

## Apocalypse 1526

### Chapter 1526: Molting Life

Ye Zhongming's heart suddenly tightened, and he even felt a trace of nervousness he hadn't experienced in a long time.

The appearance of the God Hall's Heaven Speech Demon Vine meant the mysterious Director of the God Hall was nearby!

At this moment, if the Director had simply revealed himself, it might have been better. But lurking in the shadows like this forced Ye Zhongming to remain constantly vigilant against this hidden, formidable opponent.

He didn't know who this God Hall Director was or what his true strength was, but one thing he was certain of—both the Director and the equally enigmatic Great Leader of Soul Merchant were undoubtedly stronger than Wen Yan.

"Pinhall. Twin Demons."

The two men wielding paired blades spoke in eerie unison, though their faces bore no resemblance to twins.

"Saint Green Serpent. Soul Merchant."

The old man with a level-eight venomous snake coiled around his arm spoke next.

The man whose hands had vanished, replaced by two small black holes, grinned unnervingly.

"Silver. From God Hall."

"I'm Sister Bo, Vice-Leader of Soul Merchant. Remember that before you die, bastard."

The massive woman swung her spiked mace in the air, unable to contain herself any longer. The enormous weapon detached from her grip and hovered midair as she did. Simultaneously, two massive round-headed warhammers appeared in her hands—each larger than her own body.

This woman actually wielded a dual-weapon system.

Typically, such evolved possessed terrifying combat prowess.

Somehow, these people had arrived here and formed a perfect encirclement.

Though Ye Zhongming's ultimate destination might have been guessed, the path there wasn't fixed—he had even changed directions multiple times. Yet they had still found him. This meant one thing: his movements were completely exposed to the enemy.

Ye Zhongming had been careful—no surveillance sources were in the sky. That left only one possibility: the enemy had another method to track him.

And indeed, the Great Leader of the Soul Merchant and the God Hall Director had reunited not far from this location. With them were two others—one was Divine Court's Ah Xiu, the other an unremarkable-looking woman.

At this moment, the woman's eyes glowed an eerie blue, flickering with rapidly shifting images and silhouettes. Though unclear, the Great Leader and the Director waited patiently beside her.

"Sister Bo and the others have intercepted Ye Zhongming. This King of Cloud Peak runs quite fast. Made us chase him like fools, but he couldn't escape Mei Rang's eyes. Well? My Saint isn't bad, eh?"

The Great Leader chuckled, brimming with smug satisfaction.

The Director nodded. "The Earth Eye job is decent. Just a bit low-level. If it were advanced, she could've cast a Decay Membrane on Ye Zhongming—killing him would've been much easier."

The Great Leader's smile remained, but displeasure flashed in his eyes.

Were skill-upgrade scrolls or unsealing fluids easy to obtain? Even at their level, were all their skills maxed out? Pinpointing Ye Zhongming's location alone was already impressive. How many of them could've kept up with this monkey-like fugitive without it?

"Let's see what your Heaven Speech Demon Vine can do."

Though inwardly annoyed, the Great Leader didn't hold back verbally. He knew this level-eight mutated plant was formidable, but claiming it alone could defeat Ye Zhongming was absurd. His words were merely a reminder—besides the vine, five other eight-star evolved had Ye Zhongming surrounded.

But while the two leaders exchanged barbs, neither suggested heading to the battlefield immediately. At their strength, reaching it would take mere minutes.

In this regard, they were cut from the same cloth. Even knowing that joining the encirclement now might ensure Ye Zhongming's death, they feared one thing above all—the leader of the nation's top faction dragging one of them down with him.

And who better than themselves as targets?

When it came to self-preservation, men like them were experts.

Subordinates could die. They could not be harmed.

This was their unspoken creed.

"Sister Bo has attacked."

The female Saint with Earth Eye suddenly spoke, informing the two leaders that what might be the final assault on the King of Cloud Peak had begun.

"Ah Xiu, you go too."

The Director abruptly ordered. The woman beside him vanished in a flash.

The Great Leader's eyes narrowed slightly, surprised by her speed.

While the two leaders watched from afar, Ye Zhongming found himself in the fiercest battle of the day.

Above him, Sister Bo's hovering spiked mace periodically descended—each strike carried crushing force. Though not fast, its power was immense. Under normal circumstances, Ye Zhongming could evade easily, but now, while fending off other attackers, it was a relentless nuisance.

Another headache was Silver from God Hall.

Unlike the others, this man—with black holes for hands—didn't join the melee. Instead, he lurked at the periphery, continuously releasing electric currents from those voids, weaving a crackling net roughly the size of two basketball courts around the battlefield.

Its purpose was obvious—to block Ye Zhongming’s escape.

Sister Bo led the assault. Ye Zhongming wasn’t familiar with her job, but white fur sprouted across her body once activated. Though no other visible changes occurred, her strength skyrocketed to monstrous levels.

In raw power, the only person Ye Zhongming had ever met who could rival him was his sworn brother Sheng Yuan. Now, this obese woman had joined that short list.

In their several direct clashes, she hadn’t been at a disadvantage. Her colossal hammers showed no signs of inferiority against the Undead Sand Moon Blade—likely at least golden-grade equipment, and exceptionally durable at that.

Beyond strength, her defense was equally terrifying. Though her armor was only blue-grade, its white fur had deflected one of Ye Zhongming’s sharpest strikes.

Chapter 1526.5- Molting Life

But the King of Cloud Peak’s troubles didn’t end there.

The Twin Demons of Pin Palace moved with unnatural synchronicity. Ye Zhongming recognized their job—Linked Martial Masters, a rare class that granted two individuals flawless coordination in battle, drastically amplifying their combat effectiveness.

Since when did Wen Yan have such experts under him?

Though their skills bore no flashy visual effects, their teamwork made it impossible for Ye Zhongming to break their defense without resorting to his own skills.

These foes were cunning—they pressed him relentlessly, denying him the time and space to unleash his abilities.

The Saint Green Serpent of Soul Merchant wasn't idle either. While Sister Bo and the Twin Demons formed the main offensive, he harassed Ye Zhongming incessantly. He and his serpent excelled at exploiting openings, steadily amplifying the pressure.

Combat between high-level evolved was blisteringly fast, but every move revealed lethal precision if slowed down.

Especially in close-quarters like this, where a single misstep—given their superhuman physiques—could mean death.

Ye Zhongming had already drawn both blades, countering and probing for an opening amidst the relentless assault.

That opening came sooner than expected.

Sister Bo, a brute-force fighter, favored overwhelming aggression. Though she followed the plan, impatience gnawed at her. Spotting Ye Zhongming momentarily unbalanced after deflecting the Twin Demons' strikes, she roared, her hammers glowing.

Her left hammer hurled forward, rocketing toward Ye Zhongming, while the right hammer slammed into the left, propelling it with even greater speed.

Dodging was impossible at this distance with her swings already nearly grazing him. He had to take the hit or block it.

But Ye Zhongming's reflexes defied expectations.

Blink.

His body shifted two positions sideways, appearing beside the snake-handling old man.

Saint Green Serpent, previously in a supporting role, gasped—unprepared to suddenly become the primary target.

Just as the hammer strike had been unavoidable, neither was Ye Zhongming's blade.

The Undead Sand Moon Blade touched the old man's throat.

Any eight-star evolved—especially one who rose to Saint position—had their own trump cards.

At the critical moment, the old man's eyes shifted into serpentine slits, strange energy flickering within. Simultaneously, the blade sliced through his neck.

"Thud!"

The sound wasn't right.

A severed human head didn't produce that noise.

Behind the collapsing "corpse," another Saint Green Serpent emerged, glaring venomously at Ye Zhongming.

The massive mutated snake spat a torrent of venom straight at him.

"Old lunatic! You want to die?!"

As fellow Saint Merchant members, Sister Bo and Saint Green Serpent knew each other well—with her being the Vice-Leader. Seeing her subordinate disregard allies and unleash area-effect venom, she raged.

She knew how deadly that venom was. Half that snake's lethality lay in its toxicity.

Even someone as fearless as Sister Bo dodged first. The Twin Demons followed suit.

Ye Zhongming blinked repeatedly, using equipment-based teleportation to evade.

The venom spread too fast, too wide. Without teleportation, dodging was impossible.

Yet some droplets still grazed him.

Instantly, he knew something was wrong.

Debuffs and searing pain began corroding his body.

On the other side, Saint Green Serpent—having burned his ultimate survival skill—cooled slightly.

His title came not just from his serpent, but his job—Taipan Serpentine.

Its signature ability: Molting Life.

When facing a fatal strike, it automatically activated, shedding his outer layer to absorb the deathblow, while his true body emerged safely behind.

A powerful life-saving skill, but with harsh restrictions:

Cooldown scaled with evolution rank—once per star level. Even if unused at a lower rank, it didn't carry over.

After use, all stats permanently decreased by  $(1/\text{current rank})$ .

As an eight-star evolved, his stats had just dropped by  $1/8$ .

A steep price.

No wonder he'd been so enraged after Ye Zhongming's sudden switch.

Seeing Ye Zhongming poisoned, Sister Bo bellowed and charged.

Her timing was impeccable—knowing he'd need moments to antidote, or risk lethal toxicity.

The Twin Demons followed, unwilling to miss this chance.

But Ye Zhongming made a shocking choice.

Instead of detoxing, he attacked.

His speed blurred, teleporting once before streaking toward... Silver of God Hall.

Everyone's expressions changed. Only now did they realize—Ye Zhongming's venom-dodging path had been deliberate. His goal: close the distance to Silver, who was weaving an ever-tighter electric net.

A blink, augmented by his Blood Stepping Boots' sprint, brought him before Silver. The Undead Sand Moon Blade stabbed for his eyes.

Caught off guard, Silver panicked. In this life-or-death instant, he unleashed every escape skill he had.

First, the electric net contracted violently, targeting Ye Zhongming. Simultaneously, his black-hole hands morphed into bestial claws, slashing at Ye Zhongming's abdomen—a desperate gamble to save himself.

The claws gleamed with a dark glow—clearly a skill.

Meanwhile, his eyelids thickened with keratinized layers.

Multiple sounds intertwined—rewriting the battlefield.

Ye Zhongming, wreathed in electricity, was sent flying. Blood arced through the air before he even hit the ground.

And on the other side...

Embedded in Silver's eye socket was a violet-glowing warblade.

Chapter 1527: Badly injured

"Ye Zhongming has teleportation abilities!"

"Saint Green Serpent is injured! Saint Green Serpent counterattacks!"

"Ye Zhongming is retreating—no, he's targeting Silver!"

"Silver is wounded! Ye Zhongming is also injured!"

Mei Rang, the Saint with Earth Eye abilities, continuously relayed the battle's progress to the Great Leader and the God Hall Director. The expressions in the two leaders' eyes shifted with each update.

They would be more than happy if they could kill Ye Zhongming like this. They didn't care about the fame of personally slaying the King of Cloud Peak—what they wanted was to safely remove an obstacle from their path and secure greater benefits.

But the battle wasn't going as smoothly as they had anticipated.

"Ah Xiu will reach the battlefield in about a minute. Six eight-star evolved—they will definitely kill Ye Zhongming."

The Director spoke, then suddenly turned to the Great Leader. "How about letting our Ah Xiu deliver the final blow?"

The Great Leader smiled. "My people also want that glory. What do you think of Sister Bo?"

"She's not fit to take over Soul Merchant."

"So you've also received an 'entry ticket'?"

"That's hardly surprising."

The two exchanged words that Mei Rang couldn't comprehend before falling into brief silence.

Both the Director and the Great Leader realized something—they were grooming successors of absolute loyalty. Letting their chosen ones kill Ye Zhongming would grant immense prestige, strengthening their claim to leadership.

Their full-force siege on Ye Zhongming had complex underlying motives, with each scheming for their own gains. But in this regard, the Great Leader and the Director were unusually aligned.

"How about this? I'll give you—"

The Director's offer to trade benefits in exchange for the Great Leader yielding the kill was cut short by Mei Rang's trembling voice.

"Silver... seems to have fallen in battle."

She couldn't help her fear. As a seven-star evolved, she had witnessed Silver's overwhelming strength during the hunt of a nine-star lifeform. In her eyes, aside from the top leaders, Silver had been the strongest.

How terrifying was the King of Cloud Peak if even he could be killed?

"What happened?!"

For the first time, the Director's voice wavered.

.....

Ye Zhongming had been injured, poisoned, and drained of stamina—but never before had he lost control of his body. Yet the moment he was sent flying, he realized that everything below his neck no longer obeyed him.

Under normal circumstances, he wouldn't have taken such a risk. Though not as calculating as Soul Merchant and God Hall leaders—willing to sacrifice subordinates to weaken foes—he had learned to weigh gains against losses. He avoided reckless gambles unless absolutely necessary.

But this time, he had no choice.

The five eight-star evolved besieging him were no ordinary foes—each was an elite, their skills, jobs, and even battle beasts synergizing flawlessly.

Fighting one against five, Ye Zhongming felt immense pressure.

The last time he'd felt this way was when facing five of his own core members.

(Though if those five were Red Hair, Xia Bai, Mo Ye, Liang Chuyin, and Xia Lei, he wouldn't just feel pressure—he'd be fleeing for his life.)

Having exhausted his teleportation uses, he abandoned the failed strike on the Saint Green Serpent and switched targets.

Why Silver, who hadn't directly engaged but seemed troublesome?

Because Ye Zhongming feared his electric net and unknown abilities.

And one more reason sealed his decision—the vanished Heaven Speech Demon Vine.

He knew it hadn't left. It was lurking, waiting to strike.

The hovering spiked mace descended, smashing into Ye Zhongming's chest. The impact jolted his senses back, allowing him to twist his head away from a fatal blow barely.

The crushing force and searing pain sent him crashing to the ground. His organs felt shattered, blood gushing from his wounds.

The King of Cloud Peak was finally severely wounded.

Silver's last-ditch attack had been devastating.

The electric net searing into his flesh and the void-claw punch to his abdomen had briefly paralyzed him, and Sister Bo's mace strike afterward would have killed anyone else.

But even in agony, Ye Zhongming felt no fear. Control had returned.

Trading injuries for a kill? Worth it.

This was the first breach in the encirclement—and the hardest. Their cohesion was their strength. Now that it was cracked, the battle would ease.

Rolling aside to dodge Sister Bo's leaping crush attack, Ye Zhongming activated his Hell Envoy bloodline.

Everyone knew—when Ye Zhongming's bloodline ignited, he fought to kill. Even a brute like Sister Bo hesitated.

Nearby, Silver's corpse twitched, the Undead Sand Moon Blade still embedded in his eye. The thickened keratin layer hadn't stopped the purple-grade weapon's penetration.

Perhaps only the tip had pierced through—but that was enough.

The God Hall's best gene-fusion subject had died before showcasing his full power.

The Lightning Sand Demon materialized with a roar, its fury mirroring its master's. Now comparable to an eight-star lifeform—even surpassing some in raw power and defense—it lacked only versatility and agility.

It lunged at the nearest target: Sister Bo. Lightning-wreathed claws aimed for her skull. Against its monstrous form, her bulk meant nothing.

Simultaneously, Ye Zhongming's hand covertly drew the Harvester Mimicry Shooter.

His posture was deceptive—half-crouched, one hand bracing against the ground.

Killing Silver was a breakthrough, but it cost him his weapon. The Saint Green Serpent Throne, having narrowly escaped death, dashed toward the corpse, his serpent leading the charge—intent on seizing the Undead Sand Moon Blade.

Both Sister Bo and the Saint assumed Ye Zhongming's priority was reclaiming his purple-grade weapon.

That was basic logic—who would abandon such treasure mid-battle? Especially a weapon, which is the most valuable of all equipment.

With the Sand Demon drawing attention, Ye Zhongming's movements seemed focused on preventing retrieval.

Under this cover, he silently aimed the Harvester beneath his arm and fired at Sister Bo.

She was, after all, the closest.

The shot used "Burst" mode—shortest range, but devastating area impact.

Chapter 1528: Sudden change

Sister Bo, who had been clashing head-on with the Lightning Sand Demon, suddenly convulsed violently before being sent flying backward.

The Twin Demons and the Saint Green Serpent hastily retreated—the latter even abandoning the Undead Sand Moon Blade.

No one understood better than them just how absurd Sister Bo's defenses were at this moment.

Her job was called "Oputantan Transformation"—a strange name that sounded more like a bloodline. Yet it was an incredibly rare and precious job that granted entirely passive abilities while massively boosting all physical attributes.

Strength. Defense. Regeneration. And more.

For someone like Sister Bo, who had climbed to such heights, did it matter that her job lacked active attack skills?

Not at all!

She could compensate with other skill scrolls. Oputantan Transformation was a universal job—any offensive ability that leveraged physical prowess could synergize with it.

Coupled with Sister Bo's innate superhuman strength and her evolution path focusing purely on power, she was essentially a humanoid monster.

Sister Bo had been indispensable during the previous hunt for a nine-star lifeform. She alone had withstood the nine-star creature's frontal assault for a full ten seconds, laying the groundwork for its eventual kill.

Ten seconds!

Against a nine-star lifeform! Even if it wasn't a top-tier entity like the Nine-Winged Crow or Armor King, it was still among the most powerful beings in existence. Not even Ye Zhongming could confidently claim to endure such an onslaught.

But Sister Bo had done it.

Yet now, this same woman—a tank capable of facing nine-star creatures head-on—had been sent flying by a single shot, her fate unknown. What kind of attack was this?!

The Twin Demons and Saint Green Serpent's fear was a natural reaction for any evolved.

Why had Ye Zhongming fired so stealthily? To deny his enemies any warning. And why had they instantly created distance? To buy themselves reaction time.

Sister Bo crashed heavily to the ground. Ye Zhongming didn't spare her a glance—he trusted his firearm's lethality. The moment the shot was fired, he had already lunged for the Undead Sand Moonblade, reclaiming it swiftly while crushing a Healing Crystal and downing a high-grade recovery potion.

The latter wasn't cheap. Even Ye Zhongming had limited reserves.

His injuries improved significantly.

But before he could act further, his expression suddenly changed. Whirling around, he saw the impossible—Sister Bo, whom he had believed dead, was standing.

Not only that—she had hurled her warhammer, reducing the Lightning Sand Demon to half its original mass.

Summoned creatures like the Sand Demon couldn't die, but each destruction drained their energy. Too many defeats would permanently weaken them, requiring lengthy re-cultivation.

Sister Bo... was still alive?

Ye Zhongming's gaze locked onto the woman's left side—and understanding dawned.

Because he had absolute confidence in his purple-grade firearm, he had prioritized concealment and surprise over precision when firing.

The "Burst" skill was inherently an area-of-effect attack—even a near-miss would obliterate most targets through sheer destructive force.

The Harvester Mimicry Shooter was the most lethal among his recently forged purple-grade equipment.

Its past performances had been flawless, which was why Ye Zhongming had assumed Sister Bo's death was guaranteed.

And under normal circumstances, she should have died. Any evolved—no matter how tough—would perish after losing half their abdominal organs.

Yet Sister Bo lived. And was still combat-ready!

Her entire body was now covered in longer white fur, while her left abdomen was gone entirely from the navel down. Ye Zhongming could even see her exposed ribs.

But!

Along the wound's edges, red tendrils of flesh were visibly regenerating, rapidly repairing the damage.

This level of regeneration?!

Ye Zhongming's eyes narrowed.

Even in all of Cloud Peak, perhaps no one—not even himself—possessed such healing capabilities.

Surprise, however, didn't equate to fear. Ye Zhongming's philosophy was simple: If one strike doesn't kill, deliver more.

With an explosive push-off from the ground, he shot toward Sister Bo like a cannonball, ignoring her grievous yet seemingly inconsequential injuries.

The Twin Demons raced to intercept, desperate to reach her before Ye Zhongming's attack landed.

They knew—without Soul Merchant's powerhouse to pin Ye Zhongming down, their fate was sealed.

The priority now was protecting Sister Bo long enough for her to recover.

Meanwhile, Saint Green Serpent and his serpent readied another assault.

But then—

The world darkened around them.

Above, a sky full of stars materialized.

Ye Zhongming's "Stellar Gaze" activated!

Next, shimmering particles of light-sand engulfed the battlefield.

Sister Bo, the Twin Demons, and Saint Green Serpent all felt their bodies grow heavier—and mortal danger loomed.

Trapped in darkness with no immediate escape, their only option was to defend.

Ye Zhongming, now fighting at full strength, had no intention of letting them off. As the Star Spirit's ability took effect, the Earth Spirit—having exhausted nearly all energy from repeatedly casting Black Soil Armor—slammed Sister Bo and the Twin Demons with a Gravity Field.

Enhanced by his Amplification Field, Ye Zhongming moved like lightning. The Undead Sand Moon Blade arced toward the nearest target—Sister Bo.

Soul Merchant's Vice-Leader could only raise her warhammer in a frantic block.

CLANG!

The weapons collided. Sister Bo's hammer was knocked aside, and her body staggered back.

Under Stellar Gaze, Ye Zhongming's bloodline and other abilities were boosted by 20%. Combined with Sister Bo's injuries, the woman who had once matched him blow-for-blow was now outclassed.

The Twin Demons intercepted, parrying Ye Zhongming's next slash.

But his resolve was firm. Dual-wielding again, he leveraged his speed and strength to unleash a relentless barrage against the Twin Demons.

In weapon grade alone, the Twin Demons were outmatched. Their earlier success had relied on job synergy, teamwork, and Sister Bo's pressure. Now, with Ye Zhongming's sudden power surge and Sister Bo neutralized, their disadvantage became glaring.

Ye Zhongming's blades struck dozens of times like a precision machine in mere seconds.

Finally—an opening.

One of the Twin Demons, his weapon cracked from the onslaught, misjudged a block by a fraction. His left chest was exposed.

Wind and Thunder struck like a viper.

Blood sprayed.

Ye Zhongming would have driven the blade deeper in the next instant—ending one of Wen Yan's elites.

But then—

A sudden disturbance erupted behind him!

Chapter 1529: Forceful killing

Ye Zhongming's back bristled with goosebumps as his body twisted unnaturally into a backward flip, his weapons sweeping behind him in the same motion.

He could no longer afford to finish off the Twin Demons.

A tremendous force reverberated through his blades, while shadows surged toward him from all sides.

Ye Zhongming planted his weapon against the ground, propelling himself backward toward the Twin Demons' position. Simultaneously, he hurled several objects around himself—they detonated the instant they left his hand. The blast wave sent him skidding another few meters away.

There was no deafening explosion at the epicenter—only a ripple of energy and faint wisps of smoke.

Landing in a crouch, Ye Zhongming wiped his cheek with the back of his sword hand, leaving a smear of blood.

Only now did he see what had attacked him.

The Heaven Speech Demon Vine!

He had never witnessed this mutated plant's combat methods before—now he'd experienced them firsthand.

At least a hundred black, needle-thin vines were retracting, each tipped with a three-petaled white flower. But these were no ordinary petals—their edges gleamed razor-sharp under the light, shimmering with an eerie blue glow. One of them still bore droplets of blood.

His blood.

Despite his injuries, Ye Zhongming was at his peak—bloodline fully activated, Stellar Gaze unleashed. Yet even in this state, those sinister petals had wounded him.

His eyes tracked the vines as they slithered back into the earth, but he didn't pursue. Instead, he scanned the surroundings for their master—the God Hall Director!

.....

Mei Rang's battlefield updates visibly relaxed the Great Leader and the Director.

"Truly worthy of the Heaven Speech Demon Vine," the Great Leader remarked, his mood lightened. "Even operating independently, it poses such a threat to Ye Zhongming. I concede defeat."

His cheer wasn't unfounded. Sister Bo, though grievously wounded, still lived. So far, only God Hall's Silver and Tong Lu had fallen—a favorable outcome for Soul Merchant.

Ye Zhongming was a cornered beast. His death was inevitable. The fewer his own casualties, and the more others lost, the better.

The Director's mood improved slightly seeing the Demon Vine's effectiveness, but the Great Leader's words grated. The consecutive losses of key subordinates made one thing clear—this fat schemer was no longer content to follow his lead.

The three superpowers had always dominated the alliance between God Hall, Pin Palace, Soul Merchant, and minor factions. But even among them, hierarchies existed.

God Hall had long held the foremost position—and with it, marginally greater benefits. With fewer evolved than the others, maintaining this dominance was critical.

Sensing the Great Leader's growing ambition, the Director suppressed his fury over losing two elites. With a flick of his right hand, a jade-smooth, deep-brown vine emerged from the ground at his feet—pristine, as if carved from polished stone.

The Great Leader stiffened.

This... was the Heaven Speech Demon Vine?!

Then what had been attacking Ye Zhongming?

The Director relished his rival's shock. "What you see on the battlefield is merely a fragment of it," he declared, pride lacing his voice.

The Great Leader's jaw slackened. He pointed alternately at the distant combat zone and the lustrous vine before them, stammering, "That... and this... are one? Connected? Over such distance?!"

Behind his mask, the Director's grin widened. "Indeed."

The Great Leader offered no further comment—just a thumbs-up.

But the Director wasn't done. A sharp whistle pierced the air. The final strike against Ye Zhongming would be delivered here.

Nearby, the roar of massive machinery erupted. The Great Leader's eyes flickered toward the sound, thoughts unreadable.

.....

Ye Zhongming's unease grew as his search for the Director proved futile.

The Demon Vine's presence guaranteed its master was nearby. So why wasn't he attacking?

The delay had granted Sister Bo critical recovery time. The gaping wound in her abdomen had shrunk to a fist-sized hole, and her ferocity had returned in full. Even her hovering spiked mace had reclaimed its position in the sky.

Abruptly, Ye Zhongming pivoted, his blades lashing out at the Twin Demons once more.

If the Director wouldn't show himself, he'd force him out!

This time, Ye Zhongming fought with reckless abandon, discarding defense entirely.

Already enhanced by multiple buffs, his assault was terrifying. Though flawless in coordination, the Twin Demons could now only desperately block—their occasional counterattacks, once a pressure valve, were no longer feasible.

Meanwhile, the vengeful Lightning Sand Demon rematerialized, howling as it charged Sister Bo.

Payback was due.

With his Hell Envoy bloodline active for some time, its secondary ability triggered—a dark fissure split the battlefield, disgorging a fork-wielding humanoid entity shrouded in shadow. By all indications, another eight-star summon.

Luck had favored Ye Zhongming twice now, granting him peak-tier infernal reinforcements.

The fork-wielder's cyst-covered, crimson head swiveled toward Saint Green Serpent—its serpentine companion particularly intriguing. With a guttural cry, it lunged.

A cold smile curled Ye Zhongming's lips. To the Twin Demons, it might as well have been the grin of a demon.

With Sister Bo and Saint Green Serpent occupied, and Silver dead, they alone faced Ye Zhongming's fury.

Yet despite their dread, the Twin Demons clung to one hope—the Heaven Speech Demon Vine lurked nearby.

Unshackled, Ye Zhongming shattered their defense in eight brutal seconds. Wind and Thunder arced toward one demon's chest—an inevitable kill.

Then—salvation descended from above.

This time, the vines didn't emerge from the ground but a nearby tree—five wrist-thick, spike-covered tendrils plummeted toward Ye Zhongming like divine retribution.

Evasion would require under a second—but abandoning his strike was the only way.

The Twin Demons exhaled. Surely, he'd dodge.

They were wrong.

Ye Zhongming unfurled the Staff of Nature with a sudden flourish, enveloping all three within its protective dome.

Wind and Thunder found their mark—armor shattered, flesh split.

The Water Bottle Protection held just long enough to block the vines before crumbling. Five lashes tore into Ye Zhongming's back.

"Little Brother!"

The surviving Twin Demon's anguished cry echoed as he caught his falling comrade, retreating at full speed.

Because the King of Cloud Peak—knocked prone moments earlier—had already sprung up, a crescent of blade light chasing his heels.

Chapter 1530: Blindness

The blade in his hand shattered as a gaping wound split his body from left shoulder to chest. One of the Twin Demons staggered back, howling in agony.

The brother he'd been clutching—already clinging to his last breath—now lay severed in two, all signs of life extinguished.

Since mastering their unique job, the Twin Demons had encountered foes they couldn't defeat—but none who could kill them.

He understood why Ye Zhongming hadn't dodged: The King of Cloud Peak had traded defense for annihilation. What baffled him was how Ye Zhongming, after taking a direct hit from the Heaven Speech Demon Vine, seemed completely unfazed—still capable of delivering this lethal strike.

Ye Zhongming's body had rebounded after that slash, but the violent impact forced fresh blood from his lips.

The Staff of Nature had mitigated some damage, but the Demon Vine was a top-tier battle companion. Its attack had been weakened, not nullified.

Ye Zhongming had gambled on his own defense to endure the blow.

The gamble paid off—one Twin Demon lay dead—but the backlash ravaged his body. Wounds that had begun healing now flared anew.

He knew his regenerative abilities, though monstrous, didn't grant immortality. Accumulating injuries would diminish potion efficacy, and the cycle of fresh and old wounds would inevitably erode his combat prowess.

Yet he couldn't relent. Gritting through the pain, he lunged forward, crossing meters in an instant as his weapon arced upward toward the surviving Twin Demon.

If he killed, he'd kill thoroughly!

Even if he never reached the plains, even if he had to release the demonic horde here—slaughtering more eight-star evolved would cripple the elite forces of Soul Merchant, God Hall, and Pin Palace, directly impacting the final outcome.

The blade's glow nearly grazed the unarmed, grievously wounded Twin Demon—when a streak of crimson intercepted.

CLANG!

The deflection sent Ye Zhongming's strike veering off course, gouging a three-meter fissure beside his target. The counterforce also twisted Ye Zhongming's stance, robbing him of a follow-up angle.

As he leaped aside, a whistling gust attacked his flank. With no time to dodge, he crossed his weapons to block—but the impact felt oddly fluid.

Stabilizing, his peripheral vision caught a flash of red.

Silk? Satin? Brocade?

"Ah Xiu!" Sister Bo's roar confirmed the newcomer's identity—an ally, and apparently a close one.

Ah Xiu of God Hall had arrived. An agility-specialized evolved, her speed was legendary. Covering the distance in just over a minute, she now confronted a battlefield starkly different from Mei Rang's reports.

Silver—dead. One Twin Demon—dead. Sister Bo—wounded.

Was the King of Cloud Peak truly this formidable?

Unlike overconfident elites, Ah Xiu's greatest strength was prudence. She'd rather overprepare than underestimate.

After saving the Twin Demon, she activated her job—Flowing Sleeve Phantom—and unleashed its signature skill: "Graceful Sleeves Dance."

The attack itself lacked brute force, but its unpredictability made it nearly impossible to fully counter. Her weapons were twin crimson sleeves that shifted between supple and rigid at will.

Even Ye Zhongming's dual blades blocking couldn't negate the secondary shockwave, forcing his body off-balance.

In combat, losing control—even momentarily—was fatal.

Seeing Ye Zhongming easily dismantle her first move, Ah Xiu didn't hesitate. Ignoring Sister Bo's shouts, she triggered her second skill: "Thousand Flying Swallows!"

Her sleeves whirled into a blur, multiplying until a sea of crimson fabric bloomed before her. Soon, Ah Xiu herself vanished, leaving only a storm of scarlet petals—their numbers swelling relentlessly.

Ye Zhongming tilted his head, uncertain of the technique. He raised the Undead Sand Moon Blade and slashed.

Upon contact, the red mass detonated.

A sky of scarlet shards.

Each strip hardened into razor-edged steel rods, fanning outward in a grid too precise to evade. Ye Zhongming deflected two before retreating beyond their range.

Ah Xiu reappeared at the epicenter, every crimson strand connected to her battle skirt.

When her attack failed to injure Ye Zhongming, her expression remained unshaken—a detail that unsettled him.

Then, the "porcupine" of rigid sleeves dissolved into crimson light.

"Ah—!"

Ye Zhongming's gasp was stifled as he shut his eyes, backpedaling violently. The Undead Sand Moon Blade scored deep grooves into the earth.

He'd avoided using his weapon's passive summoning earlier—undead minions were too slow and weak for this combat tier.

But now? The sleeve-light's nature was unknown, yet his eyes burned as if scalded. Touching them revealed a pinkish fluid—tears mingled with blood.

Blindness. He couldn't see, couldn't even pry his eyelids open.

This Ah Xiu possessed vision-crippling abilities.

After a wild slash, Ye Zhongming turned and fled.

Blindness spelled doom against the Demon Vine and these foes.

"After him!" Sister Bo bellowed, leading the chase.

The Lightning Sand Demon, bound by proximity limits, vanished—reappearing beside its retreating master. Only the fork-wielding humanoid still harried Saint Green Serpent.

Ah Xiu glanced at Ye Zhongming's fleeing figure, then outraced Sister Bo in three effortless strides. The surviving Twin Demon slumped to the ground, sprinkling medicinal powder into his wounds.

Losing his brother had halved his strength. With injuries compounding, he'd rejoin his leader Wen Yan—this fight was beyond him now.

As for Saint Green Serpent? He screamed for help, but his body didn't even move. He was locked in an even duel with his infernal adversary.