

Winter 451

Chapter 451: Calamity of the Northern Territory (Part 2)

In the sky, several Scavenger Crow Beasts with bony wings circled low, diving down to peck out the eyes of the strugglers.

Alchemy firearms frequently jammed in the extreme cold and wet snow, the damp powder unable to ignite.

Petroleum canisters were thrown out but were flung back by the enemy with live vines.

The flames instantly engulfed a section of the wooden wall, and the defending soldiers screamed and fell in the firelight.

In less than an hour, the defense line was completely torn apart.

The Barbarians stormed into the town, axes chopping down wooden houses, and vines erupted from the ground, climbing like venomous snakes over the walls and roofs, uprooting entire buildings.

In the chaos of the blizzard and flames, Astha saw his town being ground to ruins bit by bit.

It was no longer a battle but an unstoppable slaughter.

Within two days, eight villages and towns on the outskirts of Frost River Valley fell one after another.

Flames churned in the night and blizzard, illuminating charred beams and collapsed stone houses.

In the snow, charred wheat rolled about, once stored in granaries, now carried by the wind to the sky, accompanied by the choking smell of burning.

Jerky and salted fish burst in the flames, grease flowing down the steps of the storage house, mixing with the snow water to form a foul-smelling brown stream.

The fur blankets, boots, and thick robes for keeping warm were dragged outside by the Barbarians, some thrown directly into the fire, others trampled into the snow and mud, then crushed with spiked boot soles.

They were not here to plunder, but to wipe out every condition for survival.

Retreat route? None.

The valley entrance had long been trapped, a barrier woven of live roots and black vines, with root systems thick as stone pillars intertwined.

A knight trying to charge out had barely cut through a few vines before being ensnared and dragged back into the snow.

His scream echoed sharply in the snow mist, then was drowned by the crisp sound of vines snapping his neck.

The original two thousand troops now were halved.

Engineers, Alchemists, construction craftsmen... almost all these precious technical personnel were wiped out.

The once wooden stone structures, shelters against the cold, and orderly streets had now all turned to scorched earth.

A year's worth of Astha's governance achievements were utterly obliterated by this storm and flame.

Not even a patch of clean snow could be found; the ground was either blood, ash, or trampled corpses.

The beams of the council hall cracked ominously in the flames, the roof might collapse any moment.

Astha gripped a sword stained with blood and snow, surrounded tightly by twenty-nine of his guards.

Heavy footsteps and the rustling of vines approached from the doorway, the Barbarians closing in were several times their number, the air thick with the smell of charred wood and flesh.

In the next instant, the heavy wooden door shattered.

Wind and snow poured in, followed by a troop of nearly a hundred Silver Dragon Knights.

They were clad in half-frozen armor, their shoulders and arms wrapped with battle scars, their spears flashing a sharp, cold light in the snow mist and firelight.

"Cover His Highness!" someone shouted hoarsely.

Spears and blades simultaneously thrust out, pinning the first row of Barbarians against the burning beams.

The narrowness of the battlefield meant that every swing sent splinters flying, and vines twisted on the ground, crackling sharply as they caught fire from the petroleum.

Astha, escorted by guards, dashed out of the ruins, flames exploding behind him, illuminating the giant silhouette in the snow mist.

The colossal figure wielded a bone-made Giant Hammer, smashing aside three knights covering him, their armor and blood sprayed onto the snow, swiftly buried.

The rescue team fell one by one under the assault of the Barbarians and parasitic vines.

The original hundred-plus knights, only about fifty remained when they broke through, their armor full of cracks and ice.

Astha looked back, at the Frost River Valley territory he had built single-handedly, now all that remained were flames, thick smoke, and ashes blown by the wind.

And of his troops, not even one-third remained.

When he led the remnant guards through the gates of New Frost Halberd City, they were the only survivors crawling out of the ruins.

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In the wartime council hall of Frost Halberd City, the heavy doors and windows were sealed tight, leaving only dim oil lamps flickering their light onto every weary and tense face.

Dispatches were brought in by Gale Birds, landing on the long table, hastily opened and read by the Deacon.

Almost every report was bad news...

"The northwest defense line was raided by Barbarians at dawn, the enemy forces broke through the southern gap of Winter Fortress Ridge, the defending troops lost seventy percent, Count Hill died in battle.

The remnants of the Third Legion retreated south to the south of Stone Hammer River, the enemy did not pursue, suspected of a bigger mobilization.

Northeast, contact was lost with four cities, the knights sent did not return, suspected total city annihilation..."

At the end of the reading, oppressive silence filled the hall, only the low murmur of wind and snow against the city walls could be heard.

As the meeting grew ever more silent, Duke Edmund motioned the Deacon to deliver another letter, this one from Louis.

As it unfolded, the rich scent of ink wafted gently under the oil lamps, as the intelligence officer slowly read aloud:

"...Red Tide Knights, a quarter lost... destroyed five thousand Barbarian Knights."

In an instant, the entire meeting hall seemed frozen.

Everyone stood stunned at first, then gradually lifted their heads, eyes moving from the letter to the Duke, exchanging looks of disbelief.

In the past days, they'd received nothing but news of defeat and fall.

Defense lines collapsed, towns fell, Knight Orders annihilated.

Almost every dispatch was proof of the Northern Territory bleeding inch by inch.

And now, suddenly someone, in this desperate situation, had defeated a full five thousand Barbarian Knights.

"...How is that possible?" an old gray-haired general murmured softly, as if afraid that speaking would wake him from a beautiful dream.

"But that's five thousand!" a Count nearly stopped breathing, "And it's Red Tide Territory, Viscount Calvin's troop size..."

He didn't continue, but everyone present knew that the regular army there was hardly enough to clash head-on with the Barbarian main forces.

Suspicious, a noble furrowed his brow, "Could it be... an exaggeration?"

Astha remained silent, "How... did he do it?"

The intelligence officer pored over the report copies, voice hoarse: "Based on multiple investigations, this number seems real... but the specific battle loss situation is not fully cleared."

Duke Edmund pondered for a moment, then spoke in a low voice: "Louis is a war genius. If he truly took down five thousand Barbarians, it's a great achievement.

But... I suspect he's underreporting his own losses. More to assure us."

However, Louis had deliberately overstated the losses to avoid too exaggerated a battle loss ratio; in reality, only over thirty perished.

The letter ends with a brief suggestion that those monsters are driven by rage, and attempting to use psychic weapons or magic to interrupt their frenzied state might be worthwhile.

Edmund sighed and instructed the Deacon, "Reply, telling Louis to continue holding the Southeast Northern Territory line."

The ensuing discussion quickly entangled in arguments.

Some advocated splitting troops to aid the Northeast vassal city, lest the Barbarians further expand their encirclement, some insisted on firmly defending the existing fortress, waiting for the Empire's reinforcements.

Others proposed directly retreating to the Northern Territory, preserving the Nobility and core strength.

But such a suggestion provoked fierce rebuke and mockery.

"Can't wait for reinforcements!" an old general harshly pounded the map, "At this speed, all that will remain of the Northern Territory is scorched earth!"

"We need a counterattack, not to cower!" another young Viscount nearly drew his sword to strike the table.

"Counterattack? With what do you counterattack?!"

The clamor rose and fell, seemingly every plan had fatal flaws.

Finally, Duke Edmund stood decisively, pressing heavily on the Northern Territory map on the long table.

Candlelight highlighted the scars on his face: "Enough. If reinforcements won't come, then we'll create our own opportunity."

His finger pointed to a narrow valley on the map.

The terrain there was perilous, easy to defend and hard to attack, yet spacious enough for a large-scale decisive battle: "This is suitable for a direct confrontation with those monsters."

We must fight with our backs to the river! Before they spread further, eliminate these beasts entirely. Otherwise, the Northern Territory will be devoured by this winter!"

The entire council hall fell silent, the wind howling outside the thick city walls, like a death knell heralding the impending bloodshed.

Chapter 452: Before the Final Battle

The heavy oak door slowly closed behind him, completely isolating the noise and debates from the meeting hall.

The corridor was silent, with only Duke Edmund's footsteps echoing steadily and heavily in the vastness.

In his mind, the words of the battle reports continued to surge; every troop forced to retreat south, every fallen town, pressed coldly against his chest, turning his breath heavy and labored.

Then he returned to his room and pushed open the heavy wooden door. Inside, the warm fireplace flickered, casting a golden glow on the stone walls, and the air held the faint scent of holly and dried lavender, a fragrance Lady Irina favored.

Duke Edmund tried hard to shake off the heavy mood that accompanied him, forcing a gentle smile onto his face.

The large scar on his face made the smile somewhat peculiar, but he did his best to appear less like a man just returned from the battlefield.

Lady Irina sat by the fireplace, holding their one-year-old child, gently patting the little back and humming a lullaby.

Hearing the door open, she looked up, a spark of light in her eyes.

A letter from the Red Tide Territory was spread out on the table.

Emily had sent it back; the corners of the paper slightly curled from the journey, with a few small snowflakes still lingering on the envelope.

Edmund stepped forward, bent down, and took the child.

Even without his armor, his embrace still held its heavy strength, yet he clumsily held the child like a young father learning to do so for the first time.

He tried to gently rock, but was scrutinized by the child's curious gaze for a few seconds, then the little one reached out a soft hand, grasping his beard and giving it a strong tug, causing him to tilt his head slightly.

The child giggled, a sound like the tinkling of a wind chime.

Edmund simply lowered his head, gently touched the child's forehead with his own, eliciting a joyful coo.

Lady Irina, seeing this, couldn't help but laugh, lightly tapping the little one's nose with her finger.

"He's more spirited today than usual," she said. "Before his nap, he insisted on trying to climb up the curtains."

Edmund raised an eyebrow: "With that strength, I wouldn't be surprised if he ends up following me to the battlefield."

"He will likely make a good knight."

"Hmm... but first he needs to learn not to pull beards."

Then they talked about the venison stew in the kitchen today, about the fruit growing in the greenhouse, and even mentioned how Lady Irina tried having the servants cultivate mushrooms in the cellar recently.

The fire crackled, and the wind and snow still howled outside, yet the room felt like a small, isolated island from the war.

It wasn't until then that Irina seemed to remember something, pointing toward the envelope on the table: "By the way, Emily's letter, it arrived this morning."

She sat back in her chair by the fireplace and unfolded the letter.

"At the Red Tide's spring event, Emily almost won the knight demonstration match... but in the end, her horse was attracted by the candy stand beside the field and went straight to munch on candied haws."

Edmund couldn't help but laugh upon hearing this.

The laughter was initially stiff, as if unused to showing such emotion amidst war affairs, but the imagery quickly softened it.

He could almost truly see Emily, exasperatedly pulling at her reins while the horse contentedly chewed on the hawthorn.

"Isn't that girl pregnant? How mischievous is that?" He shook his head, though his tone carried unmistakable fondness.

Irina casually picked up a piece of warm honey cake and gently placed it in his palm.

Edmund's fingertips slightly relaxed in the warmth of the cake, the sweet aroma seeming to dispel the chill that traveled with him.

The wind and snow continued to howl outside. Inside, the fragrant scent and soft light kept the cold night at bay beyond the doors.

This moment of warmth nearly made one forget the blood and fire devouring the Northern Territory beyond the gate.

After a while, Edmund's gaze fell on the depths of the fire, his voice calm yet heavy as he spoke: "You should take the child to the South for a while."

Irina hesitated, a flicker of unease and inquiry in her eyes.

She understood what this meant; Edmund would not ask her to leave Frost Halberd City without reason, nor would he have her go to the South.

But she took a deep breath, pressed these thoughts back down, and ultimately only nodded lightly.

After sitting for a while longer, Edmund stood up, gently placing his palm on his wife's shoulder.

Without speaking, he simply looked at the child sleeping peacefully in her arms for a moment, then adjusted his cloak and concealed the last hint of smile between his brows, heading for the door.

"I'll go check the arrangements for the alert lines," he said, his tone casual.

Irina did not intervene, only gently replied, "The wind is strong on the road, wear your cloak."

The door closed softly.

At the moment when the heavy door shut, it felt as though the warmth was locked inside the room.

When he stepped out of the room, Edmund's smile faded along with it, a cold sternness, well-accustomed to the battlefield, returned to his features.

He surveyed the corridor, and immediately a personal guard in armor quickly approached, kneeling on one knee.

Edmund's voice was as cold as ice: "Ensure safe delivery."

Then he slowly took out several letters from his cloak that had been sealed for some time.

Each seal was pressed by his own hand, the edges of the papers slightly yellowed, evidently written days ago.

He handed them out one by one, his tone indisputable: "Deliver them to the lady once they've reached the Southern Territory."

The personal guard took them without a word, though his hands slightly trembled under the pressure, knowing what these letters meant.

"By the fastest route, bypass the main roads, head south through the forest line, avoid trade routes. You and your men... return together when the conflict subsides."

Chapter 453: Before the Final Battle (2)

The Personal Guard bowed deeply: "I understand, sir."

He turned and left, the soles of his boots tapping on the stone slabs, one by one, growing fainter.

Once more, the corridor returned to silence, leaving Edmund alone, standing where shadows and firelight mingled.

He leaned against the cold stone pillar and slowly exhaled.

At that moment, he bore no armor, no helmet, just a middle-aged man, a father understanding his fate.

He murmured to himself, as if speaking only to his own ears: "This is my only selfish desire."

This was his only selfish desire. For generations, the Edmund Clan had defended the Northern Territory for the Empire, and their bloodline had long since seeped into this icefield.

From grandfather to father, from eldest brother to firstborn son, one cold tombstone after another stood upon the snow-buried hills.

He was unwilling to let his children witness the finale of his family's saga once more.

With loyalty as their sword, ultimately to be buried beneath the snow.

At that moment, his daughter's smile appeared in his mind.

Emily, that stubborn, willful girl, more like him than anyone.

She was in the Red Tide Territory, not far from the front line, and had recently become pregnant.

Thinking of this, Edmund felt his chest tighten slightly: "I hope they will survive."

But Edmund slowly raised his eyebrows, the corners of his lips curving into a smile that was almost self-deprecating.

Louis, that young man, seemed frail yet was decisively ruthless, possessing a rare steadiness and relentlessness.

Much calmer than he was in his youth, and far more ruthless.

Perhaps... he truly could protect Emily.

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Night unfurled like a torn beast's hide, draping over the broken fortress ruins, where blood mingled with mud, flowing into a rotting, stinking river.

A headless knight's corpse hung upon a shattered catapult, his silver armor shattered, his chest cavity torn open by some enormous beast, with entrails swaying in the night breeze.

His lance was still thrust into the ground, its tip broken, yet the butt was tightly gripped in bare bone fingers.

He was the vanguard commander of the Imperial Sixth Legion, the Extraordinary Knight Ravento.

He once led hundreds of elite knights to break through beast hordes, holding North Arid Ridge for three days and nights.

Now his head hung from the flagpole, a coarse iron nail driven through his eye socket, pinned beneath a bloodstained battle flag.

Footsteps thundered to the ground.

The giant's heavy hooves cracked the stone slabs, stepping one by one into the heart of the ruins.

It stood ten meters tall, its skin like cracked black ice, tendrils emerging from shoulders and elbows, entwining its limbs, dragging countless bloodstained limbs.

And upon its shoulder stood Tistu, the conqueror of the Northern Barbarians.

Yet now he was merely a vessel of fury.

Flames of anger blazed behind him, like a patch of inextinguishable red vines, roots sprouting from his spine, arm bones, eye sockets, writhing like worms, pulling his bones and muscles forward in a relentless march of slaughter.

His pupils were no more, leaving only two burning crimson points, scorching this world.

"Kill—" His throat issued a deep roar, like the breathing of some beast.

He gave no order, nor needed any.

The vines' resonant fury had long connected him to all his warriors.

The next moment, the Nightmare Legion from the Northern Territory surged like a tide, pouring out from the hills and ravines.

Those things, not human, running and shrieking, each body enwrapped with vines, swollen and deformed, clutching broken swords, axes, shields taken from enemy corpses.

Some dragged unhealed broken legs, yet could still run, fueled by "sharing the fire," some with chests hollowed, ribs exposed, yet still laughing as they charged.

"Ah! Kill! Kill, kill, kill!!!"

The shouting rose like the howl of wild dogs, surging in the blood of the fallen.

The elite Imperial Knight Order endeavored to organize a defense line, six heavily armed riders charging down the long streets of ruins, lances slicing through the night like silver serpents.

But the furious Barbarian warriors cared naught for the threat of lances; they opened their arms, meeting the lances with their own bodies, overturning warhorses to the ground.

Even as entrails splattered the earth, their hands still clutched at the knights' throats, relentless and unyielding.

Tistu stood on the giant's shoulder, quietly overseeing the land he had scorched.

He felt no joy, no pain, nor any sense of victory.

Only a deeper void.

Beasts without consciousness would not cheer for victory.

He was merely an instrument driven by fury.

The king seed of the Burning Pain Vine Court had completely seized his will. His soul, like the bones of the dead, was being consumed by the crimson roots inch by inch, utterly submerged in this endless slaughter.

And this was only the beginning of the "fury" tide.

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The afternoon wind of the Southeast Valley carried with it the scent of forests and blood, sweeping past the battle flags of the Red Tide Legion and the allied noble knights, fluttering.

The battle-clearing had lasted for three hours, with the last group of Barbarian stragglers in the valley utterly routed by the Knight Order's assault.

They still bore the marks of the fury ritual, blood-red yet unorganized and without support, like fish stranded after a receding tide, struggling, howling in the dust before falling silent.

Under Louis's proposal and pressure, the various lords of the Southeast had long since assembled their capable Knight Orders into a temporarily efficient "Southeast United Knight Order," with the Red Tide Personal Guard leading the line.

Initially, the nobility harbored caution toward this young lord.

Yet after several purging battles, be it in strategic coordination or battlefield tempo, they had to admit, this Lord of the Red Tide was the most reliable military and political core in the North East of the Northern Territory.

Now the Knight Orders no longer acted independently, and none sought to seize command.

Everyone knew: in the collapse of the situation and the breakdown of the vassal system, only this young man's uncannily precise judgment could pull them out of calamity.

Now the entire Southeast had tacitly acknowledged: the Red Tide Lord was the master of the North East.

Louis sat astride his horse on a rocky hill, his battle robe stained with fresh blood, yet his eyes were calm as snow.

He gazed toward the rising smoke in the distance, speechless for a long while.

Sif rode close on a white horse, her gaze already lingering on Louis's face: "What's wrong with you today?"

Unable to hold her patience, she had come over, though Louis had merely allowed her to join in the aftermath.

Louis remained silent for a while before speaking: "Just didn't sleep well last night."

Sif squinted at him, not believing the perfunctory excuse, but asked no more.

Louis pondered a moment longer, then raised a hand to summon Lambert.

"Tell Hillco," Louis's tone was low and firm, irrefutable, "apart from the three pairs of Soul-devouring Lizard Beasts needed for breeding, slaughter the rest to make Frost Devourer Resonance Bombs."

"And," he continued, "gather half of the elite and above knights, and follow me north."

"Yes." Lambert asked no questions, bowed, and left,

Leaving only Louis alone on the rocky hill, the wind lifting his cloak like a blazing red banner.

He was prompted to do this by the intelligence he received this morning from the Daily Intelligence System.

The short forewarning contained only a few words, yet was cold enough to pierce to the bone: [In ten days, the Northern Alliance Army will be defeated, Duke Edmund will die, and the Burning Pain Vine Court will sweep the entire Northern Territory, leaving not one in a thousand alive.]

Louis knew that, like all previous intelligence, this one would come true; if he chose to stand by, the outcome would be irrevocable.

He was no saint, but if the entire Northern Territory fell, the Red Tide Territory would be equally doomed, and everything he had created and protected would be destroyed.

"If there's even a sliver of a chance, I must gamble on it myself."

He had the "Daily Intelligence System," which was his trump card.

Others couldn't foresee the future, but he could glimpse fragments of it; others could only wait for fate, but he could set plans in motion ahead of time.

If he could obtain pivotal tactical intelligence at a critical juncture,

perhaps the ending might not be as the harsh prophecy foretold.

He thought of Edmund, the elderly man who had supported him when he first arrived in the Northern Territory and had given him his daughter's hand in marriage.

He thought of Emily, thought of the unborn child in her womb.

If they failed, he'd retreat to the Red Tide Territory, taking Emily, Sif, and the unborn child, fleeing south.

But if they won, the Northern Territory could still be saved.

Chapter 454: Final Battle (Part 1)

Bone Canyon, narrow and long like a divine scar stood deep within the Northern Territory's white bone mountain range.

Both walls were covered in snow, never melting throughout the year.

This was the last chaotic burial site from a hundred years ago when the Snow Country dynasty fell, rumored to be the resting place of a hundred thousand restless warrior souls.

Now this is the battleground chosen by Duke Edmund, the Northern Empire's final defense line, also a desperate gamble forged by fifty thousand blood and flesh.

"Bury all shock stone magic explosion bullets in the first line, every fifty steps a trench filled with petroleum, connecting the entire line without gaps!" The Duke's stern command spread through the snow.

Within seven days, all coalition forces were organized into three defense lines:

The first line comprised light cavalry, lurking like needles beneath the ice, responsible for triggering explosive traps, just waiting for the Barbarian Race to step in.

The second line consisted of the Ninth Legion and knights from other nobility, the main cavalry of the Silver Teeth Army and Broken Blade Army, deployed in a staggered formation, creating a triple penetrating defense line, akin to a dense net woven by steel, ultimately to harvest these barbarians.

The third line was personally guarded by the Cold Iron Army and the Duke's personal guards, each clad in heavy armor, with shields like mountains and hammers like thunder.

They would confront those Frost Giants head-on, a true flesh and blood barrier in this blood battle.

One by one, knights' last words were handed to Edmund, with envelopes rough to the touch, filled with expectations for their children, entrusted to their wives, and confessions to their elderly mothers... He accepted each one, each envelope heavy as a mountain.

"I won't let you die in vain." He lifted his head, his gaze piercing through the rolling mist.

In the final speech, Edmund raised the warhammer high, his voice like thunder: "This battle is to the death, if Northern Territory bleeds dry, then our blood is the boundary! If the barbarians destroy the Northern Territory, they must step over our corpses!"

With a command, fifty thousand warriors roared in unison, shattering the cold clouds!

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Mountain wind howled, snow fog covered the sky.

Before Bone Canyon, a group of several hundred elite knights marched against the wind.

Every knight's hair was white, yet their steps showed no delay.

They wore shabby cloaks, while their silver-white battle armor was long tarnished, covered in bloodstains and scars.

This was the coalition's vanguard suicide squad, also a group of true veterans of the Northern Territory.

"Come this far... what's the point of fearing death?" Leading the unit was an Extraordinary Knight from the Broken Blade Army, Old Wake.

His face was like a dry riverbed with knife scars, his left eye long blind, yet he still raised the greatsword at the forefront.

No one understood better than them, that this journey had no return.

Yet they willingly undertook the most dangerous tasks, using flesh and blood as bait, enticing the Barbarian Race main force, filled with rage and corruption, into Bone Canyon's trap.

They once slaughtered through corpses like forests during insect infestations, and guarded till only ten were left beneath border fortresses.

Now they willingly set foot again on this perilous path, just to lure those creatures from the abyss of fury, even if dying flames, they would ignite this blood trap.

"Kill! Kill them!!"

Old Wake shouted, charging forward, slashing down a vine armor magical beast with his sword.

They attacked the monsters with all their might, attracting their attention.

Then they kicked their steeds fiercely, turning and fleeing, weaving between battling and retreating, constantly leaving both ally and enemy corpses behind, creating a visual and olfactory blood-red guide line.

They never stopped, but their numbers kept dwindling.

Finally, in the roaring gale, the canyon's outline appeared ahead.

"Finally arrived..."

Old Wake almost dragged his shattered body to stand at the canyon's entrance.

He looked back to see the entire wasteland engulfed in a blaze of angry red light, tens of thousands of Barbarian Race main force driven by rage, losing tactical judgment, recklessly charging forth.

He spat blood, chuckled softly: "Sending you to Hell."

He raised the sword one last time, turning to charge towards the beasts.

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At the end of Bone Canyon, shadows finally broke the snow-white silence.

At that moment, the earth trembled.

A hundred Frost Giants tore through the mist, with raging vine armor entwined around them, like gods of war emerging from hell, with thunderous roars, approaching the canyon.

Their feet were on tides of Barbarian Race armies.

The angry berserkers were fully nude, muscles bulging, vines squirmed from beneath the skin, raging flowers bloomed on their backs.

Crack-jaw dogs, Ice Wolves and other beasts moved like night shadows, with jaw gaps still stained with not fully digested bone and flesh.

Red mist spread across the snow, fury hissed through the air.

In that instant, it seemed death truly descended.

Upon the canyon high ground, Duke Edmund quietly watched the towering black tide, murmuring: "They succeeded..."

The monster army continued to approach, some trembled, some prayed softly, some took out amulets hidden at their chest, grasped tight, like holding onto shadows of family.

Oppression, so suffocating it couldn't be breathed.

Fifty thousand allied forces silently lined up, ambushed in the canyon's three defense lines, waiting like a dormant steel flood.

Once the enemy steps in, it would be a confrontation of life and death.

Amidst the snow fog, first came the muted sound of war drums, like the heartbeat of a great beast, shaking cliff snow down.

Soon followed groups of monster troops, crossing the snow.

It's the Barbarian Race main force, no longer considered human.

The Frost Giants led as the vanguard, ten-meter tall behemoths in black iron vine angry armor, dragging blood-stained giant trees, roaring like thunder.

The berserker groups followed closely, bodies naked, covered in raging flower vines, eyes blood red like fire, wielding sharp blades charging towards the line.

Magical beast army distributed at both wings, crack-jaw dogs in packs, teeth snapping bones, Ice Wolves traversing snow, carapace vine-woven, twisted faces, blood feathered lizard spawning bone wings from their backs soaring and growling through the sky.

Chapter 455: Final Battle (Part 1)

This is not an army, but a tide of calamity forged by blood and flames!

"Drum." Duke Edmund issued the order briefly.

"Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!"

In an instant, ten thousand drums roared simultaneously, battle flags surged like tides, and the previously silent and oppressive battle line suddenly came alive.

Some wavering pioneer knights tightened their grip on their short spears and gritted their teeth, stepping forward.

Among the Silver Teeth Army, a young knight's palms were drenched in cold sweat. Hearing the drumbeats, he felt as if he was fiercely pushed, abruptly drawing his longsword.

An older knight who had been praying softly with his head down now raised his head, gazing at the creatures on the horizon, rekindling his rage as if returning to the glacial frontline thirty years ago.

Fifty thousand warriors advanced half a step in unison, and their steely resolve condensed into an unshakeable wall of will.

The canyon winds shrieked like whistles tearing through the throat, leaving only the colors of snow and blood in the world.

Edmund stood on the command platform, frost congealing on his cloak and armor, as his giant hammer slowly lifted.

"They're coming in." he whispered, "Ignite hell."

As the first Frost Giant stepped deep into the canyon floor, there was a crisp "click" sound, akin to the awakening of a war god.

"Boom———!!!"

In an instant, the entire Bone Burying Canyon was torn apart like by thunder, flames and rock fragments soared into the sky, the Magic Explosion Bullet detonating the trap zone. Then the petroleum ignited, black flames danced like serpents and devoured like dragons, spreading hundreds of meters along the canyon.

A dozen giants charging ahead were caught off guard, blown into the air by the explosion, their bodies disintegrating in the flames, black vines bursting, furious blooms withering, the wrathful flames raining down like bloody rain!

"Release the arrows!!!"

On the cliffs on both sides, the shooting troops were long ready, over a thousand bow riders simultaneously drew bows and released arrows.

Arrows poured like meteors suddenly falling from the night sky, directly aiming for the giant's furious blooms and eyes!

"Crack——!"

The sound of furious vines breaking merged into one, bright red vine sap rising like poisonous mist, covering dozens of meters.

One giant after another howled in pain and knelt, their steel knees pounded into the icefield, crushing the elite formation of the Barbarian Race that hadn't had time to move from behind.

Berserkers were thrown flying, magical beasts screeched and wailed, and the previously dense battle lines of the Barbarian Army plunged into chaos in an instant!

They began to shove and trample each other, trying to dodge their comrades' falling bodies from the sky, yet were driven into deeper frenzy by the red mist of the furious bloom domain!

Boom——!!

With the subsequent batch of Magic Explosion Bullets detonating at the canyon floor, numerous Barbarian soldiers and magical beast bodies were blown apart, fragments raining down.

Yet this did not end the enemy's frenzy, on the contrary, the true terror was just beginning.

Those bodies began to move.

They split open and peeled away, amidst the wriggling of blood and muscle, dark red vines grew madly from within, entwining skeletons, clinging to the ground, like snakes or tentacles.

In the surge of flesh, furious blooms of flesh color blossomed, clusters upon clusters, patches upon patches, like a hellish feast unfolding in the snow.

What followed closely was a tide of blood mist.

"Cover your faces! Chew the herbs! Don't look at the flowers!" came the urgent roar of the messenger among the coalition.

The warriors reflexively retrieved cracked herbal blocks from their bosoms, stuffed them into their mouths, chewed repeatedly, then pulled down their face masks.

The bitterness spread, yet suppressed the hallucinations emerging in their minds.

Those plants called "furious blooms" were releasing crimson mist, polluting the spirit, inciting anger, and stirring up slaughter.

The coalition was well-prepared; these soldiers were not facing the power of the Burning Pain Vine Court for the first time.

Every combatant carried drugs made from calming herbs, though somewhat crude, sufficiently severing their connection to fury temporarily.

The rumbling, burning, screeching, the breath of death rampantly churned inside Bone Burying Canyon.

The meticulously arranged Magic Explosion Bullets tore the earth apart, blood and furious blooms burst and scattered together, in an instant the whole canyon seemed stained into a scorching red hell.

"Hiss...!!"

The Barbarian soldiers' bodies convulsed in the flames, their abdominal cavities burst open, sharp and writhing vine thorns erupted from bone seams, igniting flame sparks of flesh, reminiscent of clusters of living flame vine furnaces.

What spewed forth was a suffocating red mist.

Anger pulse activated!

These fleshy flowers pulse like a heartbeat, waves of pulses spreading from the center of blood vines to the four corners, all the Barbarian Army touched by the mist instantly have their pupils turn red, muscles swell, and emit beast-like roars.

Their rage, under the influence of the red mist, continuously expands.

Muscles rapidly swell, strength increases manifold, speed skyrockets, skin cracks, yet no pain is felt, even those with severed arms drag bloodied bones and continue charging, as if the entire army has turned into enraged demons.

But just at the moment the pulse spread, a dull explosion shattered the rhythm of anger's resonance.

"Throwing team, fire!"

One by one, short stick-like objects painted with blue patterns arced gracefully through the air, landing precisely into the center of the anger flowers.

"Cold Breath Hammer Explosive Bullet, detonate!"

These Cold Breath Hammer Explosive Bullets are not standard military equipment but are made from the Frost Devour Soul Shock Bullet formula sent by Red Tide Lord Louis.

Unfortunately, there is neither the same alchemy materials library as in Red Tide Territory nor an alchemy workshop capable of complete replication here, let alone enough time.

It doesn't possess the Frost Devour Soul Shock Bullet's precision to instantly freeze and shatter emotional nerves, or directly smash the anger center, but it's sufficient to cause interference and temporary paralysis, which is enough.

A blue-white air wave exploded at the core anger point, as if those barbarian soldiers plunged into madness were struck by lightning, their anger suddenly severed.

Some collapsed straight, some stared blankly around, while others uncontrollably drove sharp claws into the chests of their comrades nearby, emitting muffled roars.

"Uh... Aaaaaahhh!!"

The blankness after emotional links were severed, converted into even more primordial chaos.

Swarms of barbarian soldiers tore at each other at the extinguished anger flower spot, turning against each other, blood mist splattering backward into army formations, unleashing more chaos and shock.

On the coalition command platform, a deputy general excitedly had his Adam's apple jump: "Hit it...! Anger's resonance was broken!!"

"The Northern Territory cannot be lost, life and death depend on this battle." Edmund raised the Giant Hammer high.

With his command, the coalition of fifty thousand knights surged forward like a waking steel tide, three formations advancing together, battle boots grinding ice and snow, with the snowfield emitting a bone-cracking low hum.

In the trap zones, petroleum reignited, a line of fire snake meandering out, isolating the gorge and dead zone.

The dim sky was suddenly dyed red by the flames, casting shadows heavily upon enemy silhouettes.

The barbarian warriors entwined with blood vines rushed forth with snarls, as if crawling from an abyssal hell.

Magical beasts with protruding bone spurs charged in like roaring thunder, red mist erupting from cracked vine armor.

At the front line, a Frost Giant not yet fallen roared waving its hammer, sweeping away a row of knights!

"Charge!!!"

The Silver Teeth Army was the first to break formation, knights roaring as they charged towards the monster front line.

The Broken Blade Army closely followed, infantry shields pushed aside anger vines, short blades stabbed into twisted flesh, splashing scarlet hot waves!

Flames, blood mist, snow frost, and roars, combined in the gorge to form hell's roar.

An old knight fought until his helmet shattered and armor cracked, yet still wielded a sword to cleave open a Beast Stripped Beast's head.

Another bow rider maiden leapt onto the rock walls, shooting six arrows in succession, piercing the anger flower eye core of a giant!

But the enemy would not retreat.

Each barbarian warrior who fell, their bodies would crack open, sprouts vines, entangling other fallen comrades.

Between the decay of blood and flesh, the ground began to squirm, vine walls quietly formed, red mist rolled again, madness force spreading forth.

"Bite the herbs!"

Coalition soldiers bit off bitter herbs at their lips, resisting mental pollution.

Simultaneously, Cold Breath Hammer Explosive Bullet shot out, precisely hitting the anger flower core, dispersing the red mist, various Barbarian Army emotions crumbled in an instant, turning to bite their own side, howling like rabid dogs!

The battlefield changed in a heartbeat, good versus evil, reason versus madness, colliding constantly.

This was the border of life and death.

Burial Gorge, like its name, would become the endpoint of all things.

But at this moment fifty thousand coalition troops built an uncompromising wall of flesh and blood, using the knight's vow, trying to keep the monsters from the abyssal rage beyond the final frontier.

Chapter 456: Final Battle (Part 2)

The red mist churned in the air, and flowers of rage quietly bloomed within the dead, emitting an eerily red glow, turning the battlefield into a purgatory of flesh and blood.

The young knight Leonard hid behind a rock, his chest heaving violently, the longsword in his hand trembling uncontrollably.

His comrades, Joyce, Michel, Talan... just moments before, they fought side by side with him, but now they lay fallen among the chaotic army, their faces twisted beyond recognition by anger and vines.

"It's madness..." Leonard muttered with a trembling voice.

He saw with his own eyes how Talan's eyes turned red under the red mist, roaring as he stabbed his longsword into a friend's back, as if he couldn't recognize his former comrade at all.

On the other side, an Ice Wolf snarled and leaped, pinning down a soldier of the Broken Blade Army, its sharp teeth tearing through his head.

The red mist rose with it, and the corpse rapidly split open, vines dancing wildly like blood snakes, constructing a twisted garden of flesh illuminated by the fire.

"Run away!" he heard someone shouting from a distance.

Leonard wanted to flee too, to turn and leave this hell, but his legs wouldn't obey him, only making slight shivers.

However, at that moment, a thunderous voice echoed across the battlefield: "Charge with me!!!"

That voice was like a hammer striking his heart, making Leonard look up suddenly, and through the blood mist and the fading light of rage flowers, he saw that familiar figure.

It was a man as colossal as a tower, clad in deep blue heavy armor, wielding a giant hammer, riding a horse across the cracking snowfield like a hero from ancient legends.

Duke Edmund, the Empire's hardest shield.

And behind him, hundreds of elite knights of the Cold Iron Legion followed closely, the ground roaring like an avalanche, each with resolute eyes, none showing fear.

"Charge with me!!!"

Upon hearing this, Leonard's heart felt like it was struck hard by a hammer.

He clenched his teeth, stood up from the ground, and despite his limbs still trembling, he instinctively raised his sword.

"Go! Follow!!" he roared and ran out, joining that surging iron stream.

Duke Edmund took a deep breath of the snow wind, its chill seeming to freeze his heart but making his mind sharper than a blade.

He raised the giant hammer, his muscles under the battle armor taut like steel, the knightly talent buried in his blood instantly boiling.

"Activate War Gravity!!"

An invisible pulse spread out like an earthquake.

The Frost Giants in front roared in unison, the monsters, originally advancing dispersed, surprisingly turned collectively as if pulled, their eyes locking onto that man charging like a god.

Their instincts of rage and hatred all projected onto Edmund alone.

The closest three Frost Giants roared and lunged, the snow exploding, rage flowers and vines dancing, like doomsday beasts breaching the sky.

He didn't slow down. Instead, he accelerated his charge, the spinning long hammer stirring up a snowstorm.

The three Frost Giants roared and lunged, each over ten meters tall, the rage flowers and vines writhing on their giant bodies, looming like apocalyptic shadows breaking through the sky.

Yet, Edmund didn't slow down at all. On the contrary, he urged his horse forward, the warhorse neighing and leaping, the warhammer raised high, like a blizzard tearing through the sky.

The foremost Frost Giant swung its vine-covered giant axe, cutting down with a wind of blood.

"Hah!" Edmund shouted angrily, sweeping his warhammer across.

The clash of metal and wood exploded with shockwaves!

He forcefully withstood the power of the axe blow, passing by amidst the charge, and following the momentum, delivered a hammering blow to the giant's knee joint.

"Crack!"

The knee bone shattered, it howled in pain as it crashed into the snow, crushing several barbarian soldiers following behind into pulp.

The second giant was about to strike but was bypassed by Edmund, who darted to the side with a sudden leap, hammering the connection between its leg tendon and waist.

That strike was precise as surgery yet as thunderous as a lightning strike.

The entire side waist of the giant collapsed, emitting a shrill howl, staggering a few steps before falling to the ground, its corpse like a collapsed mountain, kicking up a large cloud of snow and dust.

The ground shook violently as a Frost Giant towering five meters above its kin appeared, holding twin hammers made of giant rocks and vine bones, rage flowers burning like flames in its eyes.

It focused on Edmund and charged suddenly!

"Come on." The duke whispered, swiftly dismounting, gripping his heavy hammer with both hands.

The giant king roared, and its twin hammers fell simultaneously with the weight of mountains.

Edmund bellowed, meeting its attack head-on with his warhammer!

"Boom!!"

The ground cracked, snow shattered, and at the point of their collision, a shockwave blasted out, flipping over the surrounding barbarian soldiers and knights!

Edmund stepped back five paces, blood seeping from the corner of his mouth, but his stance remained unyielding like a mountain!

Then, he gritted his teeth and roared, leaping suddenly, hammering down powerfully!

This time, it struck right at the root of the giant king's thigh!

"Boom!"

The thigh bone shattered, vines burst apart, the giant king's figure skewed, suffering another diagonal side blow, dropping to one knee!

Before it could catch its breath, Edmund's furious hammer spun through the air, crashing down at the base of its neck!

"Shatter!"

The terrifying king's body fell heavily, crashing into the middle of the canyon.

The knights witnessed this scene as if seeing the hope of war igniting amidst the cold snow.

"For the Duke! For the Northern Territory!!"

Who knows who shouted first, but the moment burst like a long-repressed volcano.

Tens of thousands of soldiers roared in unison, their furious sound splitting clouds and stones, even dispersing the red mist for a moment.

The frontline advanced instantly.

The knights surged like an unstoppable flood, heavy armor pressing the snow, iron hooves breaking ice, various weapons tearing through rage vines and flesh.

Edmund did not stop either, wielding his hammer into the enemy ranks, carving out a bloody path like a god of war!

On both wings, the Silver Teeth Army and the Broken Blade Army also charged out from the second line of defense, entangling with the vine beasts, exchanging life for life, blood for blood.

Chapter 457: Final Battle (Part 2)

Three-sided encirclement!

At this moment, the allied forces gained the upper hand.

Unfortunately, the good situation didn't last long as a sudden change occurred.

In an instant, the sky seemed to be torn apart by an angry giant hand, the whole sky sank into an inky abyss.

A colossal giant shadow over twenty meters tall slowly rose, it was not a creature but an existence born from anger itself.

Its bones were entwined with fury, its body wrapped in blood vines, anger blossoms like pulses exploded and bloomed on its spine and head, lava-like red light seeped from its body, illuminating the entire battlefield.

And on the giant's shoulder, a figure stood tall, like a king judging all things.

He was draped in vine armor, a cloak of burning anger blossoms trailing behind him, his crown of thorns crawling like a blood crown over his head, seeming no longer mortal but the ruler resonating with this land of fury.

Titus Frost Fierce.

He did not speak, but the flames began to respond.

The angry red light poured down from the giant's body, like a raging tide sweeping across the battlefield.

Every beam of light was a seed of fury.

The Barbarian Race corpses trembled and squirmed under the call of the flame, skin cracked, flesh swollen, and tendons twitched and entwined like ropes.

Angry vines burst from their chests and wrapped around limbs and broken bones, forming mindless, pure murder-driven angry vines, dashing towards the knight defense line that hadn't retreated yet!

Meanwhile, the Barbarian Soldiers who hadn't died yet, those already near their limits, lost control completely under the angry red glow.

Their muscles swelled and tore through armor, teeth transformed into fangs, and eye sockets leaked liquid anger as red blood.

Their bones filled with fury, they howled like ignited beasts, wielding heavy weapons to tear through the knights' shield formations and knock cavalry horses flying!

"Watch out!!!"

A centurion of the Silver Teeth Army shouted, but before he could raise his shield for defense, he was hit by a berserker Barbarian Soldier, his heavy armor chest caving into a vortex, flesh and armor exploding together!

The Broken Blade Army's line was fragmented and pierced by angry vine corpses, two young knights stood back to back defending a passage.

One was caught by angry vines around the ankle, dragged into the corpse pile, and before his scream erupted, was bitten through his helmet by a vine flower of the dead, blood sprayed several feet!

The other retreated in terror, his spear trembling, only to be pierced in the throat from behind by a fallen comrade, eyes empty, no longer human.

The battlefield cracked open like Hell.

Battle flags burned in the angry tide, knights fled, fought, and roared among their dead comrades.

The battlefield was like a pot about to boil, vines entangled, angry blossoms grew wildly, and crimson mist suffused the air, suffocating.

Just as despair was about to swallow morale, Duke Edmund's silhouette stood firm as a mountain at the front line.

His blood armor stained red, his giant hammer lowered, yet his voice was strong: "Silver Teeth, Broken Blade hold the wings! Cold Iron Knight Order, follow me... execute the king!"

Unless Titus was struck down, the pulse of fury would rain down like storms, with no way for the allied forces to resist!

Edmund understood this, so he must kill the source first.

Thus, the strongest heavy armored knight order of the Northern Territory charged towards Titus.

Knights formed a wedge formation, following the Duke through the center front, plunging into a death jungle woven of angry vines, corpse walls, and blood pools!

Every ten steps forward, a High-tier Knight would fall from their warhorse, entangled by red vines, dragged into the bloody mud.

But one's sacrifice would certainly bring down dozens of Barbarian Soldiers.

Edmund charged in front, closely followed by thirty-seven Transcendent Knights, all war generals who had survived various bloody battles in the Northern Territory.

The Angry Crown Giant roared, shaking the sky, swinging all four arms, launching a storm of vine whips!

A young knight was swept into the air on the spot, his flesh exploded, his corpse swallowed by angry blossoms.

"Don't stop! Keep pressing on!!" Edmund roared, eyes bloodshot, breaking through the formation first.

He then let out a sudden shout, his fighting energy exploded, fierce brilliance released under thick battle armor.

"War Gravity!"

A star-heavy aura erupted, the Angry Crown Giant's massive head suddenly turned, eyes filled with angry blossoms deadlocked on him.

In the next moment, the giant charged with a roar!

"Ha ahhhh—!"

Edmund did not dodge; he drove his warhorse at full speed, meeting the enemy head-on!

"Boom!!"

The heavy hammer clashed directly with the vine-laden giant arm, blue fighting energy burst instantaneously, air twisted like boiling water!

A resounding crack of bones, the giant's entire arm shattered amidst the sonic boom!

Edmund's silhouette borrowed force to leap out, like a meteor passing through the angry blossoms!

Meanwhile, the back Transcendent Knights pressed forward, displaying their bloodline talents!

"Flame Spirit Assault!"

A spear of scarlet flame thundered to the ground, piercing the giant's knee tendon, exploding with a spray of angry blood and scorched vines!

"Wind Fang Six-Strike!"

Two silver shadows slashed out six wind blades in succession, fiercely tearing open the vine chest armor, revealing the blood-red core inside!

"Thunder Impact!"

On the other side, a knight charged forward, brandishing a heavy sword, thrusting it fiercely to pierce the core's center.

With a "crack," the entire flower of rage exploded in an instant!

The Angry Crown Giant howled as it staggered backward, its massive form swaying.

A seasoned Broken Blade Knight gritted his teeth and roared, igniting several Magic Explosion Bullets at his waist.

He leaped up, engulfed in fury, and charged into the giant's throat!

"Boom!!"

Like heavenly thunder crashing to the ground, a fiery mushroom cloud erupted from the giant's throat, consuming half the field of vision in a scorching light!

The giant wailed as it fell backward, its colossal body crashing down upon the garden of furious flowers, petals swirling and a mist of blood surging.

And Titus's body, like a puppet with its strings cut, plummeted from the shoulder of the falling Angry Crown Giant, crashing heavily into the blood-stained snow in the center of the battlefield.

The dull impact seemed to shake the entire canyon, with crimson vine threads and shattered furious petals filling the air like a bizarrely blooming funeral.

At that moment, everyone thought he was dead.

But in the very next second, the earth began to writhe.

"...Something's wrong!"

A knight was about to step forward to confirm when his eyes suddenly widened in shock.

The ground where Titus fell trembled like a living creature, with scalding red vine veins spreading from the cracks, pulsating like a heartbeat and swelling into a writhing platform of flesh.

Shhhhhh—!!

Dozens of upside-down bloodvines crazily surged from the ground, lifting the "corpse" high into the air!

This was no self-rescue, it was a sacrifice!

Titus's body convulsed violently in the air, his helmet shattering, his eyes long since burst by the furious flowers, vine threads frantically bursting forth from his mouth and nose.

His body cracked open inch by inch, twisted and reshaped, as vines pierced through joints and tore muscles, reconstructing him into an eerie existence.

Titus's consciousness was long extinguished, and now this remnant body was merely a vessel controlled by rage.

He was no longer Titus Frost Fierce.

He was the embodiment of the Burning Pain Vine Court!

He slowly spread his arms, the furious vines extending like tentacles across the battlefield, the domain of flesh silently forming, a new Hell opening.

In the next moment, red mist erupted like a tidal wave from his body, engulfing the battlefield!

"Cover your mouth and nose! Quickly!!"

The knight shouted, but it was too late.

This wasn't ordinary red mist, but concentrated anger released after burning countless wills' blood.

Even with special masks and bitter medicine, they couldn't withstand the mental assault mixed in this rage.

It was a madness that penetrated the marrow, a pollution that transcended the flesh and directly targeted the soul!

"Aaaahhhh!!"

A Transcendent Knight suddenly clutched his head and knelt, his eyeballs turning red, tears of blood gushing. His battle armor was pierced by furious vines, and in his eyes, rage burned. In the next second, he swung his sword at his own lieutenant!

"We... cannot lose..."

Another Cold Iron Knight gritted his teeth, his spear trembling, but ultimately couldn't resist the fiery rage whispering in his ears, losing all reason and charging at his comrades.

One after another.

Even Edmund felt the heavy weight pressing upon his spirit.

Was this defeat?

He felt an unprecedented sense of helplessness, his thoughts quickly swallowed by chaos.

But at that very moment!

"Boom!!!"

A loud explosion shattered the deathly silence!

Amidst the red mist, a gust of wind tore through the fog.

It was a crisp, cold fragrance, like the scent of flowers and leaves in early spring's morning light, bringing sudden clarity!

Edmond's consciousness seemed to be yanked back by a giant hand.

He suddenly opened his eyes, his breathing rapid, his blood vessels pounding fiercely.

"This scent... is...?"

He turned his head and saw, on a high slope at one end of the canyon, a red flag like fire flapping valiantly in the wind!

Chapter 458: Louis Battles Titus

The dusk of the Bone-Burying Gorge, the wind and snow hit the face like fragmented iron pieces, carrying the scent of blood.

Louis overlooked the battlefield from the high ground of the gorge, his gaze sweeping over the purgatory interwoven with red and white snow.

He had already known today's outcome through his Daily Intelligence System several days prior.

Duke Edmund would launch the final offensive here... and fail.

So he spared no effort in leaving the defense of the Red Tide Territory, bringing two hundred carefully selected Elite Knights, hoping to change the predetermined outcome.

They traveled day and night, without any rest, and managed to make it in time.

Of course, Louis was also fully aware that even if he threw all two hundred men into the fray, it would only result in them being swallowed faster.

But what he brought wasn't just these two hundred knights, but also weapons to counter Anger that the Northern Alliance Army didn't have.

This group of knights, each wore anti-Anger potions and Frost Leaf masks he personally supervised the formulation of, carrying high-purity cold-breath fog tanks.

They even carried a limited amount of Frost Leaf concentrated explosive bullets and Frost Devourer soul-shaking bombs. These were ingenious weapons that the Northern Alliance Army could not produce.

They were invented by Louis based on intelligence provided by the Daily Intelligence System, specifically created for the Burning Pain Vine Court.

Of course, when they reached the battlefield, Louis did not immediately order a charge, because in such a large-scale battle, these weapons needed to be used at the most critical moment.

What could truly change the outcome was not a desperate fight but breaking the spine of the enemy at their strongest moment.

Thus, all two hundred men he brought hid in the shadows of the canyon, waiting for the signal.

Their presence was invisible to the alliance army.

To the enemy, it was like an invisible longsword hanging over their heads.

The roar of the battlefield continuously reached them, Louis could even see Duke Edmund leading his troops to withstand the Frost Giants and the raging vine beast horde.

The red mist grew thicker, the air seemed soaked by burning blood, the warriors' shouts became distorted, and even the clashing of steel sounded mad.

Finally, the moment arrived...

The concentrated angry red mist erupted from Titus, who had fallen from the shoulder of the giant.

Even Duke Edmund's figure was affected by the red mist, his body beginning to stagger slightly.

Louis' pupils suddenly contracted, and he raised his hand with a wave.

"Everyone, fire!"

A dull continuous roar exploded in the valley, the Frost Leaf Vine concentrated version of the magic explosive bullet transformed into a wave of silver-blue mist, forcibly tearing open a gap in the red mist.

The cold and acrid air could sever the mental resonance of the Anger Blossom like a blade.

Meanwhile, two hundred Red Tide Elite Knights charged like a crimson lightning into the edge of the battlefield at Louis' gesture, the thundering hooves in the blood-soaked mud stirred the wind to cut through the red mist like a knife.

They did not engage the enemy head-on but maintained a high-speed ride, circling in a semicircular arc around the core of the battle and occasionally throwing light Frost Devourer soul-shaking bombs to prevent the approach of vine monsters.

Everyone had specially made sprayers attached to their waists and the sides of their saddles, continuously releasing an icy blue mist as they galloped.

The mist carried the chill and the bitter fragrance of herbs, where it passed, the red mist receded as if crushed.

Moments ago, knights with eyes red like beasts cradled their heads and wept, as if waking from a nightmare.

The knight in a frenzy abruptly halted his longsword, panting as tears blurred his vision, his sanity gradually restored.

Of course, these were those not too deeply affected; as for the barbarian knights who were severely afflicted, there was no saving them.

The route of the Red Tide Knights was precise to the extreme, avoiding the densest parts of the battle while covering the largest area of the red mist.

The fast-moving figures intertwined like threads, seemingly using icy blue threads to forcibly twist off the original turbulent madness on the battlefield.

On the other side, as the icy blue mist of the Red Tide swept past Duke Edmund's face, it was like a basin of icy water poured over his head.

The brutal whispers were forcibly cut off, his breathing clear once more.

He raised his eyes through the swirling smoke and saw the red flag of the Red Tide waving in the distance, that touch of red, in this world dyed red by the Anger Blossom, shook his heart.

It's Louis!

But there was no time to think more, Titus was right in front.

Titus stood at the center of the battlefield, his entire being like a terrifying idol sculpted from blood vines and anger.

The Anger Blossom bloomed on his back and skull, the petals trembling slowly as if breathing.

Thick blood vines twisted down from his limbs, shattering the battered armor into sharp vine blades, the cold light reflecting dark red veins, writhing like living things.

His eye sockets were long filled by the Anger Blossom, leaving no trace of human emotion, only driven by the will of the Burning Pain Vine Court.

At that moment, he was no longer Titus, but a weapon forged of rage, possessing even the speed and strength of a High Tier Peak Knight.

His movements were unsettlingly strange, each strike wasn't just the power of his arm, but the simultaneous lashing of several blood vines like steel whips, accompanied by a piercing shriek of torn air.

Eight Transcendent Knights and Duke Edmund formed an iron circle yet were forced into continual retreat with every inhale and exhale, like being engulfed by a blizzard from all sides.

A Cold Iron Elite Knight bearing a shield attempted to approach to block his flank, the thick shield like a wall against the path.

But beneath Titus, the blood vines exploded, vine thorns piercing through the snow, throwing the knight several yards into the air.

The heavy armor shattered mid-air, landing with nothing but a mixture of blood and snow.

Seeing this, Edmund shouted angrily, a Giant Hammer with the force of thunder crashing towards Titus's head.

The blood vines instantly wove into a vault-like vine shield, the impact shock wave from the hammer causing the surrounding snow to collapse.

Chapter 459: Louis versus Titus (Part 2)

As the vine shield shattered, Titus swung back with a vine thorn, shooting it straight at Edmond's throat like a spear.

Edmond could only block with the handle of his hammer, the pain in his hand was intense, and as he leveraged himself to the ground, he immediately pressed forward with two extraordinary knights from the left and right.

On the left flank, the "Flame Spirit Slash" burst into a blazing light by his waist, carving a charcoal-black crack into the vine armor.

On the right flank, the "Wind Fang Slash" cut through half of the shoulder armor, splattering a mixture of petals and flesh, a strange sweet scent lingering in the air.

Yet he did not retreat in the slightest; instead, he growled like a beast, and the petals of the rage flower suddenly shook, a circle of red shockwaves booming outward.

The three knights were directly thrown to the ground, painful howls echoed within their armor, the red mist was once again eroding their sanity.

The eight knights attacked like a tide, but they could never force him into a dead corner.

His movements were like a combination of a beast and hunting vines, without any pattern and unpredictable, the limits of strength and speed pushed to inhuman heights by his rage.

The blood vines underfoot were pervasive, as if they wanted to drag everyone nearby into the vine-flowered purgatory.

This battle didn't seem like a siege against a barbarian warrior, but rather a life-and-death struggle with a soul-possessing killing plant.

And just when everyone thought Titus' attention was firmly held by Edmond and the eight extraordinary knights.

He suddenly stopped his offensive in an instant.

Those hollow eye sockets filled with rage flower petals, glowing with red light, slowly turned to a location on the periphery...

It was where Louis was located.

The surrounding knights were all stunned, without any warning or logic, this monster seemed driven by some mysterious will, directly locking onto the Red Tide Lord.

"What grudge do I have with you?!" Realizing that this monster was rapidly approaching, Louis couldn't help but shout out, but his eyes were wide open.

[Bloodline Talent: Trajectory]activated!

A trajectory line extended from Titus' shoulder.

It crossed the war spear vine thorn at his left side, the torsion at his waist, and the sweep direction of the next moment, all formed in Louis' mind in advance.

"Left dash... then right slash!"

He almost instinctively yanked the reins, the warhorse neighing as it leapt sharply to the right, while his body suddenly ducked down.

"Boom!"

The vine thorn, as hard as steel, grazed his cheek, trailing a hot blood mist, slicing a gash in the armor over his left ear.

Snowflakes and blood droplets fell simultaneously, icy coldness and burning pain invaded his senses at the same moment.

Although he dodged that strike, his chest was still muffled by the aftershock, and his arms were numb.

The strength gap was too vast, he had narrowly dodged the scythe of death.

"So close... if I were half a second slower, I'd be headless!"

Louis cursed inwardly, the chill caused by terror still hadn't dissipated from his chest, he forced himself to suppress the chaos of his heartbeat.

Engaging head-on would be to seek death, the gap between him and the pinnacle level was not just one of strength and speed, but an unbridgeable chasm between life and death.

He could only stall him, so he quickly chanted a spell, instinctively releasing his most familiar magic.

"Body Fixing Technique!"

The silver-white sigil light erupted from his palm, like a binding lock wrapping around Titus' legs.

The vines stiffened momentarily.

"Fireball Technique!"

A blazing fireball was hurled, exploding violently at the side of the vine armor.

It didn't harm a bit of flesh, but it was enough to force Titus' vine offensive to pause for half a breath.

"Defensive formation!"

Lambert roared, and five extraordinary knights immediately closed in around Louis, the clash of steel and blood vines exploded loudly.

He stood at the forefront with his sword, as his longsword slashed down, it sparked and tangled with the blood vine as hard as a steel whip, every step forcefully blocking the opponent's offensive on the edge of death.

Louis retreated under the cover of the guards, regretting to death in his heart.

"Why did I act smart? If I had just stayed on that hillside watching, I wouldn't have ended up in this damned situation..."

Titus' rage flower pulsed faster and faster, the red mist rolling closer, like the maw of a giant beast, ready to swallow Louis and his guards whole.

While avoiding clumsily, Louis continued to use magic to force the vines to turn, barely maintaining this shaky path of survival.

Lambert gritted his teeth and crossed his sword, the defensive formation was already on the verge of collapse.

Just at the moment when the Bloodvine surged from the ground, the threat looming overhead.

"Louis! Get back!" It was the voice of Duke Edmund, deep as thunder.

Accompanying the roar, eight fierce streams of Fighting Energy, like meteors, tore through the red mist.

The Transcendents of the Cold Iron Knight Order, clad in blood-stained armor, advanced alongside the Duke.

The snow beneath their feet vaporized in the heat and impact of Fighting Energy, their charge tracing a path like a burning river of steel.

They pressed in from both sides and the front simultaneously, flames, lightning, and ice intertwined into a moving barrier of death, forcibly cutting a breathing space between Titus and Louis.

Louis was roughly pulled from the battle zone by Lambert. As he glanced back, he saw fourteen knights collide with that "Flower Doll Body" like the last gamble of destiny.

Each of Titus's swings not only carried power beyond that of a Peak Knight, but also was accompanied by Bloodvines shooting fiercely in all directions, as if the entire battlefield was assisting him.

Vine thorns swept across, armor shattered, blood sprayed, but none of the knights retreated; instead, they burned their Fighting Energy to the limit, even overdrawing their lives for the chance to exploit a moment's flaw.

Flames scorched through vine armor, lightning spikes pierced the angry flower, ice locked his joints.

The eight knights worked together to push Titus step by step into the deeper snow, forming a tightening vortex of death.

And Titus's movements gradually slowed.

The petals of the angry flower trembled in the fierce wind, the color of the vines turning black, cracking, and the pulses deep within the flower heart began to chaotic, like the last gasp of a drowning person.

Edmund stepped on the broken Bloodvine and leaped high, blue light surging on the giant hammer, "Die!!"

Boom!!!

The hammer strike heavily smashed onto the twisted core in Titus's chest—the Burning Pain Vine Court.

In the next instant, the angry flower exploded violently, the vines turned to flying ash in the air, swallowed by wind and snow.

Titus's body collapsed into the snow, silent and motionless.

The battlefield fell into a momentary freeze.

As if some invisible force had been severed...

The blood flowers blooming on the giants' chests suddenly closed tightly, cracked, the vines withered into a pile of gray debris, and the enormous, unsupported bodies collapsed, causing the snow to tremble.

Those endlessly roaring Barbarian Race soldiers, too, stiffened as though their souls were drawn out the moment the angry flower withered, and they collectively fell into the snow, silent once more.

The red glow in the magical beasts' eyes scattered around the battlefield extinguished, as if their life force had been drained, and they collapsed heavily, their cold blood seeping into the white snow.

The red mist stopped swirling, dispersed with the wind.

All the knights understood that they had won.

The Northern Frontier had survived too.

Yet at this moment, no one cheered.

The sound of long swords and warhammers loosening was particularly crisp in the deathly silent valley.

They merely breathed heavily, their bodies empty like hollow shells of iron after Fighting Energy was burned out.

Some sat paralyzed in the snow, letting ice and snow fall into the gaps of their armor, some held their chipped long swords, staring blankly at the fallen enemy.

Others looked up at the gray sky, their eyes void as if aged decades.

The wind swept through the valley, stirring a swirl of vine debris, like a silent elegy.

This victory was not glory but a cost.

And at the core of the battlefield, Louis's horse slowly stopped, yet in the next moment, his whole body heavily fell to the ground.

"Lord!"

"Louis!"

The knights and Duke Edmund's exclamations rang out almost simultaneously, and five Red Tide Knights swiftly surrounded him.

Lambert didn't even sheathe his sword, directly leaping off his horse, one hand supporting Louis's helmet, the other reaching for his neck.

He held his breath, until he felt the steady yet faint pulse, then slowly exhaled a breath of white mist.

"It's alright... Just fainted, probably due to the stress of battle and exhaustion from the charge."

Hearing this, everyone breathed a sigh of relief.

On today's ledger of merits, none outshone Louis, the "Clearing Mist" he brought nearly saved the core strength of the entire Northern Territory.

Everyone believed he had merely exhausted himself, a good rest would awaken him.

Only Louis knew, a wisp of red mist like a wandering thread, quietly slipped into his mind.

Chapter 460: The Emperor Is Missing?!

Louis only felt his limbs heavy and finally collapsed in intense fatigue.

But he did not lose consciousness, remaining fully awake.

Deep in his mind, a wisp of crimson mist was frantically pouring in, like soul-burning flames.

The mist was interspersed with countless angry howls, drum-like thunder, as if millions of vengeful souls were screaming together, trying to tear his will to shreds.

"Again! Why does everything want to burrow into my head?!"

Before he could react, a platinum pulse suddenly lit up in his mind.

It was the Primordial Heart!

It blossomed like a star's radiance, the light flowing into a river, surrounding every thread of blood-vine-like red mist in the darkness.

Two forces continually clashed within him, while Louis' consciousness was pushed to a third perspective.

He seemed to stand on a void battlefield, watching the battle of light and blood within his body.

The feeling was extremely strange; it was clearly his own body, yet he was like an indifferent spectator.

He could do nothing but cheer for the Primordial Heart because it seemed more like the side of justice.

The crimson mist churned into flowers, angry blossoms flourished in the void, blood vines snaked down like numerous tendrils.

Attempting to tightly wrap and crush the heart.

The Primordial Heart, however, transformed into a vast starry river; amid its pulsation, the platinum light flowed like a river of flames, burning the blood vines to ashes with every tremor.

The collision between the crimson mist and the starry river was like a cataclysmic chess game.

The impact of rage, frenzy, disorder, chaos felt as if it would crush his entire body.

The roar thundered in his ears, as if a hundred thousand souls were simultaneously howling: "Rage! Burn! Destroy!"

The sound shook Louis almost to the point of losing himself; he even felt his heart beating with the red mist, teetering on the brink of losing control.

But soon the Primordial Heart erupted with a dazzling white light.

Like a star exploding in the mind, the crimson mist emitted one last roar, then was completely devoured.

Louis sighed in relief, originally fearing this red mist would turn him into a monster like Titus.

However, he hadn't relaxed long before his consciousness was swept away by another current.

Some alien memories suddenly poured into his mind, dragging him into another vision.

The scene shifted, to a world of burning skies and blood-stained earth.

A black-haired youth wielding a giant sword was fighting a pitch-black dragon in the air.

The dragon's breath swept across the world like flame, while sword light cleaved scorching white cracks in the void.

Beneath them lay a sea of corpses.

Countless dragon remnants and human bodies interwoven like an endless slaughterground.

The scene suddenly shifted again.

Eight figures surrounded a lying corpse, each reaching to take a part of the remains.

Someone took the head, someone took the bones, someone took the arms...

And the last took the heart.

The final scene tore apart, transforming into a grey-white snowfield.

A tall youth stood amid the ice and snow, none other than Titus Frost Fierce.

His eyes empty, face full of conflicting and twisted struggle.

Before him stood an inverted ash-laden vine tree.

Angry blossoms flourished at the branches, blood vines hung low, as if whispering.

"Do you want power...?"

Titus trembled but finally reached out his hand.

In the next moment, the blood vine swiftly wound around his body, piercing into his flesh!

He let out a heart-wrenching roar.

And behind him, the angry flowers bloomed, his gaze was henceforth ignited by scarlet madness.

The memory flood surged through Louis' mind like a broken dam but left almost nothing behind.

Louis instinctively grasped those three fragments, yet the meaning they represented, he couldn't decipher for the moment.

Only a sense quietly rose, that this was not the end, but merely the prologue.

.....

"Ah!"

A short gasp suddenly sounded, Louis' eyes abruptly opened. Not a battlefield shrouded in smoke, he should be in a room in New Frost Halberd City.

And the instant consciousness returned, he noticed the changes in his body.

The magic power within flowed more smoothly and abundantly, as if previous barriers shattered and some unknown pathway had been opened.

Furthermore, he felt new abilities gained, like if he were to unleash full potential when overexerted, it would be enough to achieve nearly the speed and strength of a Peak Knight for a short time!

Also, the rage resonance, the sense where as long as he roars on the battlefield, it could inspire the emotions of nearby soldiers.

Not only that, but the total amount of magic power, conversion efficiency, spellcasting fluency were all elevated a whole tier.

Like an old engine replaced with a new core.

"...This, is the ability brought by the Burning Pain Vine Court?"

He murmured as he stretched out his right hand, clenched a fist, his knuckles cracked, a strange saturation between muscles.

But seemed to have no side effects, nor any feeling of being controlled by rage, even his mind was utterly calm.

Could the side effects have been suppressed by the Primordial Heart?

He frowned, contemplating while gently sitting up.

Right then, footsteps came from afar drawing near.

"Sir!" A familiar voice carried urgency.

Lambert charged in, face full of worry and fatigue.

"Great! You've finally woken up!" A few others followed, some known and some unfamiliar to him.