

Apocalypse 1746

Chapter 1746: Thousand Defender

At the base of the War Fortress, squads of warriors wielded rocket launchers. They pulled the triggers, and rockets shot out from the launchers, tracing bright arcs in the sky before slamming into the city gates.

These were the V3 grenade-launching rocket launchers—an upgraded version of the previous model, with greater power and longer range.

Of course, they were also far more expensive. Each one required five times the battle contribution points of the older model to exchange, and the same went for all the rockets.

Fortunately, thanks to the high-level mutated lifeforms recently hunted by Cloud Peak and Ye Zhongming, along with other rewards, their battle merit medal contribution badges had accumulated a significant number of points. Ye Zhongming exchanged for 2,000 launchers in one go, each equipped with ample ammunition—a full twenty rockets per launcher!

Ye Zhongming had invested heavily in this western offensive.

From the sky to the ground, these firearms were aimed at the sturdy metal gates of the Holy City. Breaching them would mean half the battle for today's urban assault was already won.

From atop the Holy City's walls, numerous streaks of light shot out, glowing brilliantly in the night under the illumination of the "flares."

At the same time, something—no one knew what—erupted from the central area of the Holy City, specifically the palace of the City Lord’s residence. Like fireworks, blossoming flowers of light burst forth before transforming into agile beams that shot outward at incredible speed, targeting the incoming missiles and rockets.

Explosions erupted just seconds after Cloud Peak’s assault began.

The deafening blasts and blinding flashes sent shivers down the spines of the Holy City’s evolved, who hadn’t heard such sounds in many years.

They weren’t truly afraid—rather, it was the lingering shadow this familiar noise from the peaceful era had left in their hearts.

The Exquisite Floating Balls, the War Fortress, and the grenade-launching rocket launchers all initiated a second wave of attacks, and the Holy City’s countermeasures followed suit.

Aerial strikes and defenses, missiles and anti-missile systems—the two sides clashed head-on in this manner.

After the second wave, Cloud Peak suddenly ceased fire. The Exquisite Floating Balls retreated, the War Fortress returned to the protection of the main forces, and the Cloud Peak warriors carrying the V3 rocket launchers slung their weapons over their backs, grabbed their ammunition crates, and ran back to their formation.

An unnatural silence fell over the battlefield.

What was happening?

Not only were the people inside the Holy City puzzled, but the defending soldiers were equally confused.

Under the glow of the flares, they could vaguely make out the distant figures of the Easterners, but they couldn't discern what they were doing.

Atop the palace in the City Lord's residence, over a dozen people stood gathered. One of them operated a square, box-like device, his hands buried inside it, while a pair of black goggles covered his eyes, flickering with intermittent light.

"What's going on with them?"

A white-robed figure gazed up at the sky, trying to deduce why the Easterners had halted their assault.

If it was because of the night, the slowly rising flares provided enough illumination—for evolved, it was practically no different from daytime.

"Did they run out of ammunition? They're using nothing but firearms, relics from the peaceful era. There shouldn't be many left!"

The wheel did offer Earth's technological weapons, but never in such quantities. Even if stockpiled, six-plus years wouldn't have been enough to amass this much. Just in those two waves of attacks, the four aircraft alone had launched forty of those expensive surface-to-air missiles!

And those missiles fired from the massive machines? Over a hundred across four directions.

As for rockets—thousands!

These would have to come from level-four or higher wheels, and most were likely one-time-use items. How many spins would it take to get so many?

It was almost certain that these missiles and rockets were either pre-apocalypse stockpiles or later productions.

Given the current technological level of the post-apocalyptic world, even if they could manufacture such high-grade firearms, the output would never be this high.

The assumption that they were running low was the most plausible explanation.

The others nodded in agreement—except for the City Lord, who kept his eyes on the man still in combat mode, his hands seemingly fused with the square device, his goggled head swiveling in different directions.

"Ah Pu, what do you see?"

Facing the City Lord's question, the man called Ah Pu continued observing while replying, "The four aircraft have flown far and are now moving—no longer targeting the gates but the middle sections of the walls! The giant machines remain stationary, but some warriors are advancing alongside the aircraft!"

Were they planning to assault the walls directly? A full-frontal attack?

The Holy City's higher-ups quickly deliberated, but none found it likely.

Modern walls were nothing like those of the cold-weapon era. These were products of wheel technology—durable enough to withstand evolved attacks.

Especially the Holy City's walls, which underwent repairs and upgrades every two years. Now, even a level-eight lifeform's full-force strike would barely leave a mark!

Of course, this was only true when energy reserves were sufficient.

Like Cloud Peak, the Holy City's walls relied not just on special materials but also on energy supply to maintain their formidable durability.

The gates were the same—crafted from treated materials rather than ordinary metal. Though they were the weakest point in the defensive system, that was only relative. Abandoning them to attack the walls instead? Were these Easterners really that foolish?

"Can you estimate their numbers?"

"Over 100,000, no more than 120,000."

Hearing this, the initially wary Holy City leaders smiled.

A hundred thousand evolved was a massive force—in West Asia or any other region, it would be an intimidating number. Against human settlements, it would be an overwhelming tide.

But they were attacking the Holy City.

A fortress so sturdy even its owners didn't know how to breach it from the outside!

A hundred thousand? Not enough.

Maybe double that number could pose a threat—and even then, only a marginal one. To take this place with certainty, a million would be the bare minimum, alongside powerful siege weapons!

This wasn't blind confidence but fact. Just look at the Holy City's own population—over a million evolved!

Even without walls, how would a mere 100,000 stand a chance?

"They're attacking again!"

As Ah Pu shouted and the square device launched more "fireworks" into the sky, the assault resumed after a brief lull!

Outside the eastern gate, Guang Yao and the others had set up a command tent to calculate strategies. Ye Zhongming stood at the entrance, observing the battle.

"According to your calculations, that Thousand Defender's energy can only hold out for eight rounds?"

The Cloud Peak King suddenly turned and asked.

"Yes!"

A man snapped to attention, his posture rigid—a habit from his days in the Resistance Zone.

"This defensive-type job is unique—he can only have this one job. Intelligence suggests he's consumed three to five bottles of mental energy potions. We calculated based on five high-grade mental energy potions, factoring in other potential unknown methods of boosting mental energy. Our conclusion is that, at the current attack intensity, he can endure eight rounds at most. Even with unforeseen variables, he absolutely cannot last past ten!"

Chapter 1747: Holy City airforce

The West Asians also knew the city gates were the focal point of defense, stationing heavy forces there. Aside from that outstanding defensive professional, most others with long-range attack abilities were also positioned here.

As long as the gates held, the idea that this small force outside could breach the Holy City was pure fantasy.

After two waves of attacks, those floating aircraft suddenly appeared above the middle sections of the walls, launching missiles from above.

The attacking side always held the initiative, and Cloud Peak was no exception.

Warriors wielding rocket launchers also emerged here, countless rockets now targeting not the gates but the evolved on the walls and the various defensive installations.

Even with the flares illuminating the sky above the walls as bright as day, the farther the distance, the darker it became.

Cloud Peak's warriors successfully exploited this, along with the range of the V3 grenade-launching rockets and their rapid movement, coordinating with the Exquisite Floating Spheres to launch two more waves of attacks before swiftly retreating, denying the defenders any chance to counterattack.

Meanwhile, the assault on the gates did not cease—the War Fortress, which had initially withdrawn, roared back to life, delivering two more bombardments.

After the second wave, Cloud Peak still achieved no tangible results: not a single missile or rocket struck the gates, no defensive installations were destroyed, and not a single Holy City warrior was injured.

By then, the slowly rising flares had reached their peak altitude, hovering in the air and swaying slightly with the wind.

This caused the light below to flicker erratically, lending an eerie, sinister atmosphere to the night.

The Exquisite Floating Balls retreated once more, and the Cloud Peak warriors also withdrew.

On the palace of the City Lord's residence, cheerful smiles spread, though some voiced concerns.

"Another attack like this, Holy Master—their ammunition isn't exhausted. If they're attacking in waves like this, could there be some scheme? Where the gaze of the Almighty does not reach, there are always treacherous and cunning men."

As he spoke, the man bowed his head, pressing a hand to his chest at the mention of the Almighty.

The City Lord remained silent, but someone else laughed. "Suhail, you overestimate them. The facts prove these are fools. Haven't we confirmed it? They're the Easterners who killed His Highness the Prince! Before, we were careless, letting them exploit a special wheel to ambush us. But since then, you know how much the Holy City has developed. We hadn't even sought revenge, and now they deliver themselves to us—with only a hundred thousand or so troops! Even if they have endless missiles, so what? They'll still be annihilated! Once the sun rises tomorrow and our slave army's combat power is no longer hindered by darkness, it will be time to slaughter them all!"

Finishing his words, he bowed toward the Holy City's ruler. "Your Majesty, I request to deploy our air force and teach these Eastern invaders a lesson on the brink of extinction!"

The City Lord—His Majesty Ahmad, King of the Holy City—smiled at his subordinate before waving a hand. "Granted. But do not venture too deep. Let these Cloud Peak fools taste some bitterness. All we need to do is wait for dawn. The slave army is one aspect, but mainly, Sayyid also needs a little more time to prepare. He will leave those outside with a heavy memory of death."

The others nodded in understanding, even Suhail, who had earlier expressed concern.

.....

"Boss, their air force has appeared!"

A staff officer monitoring the feed from the Exquisite Floating Balls promptly reported the enemy's movements.

"Any sign of the Saint Light Hall's air units?"

"None so far!"

"Proceed as planned."

At Ye Zhongming's command, the Exquisite Floating Balls in the sky immediately gained altitude and distanced themselves from the Holy City. The ground forces, however, held their positions—though some among them raised their weapons, eyes fixed on the illuminated sky.

The Holy City's air force chose the western flank as their target.

This was random, as the invading enemy had so far maintained a balanced deployment across all four directions.

The numbers of aircraft, War Fortresses, and evolved were roughly equal on each front.

So it didn't matter where they struck.

The Holy City's air force could hardly be called a proper military unit—it was more like a ragtag mob.

Their mounts were bizarre and varied, with only half carrying riders. The rest were simply controlled flying creatures.

To attack ground forces, many of these flying creatures had boxes strapped to their sides, filled with javelins, axes, iron balls, and even stones.

In the Holy City, though this air force might seem unimpressive, their status was second only to the Royal Guard. In an era where fighter jets and bombers had vanished, the advantage of aerial forces was immense—especially in numbers. A swarm like this could indeed wreak havoc on ground troops.

The Holy City's air force had played a decisive role in many past battles.

This time, as the first unit to actively engage the enemy, they were brimming with confidence. They didn't even bother forming proper ranks before surging out of the city in a disorderly mass, charging toward what they believed would soon be a shattered foe.

With the varying speeds of their mounts, gaps had already begun forming between them before they even cleared the walls. But from inside the city, the sight was imposing—a vast, overwhelming wave.

Cheers erupted from the guards on the walls. Though they hadn't suffered any real damage in the earlier attacks, being on the defensive had left them frustrated. Now, seeing their own forces sally forth, they were elated.

But then—a gunshot rang out.

The lead flying beast plummeted from the sky, its rider screaming in terror—uselessly. With a thud, it crashed to the ground. Thanks to the evolved's robust physique, the rider didn't die instantly, twitching a few times before going still.

This startled many, and nearby aerial riders instinctively reined in their mounts, wary.

Yet no further gunfire followed. Even as the bulk of the air force crossed the walls, there was no repeat.

The Holy City's air forces relaxed.

It made sense—such power, such range, surely required a specialized firearm, specialized ammunition, and possibly even a specialized gun skill!

Having even one such person or weapon was impressive enough.

They shouted as they flew toward their targets, many riders gripping javelins or readying ranged weapons, preparing to unleash punishment on these Easterners once they closed the distance.

But then—a sudden, unforeseen event left them scrambling. By the time they realized what was happening, terror was the only emotion left in their hearts.

Chapter 1748: Night Blood (1)

The sound of gunfire erupted in rapid succession.

Crisp and deadly.

With each gunshot, the Holy City's makeshift air force began to plummet from the sky.

They knew this was the enemy's attack—they even knew what kind of weapon was being used—yet they simply couldn't defend against it.

Because it was too fast. Too powerful. Before they could react, the bullets had already pierced the vital parts of their mounts.

Yes, these bullets—fired from unknown firearms—rarely targeted the riders themselves. Instead, they focused almost entirely on the flying creatures.

At first, many of the Holy City's air force soldiers had assumed that the initial gunshot was just an accident—an isolated case. Based on their post-apocalyptic experience, firearms capable of hitting them at such heights had such stringent requirements that they couldn't possibly exist in large numbers!

Unfortunately for them, they had encountered Cloud Peak. Even more unfortunately, they had no idea what kind of person the King of Cloud Peak truly was.

If this had happened in the Chinese region—especially among those familiar with Cloud Peak—no one would have made such a foolish mistake.

The Holy City's air force wasn't entirely wrong in their assumptions. Weapons capable of hitting them at such altitudes with lethal precision had to be of extremely high grade, and the ammunition had to be top-tier. The only thing they miscalculated was that Cloud Peak's firearms didn't even require specialized gun skills.

Because these guns were of a higher grade than they had imagined. The bullets were even better than they expected.

These firearms were all blue-grade. The bullets? Green-grade.

This unit was a unique and specialized force within Cloud Peak, led by a man named Li Qiang.

After Ye Zhongming evolved to level nine, his improvements manifested in multiple areas—including his crafting jobs.

As mentioned before, Ye Zhongming's smith job had already reached its peak. To advance further, he needed to evolve himself.

Now that he had become a level-nine evolved, his Glory Smith job had truly reached its pinnacle.

This didn't mean there was no room for further improvement—just that it would be extremely difficult, requiring exceptionally rare and specialized items.

In the days following his ascension to level nine, Ye Zhongming and Cloud Peak had formulated the Western Offensive plan. But they didn't launch it immediately—preparation was key.

Strictly speaking, this was Cloud Peak's first large-scale assault on a heavily fortified human stronghold. The King of Cloud Peak wanted victory, but he also wanted minimal losses.

These firearms, these bullets—they were just one part of the preparations.

As Sister Hong, who had watched Ye Zhongming craft for a while, put it: "That Little Ye is basically a human-shaped manufacturing machine."

Not only was his speed terrifying, but his success rate was also absurdly high. For blue-grade equipment, his failure rate didn't exceed 10%.

That was a statistic that became more horrifying the longer you thought about it.

Thus, Li Qiang and his ranged assault unit became one of the biggest beneficiaries.

The Holy City's air force had randomly chosen the western side as their main attack direction. Their luck couldn't have been worse.

This was where Li Qiang was stationed.

His current force of 3,000 was divided among the four gates, with only 300+ here. But precisely because the numbers were smaller, this group had no archers or other ranged-weapon specialists—only elite marksmen.

Every one of them wielded a blue-grade sniper rifle personally crafted by Ye Zhongming.

The design philosophy was derived from Ye Zhongming's beloved firearm. The bullets were either made by Ye Zhongming himself or precision-engineered micro-engraved rounds produced by Le Dayuan's lab after his modifications.

With 300+ blue-grade firearms and green-grade bullets, how could they possibly miss?

While Cloud Peak's air force was still in the process of being fully assembled, these few hundred marksmen were the core of their mobile anti-air defense.

Each of them fired only a few shots before the Holy City's air force completely collapsed.

Screaming, they yanked their mounts into sharp turns, climbed desperately for altitude—some even leaped off outright, using whatever abilities they had to flee the battlefield as fast as possible.

Their only goal? Get away from these flying creatures.

This kind of disorderly assault posed no threat to Cloud Peak—they were nothing but live targets. The retreat was no different. None of Cloud Peak's other units even needed to act. Li Qiang and his few hundred marksmen alone had shattered the Holy City's most renowned aerial force in mere minutes.

A handful managed to escape, but their numbers were pitiful. When they landed at the base they had taken off from just moments ago, the survivors knew one thing for certain:

The Holy City's air force was finished.

Even if they ultimately won this siege, rebuilding the air force to its former strength would take at least two to three years.

When City Lord Ahmad received this news, his face darkened to the point that it seemed like water could be wrung from it. He had never imagined that what should have been a guaranteed victory would instead result in a devastating defeat.

"Your Majesty, they're attacking again!"

Outside, the roar of missiles and rockets resumed. The Thousand Defender shouted while rotating the square barrel in his hands, continuously launching those firework-like interceptors. Beads of sweat had already begun forming on his forehead.

"Prepare mental energy potions and stamina potions. Administer them to him soon."

Even in his fury, Ahmad hadn't neglected the Thousand Defender. Noticing his exhaustion, he immediately ordered potions prepared.

"The west gate, Your Majesty! They're focusing their attack on the west gate!"

Many in the room stiffened in alarm.

They all realized why Cloud Peak was concentrating their assault there—because the air force had just suffered a crushing defeat. The chaos and plummeting morale among the defenders made it the perfect opportunity to strike.

"Dispatch the 3rd Brigade of the 2nd Royal Guard to reinforce that position."

Ahmad issued the command calmly.

"Your Majesty, isn't it too early to deploy the Royal Guard?" A subordinate voiced concern.

Compared to their previous humiliating defeat against Cloud Peak, the Holy City had made significant progress. Though there were still only two Royal Guards, the 1st Royal Guard—tasked with protecting the royal family—numbered around 10,000. The 2nd Royal Guard was even larger, second only to the city defense forces and the slave army, with over 50,000 members divided into five brigades of 10,000 each.

In other words, the City Lord was sending a full 10,000 troops to counter a single enemy assault.

This would give many in the Holy City the impression that the situation was dire.

But was it really?

No. Not even close.

Ahmad smiled. "It's fine. At dawn, we'll have 150,000 slave troops ready for deployment—plus Sayyid. So what if we use the 2nd Royal Guard tonight? Hell, even if we deploy the 1st Royal Guard, what does it matter?"

His gaze swept past the city's structures, settling on the towering walls in the distance.

"Though... I suppose they must be feeling quite pleased with themselves right now. That displeases me."

Ahmad's eyes shifted back, landing on Suhail.

"Suhail. Go personally. Tell my child... to visit the west gate."

The subordinates in the room collectively stiffened.

Your Majesty... you're deploying that already?!

Chapter 1749: Night Blood (2)

"Why not?"

Ahmad smiled, watching the busy Thousand Defender beside him, and repeated, "Go. Do it."

Suhail bowed in deference, then turned and leaped straight down from the palace. Mid-fall, a pair of wings suddenly unfurled from his back, allowing him to glide. With a few powerful flaps, he soared into the distance.

"I've actually been tempted to test whether we could crush those Easterners outside with just the forces we currently have on hand. But at my age, I'm past the point of reckless pride. Forget it. You lot have stayed by my side for many years—I'd like to keep you around a while longer."

At these words, those nearby bowed to their king, expressing reverence and gratitude.

"But I am the ruler of this city. I cannot allow those who just struck us to grow too arrogant. At the same time, my little prince has grown up. He's no longer the child who only knew how to indulge in debauchery. He needs to prove his worth with real action—so that when the time comes, my throne can pass smoothly to him."

As he spoke, his previously unfocused gaze sharpened abruptly, sweeping over the faces of those below him, capturing every fleeting expression.

Whether it was delight, suspicion, surprise, or something else—everyone stiffened under that gaze, quickly replacing their reactions with submission.

Ahmad's eyes turned icy. He said nothing more. No one could tell whether his words were sincere or not.

"Your Highness."

Suhail landed at a camp not far from the City Lord's residence. Unlike the rest of the Holy City, this place resembled an ancient sacrificial platform, elevated high above the ground.

Standing atop the platform, Suhail glanced at the many objects concealed beneath sand-colored tarps before entering a brightly lit building in the corner.

Even before stepping inside, the pungent stench of alcohol and the sound of raucous laughter assaulted his senses.

He sighed inwardly. At the same time, he felt a flicker of relief—this was the apocalypse. The old City Lord could live for many, many more years. Otherwise, a successor like this would truly sap any desire for loyalty. This prince wasn't even as competent as the late Crown Prince, whose ambitions had far outstripped his abilities.

"Your Highness, I bring His Majesty's orders." No matter his private thoughts, Suhail maintained perfect deference. He didn't enter the room, choosing to announce himself from outside.

"Enter."

A voice laced with characteristic effeminacy summoned him inside. Suhail stepped forward, surveying the vast hall. The young prince lounged on a raised seat, flanked by four voluptuous, scantily clad women feeding him wine and delicacies. Below him, several of the prince's friends—scions of Holy City nobility—mimicked his decadence.

This is a critical weapons depot, yet the person in charge is behaving in this manner? And with the enemy at our gates!

True, everyone was confident they could repel the invaders. But the saying "castles crumble from within" held true in any era. Though Gyanendra was gone, remnants of his faction still lurked. What if they sabotaged these powerful yet fragile weapons?

Masking his disdain, Suhail relayed the orders.

The young prince shoved the women aside, his face twisting with an unmistakable emotion.

Not impatience—contempt.

"Tell the King I'll teach those outsiders a lesson immediately. What the air force failed to do, I can accomplish."

With that, he strode out, robes hanging open.

Two maids—drunk on liquor specially brewed for evolved—giggled and clung to him, begging him to stay. Though only level-one evolved, they were intoxicated enough to be reckless.

"So reluctant to let me go?" The prince chuckled. Then, without warning, his hands snapped around their throats. "Then fight for the Holy City with me."

As the women shrieked, he dragged them outside, positioning them amidst the covered objects. His eyes darkened to a bloody crimson before a surge of energy erupted from his body, blasting away the tarps and revealing what lay beneath.

Even though Suhail had seen these things before, they still unnerved him. He bowed and took his leave, flying back toward the palace.

The prince paid him no mind. He was in a trance-like state. Yanking one struggling woman to his mouth, he sank his teeth into her neck. After a few seconds of violent convulsions, she went limp. The other met the same fate mid-scream.

Having drained both women, the prince hurled their corpses skyward. At the peak of their arc, the bodies exploded, raining down flesh and blood onto the now-uncovered machines.

At a glance, they were grotesque contraptions—their metallic surfaces glinting ominously under the flares.

Four thick wheels and armored plating formed a crude but sturdy chassis. Above it sat elongated, monstrous structures fused to the base.

A closer look revealed why Suhail found them unsettling.

Because sections of those structures were unmistakably human skin—pale, shriveled, dotted with age spots and scars.

The front ends of these abominations now slowly rose, revealing... gigantic human heads, several times larger than normal.

Their skin was ancient, their faces withered—some white-haired and wrinkled, others bald with hollow, lidless eye sockets and gaping, toothless mouths.

But as the blood and flesh showered down, the machines seemed to awaken. Their skin regained vitality. Even the desiccated heads began to rejuvenate.

"I love you all... but not how much you eat." The prince murmured, stretching his hands toward the void. Dark veins bulged across his arms as crimson tendrils of energy linked him to the machines—grotesque hybrids of bisected human torsos welded to metal pillars.

As time passed, the machines grew "younger," while the prince aged rapidly.

"Seems it's time to change your skins. You're too gluttonous."

By the time the prince had morphed from a youth into a middle-aged man, the machines brimmed with vigor. Their heads now looked fully alive—until their lips stretched into horrifying grins, jaws unhinging to grotesque widths.

The machines rocked forward, their gaping maws aligning toward the city walls. With a sound like retching, they expelled massive, pale-gray orbs that drifted sluggishly beyond the walls.

Chapter 1750: Night Blood (3)

West City Wall

The two sides were engaged in fierce exchanges of fire. The arrival of the 10,000-strong 3rd Brigade of the 2nd Royal Guard on the walls and gates had greatly boosted the defenders' morale.

While their numbers were substantial, they appeared sparse when spread across the magnificent expanse of the city walls.

The claim that "trains could run atop the walls" might be an exaggeration, but their width easily accommodated four lanes of traffic. In this extraordinary era, the demands of defensive installations and wall fortifications necessitated such dimensions.

On this "boulevard," 10,000 soldiers didn't occupy excessive space—especially since over half remained below as reserve forces.

Currently, all four Exquisite Floating Balls had converged here. With the Holy City's air force neutralized, these flying machines roamed the skies above the city with impunity. While they dared not descend too low, their high-altitude positioning made them untouchable.

Missiles and rockets poured relentlessly toward the West City gates like an inexhaustible torrent. Under covering fire from their comrades, Li Qiang's ranged unit continued picking off targets on the walls.

Priority targets were evolved capable of intercepting missiles and rockets. Operators of defensive installations came second. Ordinary guards weren't worth expending precious green-tier ammunition on.

As the western sector became the focal point of assault, Cloud Peak's forces had to advance closer, granting the wall-mounted defenses opportunities to retaliate.

Giant ballistae, massive catapults, and other siege weapons roared to life, initiating the battle's first sustained exchange of attacks and counterattacks since hostilities began.

"See those damned things spewing black mist?"

Li Qiang summoned the captains, deputies, and squad leaders of his sniper team.

"Yes. Nasty business," grumbled a hulking man whose physique suggested a frontline bruiser rather than a sniper—yet his marksmanship had earned him a transfer from Xia Lei's command. "That foul wind blows the mist our way. One whiff and your head spins, ruins your aim."

"The antidotes we took beforehand are the only reason we're just dizzy," Li Qiang said coldly. Known for his harsh discipline—a necessity for a latecomer establishing authority—his severity had become habitual. "Without them, we'd be lucky to just collapse."

He issued crisp orders:

"All units disperse freely. You know your firing preferences—do as you will. Priority: targets intercepting our ranged attacks. Secondary: operators of defensive weapons, especially those black mist sprayers. Remember—thirty minutes only. When time's up, withdraw immediately. No exceptions. We have special assignments afterward. Anyone who delays gets a bullet. Understood?"

The leaders nodded sharply. They knew Li Qiang's threats weren't empty. Anyone lingering for extra kills would indeed find themselves on the receiving end of his gun.

As the snipers dispersed to hunt, movement stirred among the western assault forces.

Farthest from the walls, a peculiar unit distinguished itself from Cloud Peak's armored ranks. Clad only in simple silver-tier leather armor with short swords or daggers at their hips, they stood encircled by heavily armed comrades.

On the ground, they worked swiftly. Hybrid plant-metal platforms rose at angles as massive cannons were rolled into position—their barrels wide enough to swallow two men standing side by side, now aimed squarely at the Holy City.

"Reinforcements secured!"

"Angle adjustments complete!"

"Projectiles loaded!"

"Targets locked!"

"FIRE!"

Within minutes, three colossal artillery pieces stood ready. After final calibrations and shouted confirmations, they unleashed their payloads without hesitation. *RaŋōbÊŚ*

BOOM! The first cannon's discharge shook the earth. A torpedo-like projectile screamed across the sky, clearing the walls to plummet toward the city center.

The second and third followed in rapid succession.

The concussive force rattled the walls themselves. Yet the matte-black projectiles—emitting no sparks or trails—streaked nearly invisibly through the night.

Their creator, Le Dayuan, had dubbed these behemoths "Candy Siege Cannons"—a nod to the little girl whose contributions proved indispensable.

These weapons represented the marriage of magic crystal technology and alchemical engineering.

"Type-1 rounds expended! Prepare Type-2!"

"Disassembly/reassembly complete! Type-2 loaded!"

"Five-second calibration!"

"FIRE!"

With startling efficiency, the three cannons were dismantled, reconfigured with additional curved plating, and merged into a single gargantuan siege weapon. The platform beneath consolidated and elevated slightly.

Now the barrel could nearly accommodate Yangos—wings folded.

KABOOM! The seismic blast momentarily halted all other combat as a cluster of massive spheres arced toward the walls.

Ten projectiles in total, they deployed metal fins mid-flight, weaving erratic paths that defied interception.

"Energy recharge! Prep Type-2 second volley!"

The crew didn't bother assessing damage, already preparing the next strike.

Then—from within the Holy City—lumbered several colossal orbs of light.

They barely cleared the walls, moving sluggishly compared to Cloud Peak's hypervelocity munitions.

Yet their appearance sent waves of alarm through the Western assault forces.

At the command center, Guang Yao and Liang Chuyin stood side by side. This was their sector—Guang Yao as lead commander, the "Internet Celebrity" as deputy.

An arrangement befitting their temperaments.

"Such potent necrotic energy," Liang Chuyin murmured. "Hard to believe anything surpasses the Undead Dragonfish's aura."

Guang Yao nodded. "Your show now. Stop them."

"Roger!" She snapped her fingers, a squad falling in behind her.

"Stay safe. Or Zhongming will have my head."

A grin. "Uncle, I like your sense of humor."

Guang Yao's eye twitched.

Uncle?!