refused that.

"Arena Duel?" The child's eyes narrowed with suspicion. "No! You're setting a trap! I won't agree. Let's test our luck instead!"

If possible, Ye Zhongming would've reached through the energy shield and strangled the brat.

His way of thinking was worse than an actual seven-year-old.

Was he really the leader?

Ye Zhongming glanced behind the child, wondering if someone else was pulling the strings.

"Choosing Team Battle or other methods means heavy losses. Even if you win, your chances in the next trial plummet. The Luck Trial is too unpredictable. Is that what you want?"

Finding no hidden mastermind, Ye Zhongming tried reasoning with the child.

"Killing you all will be easy," the kid declared smugly, grating on Ye Zhongming's nerves.

"Remaining selection time: one minute. If no agreement is reached, a random method will be chosen!"

The prompt worsened Ye Zhongming's mood. He refused to leave fate to chance.

Locking eyes with the child, he growled, "Arena. Duel."

"No! Team Battle!"

The child dug in, refusing to yield.

"In Team Battle, you will die." Ye Zhongming inhaled, making one last effort.

"You'll die!" The child shot back.

"Fine. Team Battle it is."

Rather than risk randomness, Ye Zhongming relented. Though not his preference, he had no choice.

But then—

"Then let's do Arena Duel!"

The child flipped again, cutting off Ye Zhongming. In his shrill voice, he shouted at the sky:

"We choose Arena Duel!"

"Arena Duel selection confirmed!"

"Both sides, prepare. The matches begin in one minute. Format as follows—"

"First match: Singles."

"Second match: Singles."

"Third match: Doubles."

"Fourth match: Five-person team."

"Fifth match: Battle Beast battle."

"Preparation countdown begins. Confirm participants."

Ye Zhongming turned and walked away. Further conversation was pointless—this kid was impossible.

Still, getting the Arena Duel was a win.

"I'll take the first match!"

Xia Bai, Red Hair, and Xiao Min spoke almost simultaneously. Aside from Ye Zhongming, they were Cloud Peak's strongest individual fighters.

Xiao Min stepped back, knowing she couldn't match her captain or Red Hair.

Ye Zhongming considered. With two singles matches, he would definitely fight one—but should it be first or second?

It depended on where the enemy placed their strongest fighter. Ideally, he'd face their best. But if he didn't—between Xia Bai and Red Hair, who had better odds?

With the Undead Dragon-fish, Red Hair was stronger. But now, with it in metamorphosis, the two were evenly matched.

Just then, the enemy made their move.

They had already chosen their first fighter.

Chapter 1632: Luminous Dueling Arena

"It's that guy!"

A Female Guard warrior spoke up, and everyone recognized him—the bare-chested man who had nearly shoved aside the first scout from the opposing force.

Apart from his massive build, Cloud Peak saw nothing remarkable about him.

"I'll go."

Red Hair said this while looking at Xia Bai.

Xia Bai glanced at Ye Zhongming, hesitated, then nodded.

Having spent much time with Red Hair, Xia Bai knew her combat prowess fell slightly short when she wasn't injured.

Of course, if she were severely wounded, her strength might surpass Red Hair's by a hair. But factoring in battle beasts—her Nine Treasures against Red Hair's Undead Dragon-fish—her overall power still lagged.

The gap was minuscule. Sometimes, it wasn't even fixed, since the two had never truly sparred to the death. There was no proof of who would survive a life-or-death fight.

But Xia Bai knew her power multiplied only after injury. In the early stages of battle, she risked instant death, making her less reliable than Red Hair. That was why she yielded.

"Don't worry. I've... changed a bit recently."

Red Hair smiled faintly, as if telling everyone she had regained complete life.

With their decision made, Ye Zhongming said nothing more, giving Red Hair a nod.

Red Hair stepped forward, stopping about ten meters from the hulking man.

The space abruptly transformed. Everything else plunged into darkness, leaving only the two combatants bathed in light. Energy strands materialized from the void, swiftly weaving an ornate dueling platform around them.

"First singles match begins. Time limit: ten minutes. The match ends if one party dies or surrenders. The victor may accept surrender or continue fighting until death."

"If no outcome is reached within the time limit, the side with higher remaining constitution points wins."

"If the victor wins by killing their opponent, shorter durations yield higher rewards. Base reward: A9 tier. Each minute saved upgrades the reward by one tier. Victory within one minute grants an S-tier reward. The winning team receives corresponding B9 to B1 tier rewards, capped at A9."

"If the losing party dies, their faction gains no rewards. If they surrender and are spared, the individual receives a D9 tier reward, and their faction gets E9."

"If constitution points determine victory, the winner receives B9 (individual) and C9 (faction). The loser gets C1 (individual) and D1 (faction)."

The reward system left everyone baffled. Letter-graded rewards were cryptic, but one thing was clear: killing the opponent fast yielded the best prizes. Under a minute? S-tier.

Given the space's wonders, an S-tier reward was likely extraordinary—perhaps gold or even purple grade.

Tempting, but not easily earned. Dominance was required.

Until the fight began, no one could predict the outcome. As the luminous platform formed, tension gripped those hidden in darkness.

"Ahan, crush her!"

A roar erupted from the opposing force, followed by raucous cheers and crude, slang-laden encouragement.

Cloud Peak, fewer in number, was quieter. Only the juvenile corps cheered for Red Hair, their voices drowned out.

On the platform, the giant named Ahan seemed invigorated by his team's support, entering a frenzied state. He flexed his muscles, roaring at Red Hair.

"Constitution points: Cloud Peak faction, 6789."

The announcement cut through the noise effortlessly.

"Hidden Snake Journey Faction, 4780."

Numbers flashed above the platform.

The cheers from the opposing side faltered.

No one fully understood "constitution points," but it was clearly akin to health stats in games.

6789 vs. 4780—a gap of 2009 points. A delicate-looking woman versus a mountain of a man. The contrast between their physiques and the numbers was almost comical.

"Match begins in ten seconds. 10, 9..."

The two on the platform remained calmer than the spectators, locking eyes. At the countdown, they moved.

Red Hair tilted one hand downward. A crimson spear materialized, and her scaled armor expanded, morphing into full-body plating. The spear fused with her armor, becoming one.

"Cloud Peak faction constitution points: 7131."

An increase of several hundred.

Ahan's breathing grew heavy. His already-hulking frame swelled further. He plunged his hands into his tight leather pants, pulling out two globs of butter-like substance. Smearing it over his torso, his skin gleamed with an oily sheen, tiny, wriggling particles visible under the light.

"Hidden Snake Journey faction constitution points: 6660."

A collective gasp of delight rose from Hidden Snake Journey's ranks.

Though still trailing, the gap had shrunk from over 2000 to under 500.

"1, 0... Begin!"

At the command, the two lunged forward.

A crimson spear clashed against bare hands.

It defied belief—the audacity to block a weapon with flesh. Yet Ahan did it. His hands grotesquely enlarged, seizing Red Hair's spear mid-thrust!

Chapter 1633: Virus Carrier

The spear's movement shifted from extremely fast to extremely slow, but it didn't stop completely.

Sliding along Ahan's massive hands, it pressed against his chest.

At this point, the spear tip had already pierced Ahan's chest, and a trickle of blood flowed from the wound.

On the luminous dueling platform's display, Ahan's constitution points dropped from 6660 to 6610.

This minor injury cost him 50 constitution points.

The two combatants didn't pay attention to the numbers, locked in a brief contest of strength.

Those watching below couldn't clearly see the details of the struggle, but the numbers on the display suggested Ahan was at a disadvantage.

Because his points were intermittently decreasing.

6600... 6574... 6513... 6455...

In just this short time, they had dropped by over 200.

This meant that during the contest, Red Hair's spear tip was steadily penetrating deeper into Ahan's body!

Red Hair's eyes narrowed. With a sudden tremor in her hands, an eerie recoil force surged through the spear, forcing the two apart.

"Ah?!"

Many in the Hidden Snake Journey faction gasped in shock.

The moment they separated, Ahan's constitution points instantly dropped by another 200, falling to 6255!

Then, they saw Ahan's grotesquely enlarged hands drenched in blood, while the scales on Red Hair's spear had splayed open—each one razor-sharp. It was these scales that had sliced through his hands.

In just the opening moments of the battle, Ahan had lost over 400 constitution points, sending waves of panic through Hidden Snake Journey's ranks. The fight had lasted less than thirty seconds.

If this continued, wouldn't Ahan lose in minutes? Or worse, could the next strike kill him outright?

The Hidden Snake Journey members wore expressions of tension—after all, this concerned their own stakes.

But in stark contrast, Ahan himself wasn't afraid or discouraged. Instead, he was laughing.

No one in Cloud Peak understood why, not even Ye Zhongming. But if he was laughing, something had to be wrong.

"Look at Red Hair's numbers!"

A juvenile corps member suddenly shouted. Everyone turned to see that her constitution points, which should have been 7131, had quietly dropped by two.

"What's going on?"

This was the collective question. Red Hair hadn't been hit—why were her points decreasing?

"The spear!"

After observing closely, Ye Zhongming finally spotted the issue.

The others focused on Red Hair's spear and realized that tiny, wriggling substances—the same kind that had been on Ahan's body—were now clinging to it.

They were so small and faint under the light that no one had noticed earlier.

In the time it took to identify the cause, Red Hair's points dropped by another two, falling to 7127.

And the decline continued, accelerating—from two points at a time, to three, and now four!

Suddenly, the concern had shifted from Hidden Snake Journey's side to Cloud Peak's.

"Hahaha!"

The golden-armored child burst into laughter, his shrill voice grating.

"This is Ahan's profession—Virus Carrier."

When his subordinates pressed for details, the boy smugly explained: "This job's skills are incredibly powerful—they revolve around cultivating viruses. As far as I know, Ahan can currently nurture three types."

"The first is Explosive Fungus. Once cultivated, it integrates into the bearer's body, enhancing their constitution. Now you know why Ahan is so massive, right? It's his job's skill!"

The crowd murmured in awe.

"The second is Armored Scale. This virus hardens Ahan's skin to an incredible degree. You know why he never wears a shirt? It's not to show off his muscles—it's because he doesn't need to! This skill makes him resistant to heat and cold and grants him defense comparable to gold-grade armor. He literally doesn't need clothes—unless it's purple-grade, and even I don't have purple-grade armor!"

"Incredible!"

"No wonder Ahan's so strong!"

The surrounding members cheered, their confidence swelling.

"The third is the virus currently draining that red-haired woman's constitution points—it's called Life-Devouring Tadpole. Ahan can only cultivate one gram per day. The amount he used today is over a year's worth of stockpiling."

"Boss, tell us more! What exactly does this Life-Devouring Tadpole do?"

The little tyrant clearly relished the attention. Watching the renewed clash on the platform, he elaborated:

"This thing is terrifying. Normally, it's like semi-solid butter. You could even eat it without issue. But once Ahan smears it on his body and nourishes it with his own energy and blood, it transforms within moments into something deadly—a contact-based virus that latches onto the target and devours their life force."

"No way to remove it?"

A subordinate frowned. If it was visible to the naked eye, surely there were ways to cleanse it?

"As far as I know, only extreme heat can destroy it—flames at scorching temperatures. But you can't just pluck it off. Are you going to set yourself on fire? So no, there's no cure! Once infected, death is inevitable. Well, unless the quantity is small. Then you might sustain yourself by constantly replenishing life energy and waiting for the virus to die off naturally."

The boy glanced around, adopting a theatrically mournful expression. "Do you know how long these things live?"

"How long?"

"Ahan says... 120 years."

The crowd erupted into laughter.

120 years of suffering—might as well be torture for a lifetime.

So this was Ahan's true power!

The boy shook his head with faux solemnity. "Ten minutes is too short. Otherwise, you'd witness a living person slowly corrode into a puddle of sludge."

The Hidden Snake Journey faction grew increasingly excited, their laughter rising in waves.

The situation on the battlefield also reassured them. Ahan, who had been on the defensive earlier, was now pressing the attack. His massive hands lunged relentlessly at Red Hair, undeterred even when she dodged.

Perhaps nourished by his blood, the Life-Devouring Tadpoles had grown larger—now the size of millet grains!

Chapter 1634: Explosive

"When these poison tadpoles grow larger, that woman from Cloud Peak will die rapidly!"

The little tyrant licked his lips excitedly as he watched the tadpoles reach the size of millet grains.

The Life-Devouring Tadpoles could absorb an evolved human's energy and blood to grow rapidly. Though they never exceeded the size of a grain of rice, they were already lethal pests—nearly impossible to remove once attached, capable of draining a person's life force in a horrifyingly short time, subjecting them to unbearable torment before death.

Perhaps imagining that scene, the boy shivered with excitement.

Ye Zhongming frowned slightly, watching the duel with growing concern.

The King of Cloud Peak wasn't afraid of Red Hair facing a strong opponent.

His position in the national rankings was similar. Officially, Ye Zhongming was recognized as the strongest in China—partly due to Five Ring Money's flattery, but mostly because it reflected reality.

In the vast Chinese region, Ye Zhongming was undeniably one of the top-tier powerhouses, if not the absolute strongest. His war beasts alone surpassed even Li Daqian of the Beast Villa, a specialist in that field.

Coupled with his top-tier craftsmanship and equipment, if Ye Zhongming claimed to be second, no one would dare call themselves first.

Red Hair was the same. She might still lag slightly behind Ye Zhongming, but ever since he created her, she had fought countless battles—almost always emerging victorious. Even against level nine lifeforms, her resilience was awe-inspiring.

After obtaining the Undead Dragon-fish, Red Hair's strength soared even higher. In Ye Zhongming's internal ranking of Cloud Peak's fighters, if he had to name the second strongest after himself, Red Hair would likely take that spot.

This puppet, born from his own hands and reborn with new life, had grown to a point even Ye Zhongming couldn't fully grasp.

But one thing was certain: Red Hair was strong. Exceptionally strong.

This opponent, Ahan, was an enigma in terms of presence. Ye Zhongming guessed he was an eight-star evolved. Since he hadn't reached nine stars, Red Hair's chances of losing were slim.

The Undead Dragon-fish's sudden evolution had weakened Red Hair slightly, but Ahan was far from being a top-tier eight-star either.

Ye Zhongming had been certain of victory.

But witnessing Ahan's bizarre job, even the King of Cloud Peak felt a flicker of doubt.

It wasn't that he feared Red Hair would lose—it was the lingering damage from those parasites that worried him.

For the first time, Ye Zhongming questioned his decision to never bring Park Xiuying into battle. Was his caution misplaced?

While Hidden Snake Journey reveled in their advantage and Cloud Peak watched anxiously, Red Hair launched her counterattack.

The luminous dueling platform was beautiful and indestructible. Neither Ahan's massive hands nor Red Hair's spear could leave a mark on it.

Ahan's parasites inflicted heavy damage. Even though Red Hair dodged constantly, avoiding direct contact, the sheer number of tadpoles Ahan flung into the air made contamination inevitable. Every second, Red Hair's constitution points dropped by ten! If this continued, she'd lose by default within ten minutes, without Ahan needing to lift a finger.

Yet, while the tadpoles clung to Red Hair, they did not affect the luminous platform itself.

Suddenly, Red Hair let out a soft laugh.

Ahan, puzzled, immediately halted his assault and retreated.

Despite holding the advantage, Ahan chose caution. His tadpoles were his trump card—he could afford to wait.

But then, something terrifying happened.

The supposedly indestructible luminous platform sprouted red vines!

They grew rapidly, thickening and lengthening, their surfaces covered in sharp thorns.

"Red... thorns?!"

Ahan's heart lurched. He had no time to question how vines could grow on the platform. With a roar, his pants exploded, revealing hairy legs and a pair of bright red underwear.

The shredded fabric transformed into four black, glowing cloth shields, spinning rapidly.

The thorny vines lashed against them but failed to penetrate.

Ahan exhaled in relief, a smirk forming.

In such a confined space, if he couldn't counter these vines, he'd be helpless.

But his relief was short-lived.

His smile froze as he realized the woman had already leaped into the air, her spear morphing mid-thrust into dozens of thorny vines. Even her hair had transformed into the same dreaded tendrils.

Instantly, the entire space seemed filled with writhing, attacking vines.

The four cloth shields were sturdy, but too few. Despite their rapid movement, gaps appeared.

Ahan's body was soon crisscrossed with bloody lashes.

His defenses, as the little tyrant had boasted, rivaled gold-grade armor. Yet these seemingly fragile plants had breached them effortlessly.

On the platform, Ahan's constitution points plummeted—from over 4,000 to nearly 3,000 in moments.

But Ahan wasn't afraid. He endured, knowing his opponent was faring worse.

Her points had dropped faster than his, now at 3,500—lower than his own!

In this war of attrition, he held the advantage.

The spectators below watched tensely, silently cheering for their champions.

Both sides prayed their fighter would outlast the other.

Soon, both combatants' points dwindled to just over 1,000. Red Hair was slightly behind, but a few heavy strikes had wounded Ahan severely, narrowing the gap to a mere 100 points.

Five and a half minutes had passed.

Victory—or defeat—seemed imminent.

Chapter 1635: Explosive

Ahan's entire body was drenched in sweat, but this wasn't ordinary sweat. It was the manifestation of his unleashed potential.

His job destined him to rely entirely on the viruses he cultivated.

In the past, before his job leveled up, he had been nothing more than a meat shield. In every battle or hunt, he had to charge at the front, absorbing the enemy's firepower and attacks.

This had gone on for years.

If not for sheer luck, he would have died long ago.

The Virus Carrier job was unique and eerie, but before its upgrade, when he only possessed Explosive Fungus and Armored Scale, neither he nor his job had been highly regarded.

Every team wanted him. Yet no team truly treated him as human.

They called him a vanguard, a tank, a spearhead, a blade... but in truth, he was just cannon fodder.

As the storm of thorny vines lashed around him, Ahan's mind flashed back to the early days of the apocalypse, when he had tiptoed on the edge of life and death, surviving by sheer luck.

His eyes turned bloodshot.

After acquiring the Life-Devouring Tadpole ability, Ahan's status had skyrocketed. At first, he had been satisfied. He thought everything had changed—that fate had finally smiled upon him.

But gradually, he realized nothing had truly changed. He had merely gone from being a low-tier thug to a high-tier one.

The ones giving him orders had shifted from second-rate figures to top-tier bosses.

But he was still just a hired muscle.

Even now, as the second-in-command of Hidden Snake Journey, he was still sent out to fight a life-or-death battle.

Was this an honor? Yes, in a way. But more than that, it was still just using him as a weapon.

For the first time, when the little golden-armored brat had arrogantly ordered him to fight, Ahan had felt the urge to break away and forge his own path.

So, he had to win this battle. He would claim the rewards, grow stronger, until...

He became the boss himself.

Until... others risked their lives for him!

This match—he had to win.

Amidst the sweat pouring from his body and his furious roar, the Virus Carrier unleashed his fourth skill.

No one knew Ahan had a fourth skill.

Centennial Rotting Pus!

A terrifying virus that caused instant necrosis wherever it touched.

This was the first time he had revealed this ability—a virus so agonizing to cultivate that even a tiny amount brought him unbearable pain.

The little brat had claimed Ahan could only produce one gram of Life-Devouring Tadpoles per day. What he didn't know was that Ahan could actually produce five grams—if he focused solely on them.

The reason he only made one gram was because he diverted all his remaining energy and effort into cultivating Centennial Rotting Pus!

This was his trump card, his stepping stone to becoming a top-tier powerhouse!

Ahan had already made up his mind. Kill this woman, claim the rewards, strengthen himself—then bid farewell to this insufferable little bastard!

That brat wasn't fit to command him. Without that golden armor, he wouldn't even be a match for Ahan now!

Lost in these thoughts, Ahan unleashed his ultimate move—his final, hidden weapon.

The sweat-like, seemingly harmless pus transformed into a fine mist, splattering onto the surrounding vines.

No defense, no matter how tight, could block an omnipresent liquid.

The Centennial Rotting Pus clung to the vines, seeping through their gaps, heading straight for Red Hair!

Every vine it touched erupted in green smoke, the affected areas rapidly expanding as the terrifyingly resilient weapon rotted away.

Chunks of vines fell to the ground, piling up until they reached Ahan's ankles.

He grinned savagely, watching as Red Hair—now midair with no room to dodge—was engulfed by his lethal mist.

Closer... closer...

And then, without fail, the pus splashed onto her body.

Though a few vines still writhed in the air, Ahan—and the entire Hidden Snake Journey faction—was certain: Cloud Peak had lost.

Because on the luminous dueling platform, Red Hair's constitution points were plummeting!

A freefall descent—from thousands, to hundreds, in mere seconds!

Many in Cloud Peak instinctively stepped forward. If not for the barrier, they would have rushed in to save Red Hair.

Compared to Xia Bai's cold detachment, Red Hair had become more human. She smiled warmly, treated everyone kindly, and with her increasingly ethereal beauty, it was hard not to like her.

Even the Female Guards—normally emotionless killing machines—saw her as one of their own. She was the only person in Cloud Peak, aside from Ye Zhongming, who could freely enter their camp.

Even Ye Zhongming's women—Xia Lei, Liang Chuyin—didn't have that privilege.

Xia Bai, for the first time in forever, bit her lip in regret. If she had been the one fighting, even if she died, she could have at least taken Ahan down with her.

A draw was better than a loss!

Everyone thought the battle was over.

In another two seconds, Red Hair's points would hit zero, and she would die.

But as she hung in the air, her constitution evaporating by the hundreds every second, Red Hair showed no panic.

Instead, she spread her arms wide.

The corroded vines in her hands fell away.

The vines from her hair, the ones that had grown from the platform, even the broken ones on the ground—all rose into the air at once.

And then—

They exploded.

Every single vine detonated simultaneously, releasing a flood of crimson liquid.

"Useless! You—"

The little tyrant's face flushed red as he pointed at Red Hair, ready to mock her, but his words choked in his throat.

Because the woman he thought would die was still alive.

And the man he was certain would win—Ahan—was screaming as he perished.

"Th-that's..."

The boy stared in disbelief at the sea of red liquid filling the space, his voice failing him.

It wasn't sap from the vines.

It was a scalding, glowing, viscous fluid, radiating unimaginable heat.

The vines were gone.

The only things left in the space were Red Hair, reborn as if through fire, and an ocean of magma.