

Apocalypse 1536

Chapter 1536: Attacking

At this moment, Ye Zhongming actually had two choices.

One was to compete with these two bosses in skill usage, to see who was superior. The other was to engage them in close combat, testing whose martial arts and weapon mastery was better.

In neither scenario did Ye Zhongming hold the advantage.

If he chose the first method, many of his skills were still on cooldown. Facing two opponents at their peak, he would inevitably be at a disadvantage.

If he chose the second, his impaired vision would put him at an inherent disadvantage, making the fight extremely perilous.

Both choices were, in essence, dilemmas.

So Ye Zhongming chose a third option.

He suddenly lowered his raised battle blade, and the Reaper Mimic Shooter appeared in his hand. He unleashed a barrage of rapid fire toward the two bosses.

Aside from its sniper and scatter modes, this weapon also had a full-auto mode.

In this mode, it still had three abilities:

"Firestorm Barrage," "Bullet Rain Assault," and "Extreme Lockdown."

Firestorm Barrage allowed him to suppress an area with overwhelming firepower. Bullet Rain Assault focused fire on a single point to break through strong defenses. As for Extreme Lockdown, it was the gun's most unique ability—one Ye Zhongming felt might be his trump card today.

Right now, he activated Firestorm Barrage.

He enveloped the entire area where the two bosses stood in a storm of bullets.

Firestorm Barrage was an area-of-effect attack, its lethality entirely dependent on the weapon's power and the bullets' grade.

Ye Zhongming loaded this ability entirely with green-grade bullets.

A purple-grade weapon paired with green-grade bullets already delivered devastating firepower.

The two bosses, caught off guard by Ye Zhongming's unorthodox tactic, were momentarily flustered.

To some extent, firearms had little effect on people of their level.

Of course, purple-grade firearms were an exception.

They knew Ye Zhongming possessed a powerful sniper rifle—they had long been aware of it. Their delayed appearance had partly been due to this concern. Cheng Ou's death earlier had only confirmed their fears.

But at this range, if Ye Zhongming used a sniper rifle, it would be suicidal. They had a thousand ways to dodge and counterattack while he aimed.

Yet Ye Zhongming's ability allowed him to fire instantly without delay.

When he first opened fire, the two bosses didn't take it too seriously. The Chairman was even about to unleash his own attack.

If it weren't for the fact that these were skill-enhanced bullets, the shots would have posed little threat to them. Even a direct hit to the forehead from an ordinary gun wouldn't faze them now.

But the sudden sea of green light before their eyes made them realize things weren't so simple. They immediately reacted, dodging while defending.

The distance between them was nothing to the speed of the Reaper Mimic Shooter. The bullets arrived instantly, eliciting different reactions from the two bosses.

When the bullets struck the God Hall Director, ripples spread out from each impact point, as if pebbles had been dropped into a river—before silently vanishing.

The Chairman, meanwhile, let out a howl as the bullets embedded themselves one after another into his body, making him tremble violently.

Unlike ordinary evolved who would be instantly overwhelmed by such an assault, these two were true powerhouses.

The Director stood firm, his mask suddenly smiling. A massive grinning face emerged from it, floating to his upper left.

Then, it began to laugh.

The sound reverberated around them, and as it did, energy notes flew out from the grinning face, drifting toward Ye Zhongming. When they collided with bullets, explosions erupted.

The Chairman, seemingly tanking the bullets with his body, actually had his golden robe remain completely intact. The bullets appeared to pierce his flesh, but they hadn't even penetrated the robe—they were just lodged in his fat.

If Ye Zhongming still had his sight, he would have noticed that the Chairman's bizarre crank-like weapons never stopped spinning, even as bullets struck him. He shielded his face with his arms but kept cranking.

The gunfire ceased, but the battle raged on.

Though Firestorm Barrage ended and the two bosses seemed unharmed, it had caused them significant trouble.

The Director's ripple barrier, which negated the bullets, was one of his defensive abilities—and it consumed mental energy.

A purple-grade firearm's skill-enhanced barrage, paired with green-grade bullets, was no joke. Even with half the bullets diverted to the Chairman, the Director found it hard to endure. His grinning-face attack had been an attempt to lighten his own burden.

As for the Chairman, once the shooting stopped, his bullet-riddled body twitched, and the projectiles clattered to the ground.

He glanced down at his golden robe, now slightly dulled, and seethed with anger.

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This robe was an incredibly rare piece of armor, excelling in every aspect and perfectly complementing his bloodline. But it had one flaw—its durability couldn't be repaired. Once broken, it was gone for good.

Ye Zhongming's attack had just reduced its durability by over 100 points!

The spinning cranks in his hands suddenly halted.

Then, two black tornadoes, each as thick as two meters at their widest, materialized before him. Like horizontal cones, they shot toward Ye Zhongming.

Meanwhile, Ye Zhongming was busy dodging the energy notes. These things struck the Mountain and Water Eternal World behind him with loud bangs.

Sensing another attack incoming, he raised the Staff of Nature before him.

"This damn turtle shell—I'm sick of it!"

The Chairman grumbled, breathing slightly heavily. That attack had clearly drained some of his stamina.

He gently patted the left head of his three-headed tiger and said softly, "Lend me some strength."

The tiger's maw opened and clamped down on his hand.

Four deep tooth marks marred his skin when he withdrew it—yet no blood flowed.

With a ferocious grin, the Chairman swung his hand toward Ye Zhongming from a distance.

Countless phantom tiger claws appeared in front of the King of Cloud Peak, slashing at him with lethal precision.

This was a joint skill between the Chairman and his beast.

But he wasn't done.

The right tiger head bit his other hand, and with another swing, a 10-meter-long phantom tiger tail whipped toward Ye Zhongming.

Energy notes, tiger claws, tiger tail, tornado cones—all converged on Ye Zhongming.

They were certain that Ye Zhongming would have to defend against them. Even if his gunfire had caught them off guard, he would ultimately be forced into a defensive stance.

This was where the difference between top-tier evolved and elite evolved became glaringly obvious.

Against Ye Zhongming, even elites of the same evolution level stood no chance alone. Two could barely hold their own, three might still be at a disadvantage, and only four could truly match him.

There were moments when Ye Zhongming could overwhelm them so thoroughly that they couldn't even activate skills.

But the Chairman and God Hall Director were true pinnacle existences—ranked in the top five of the entire nation, perhaps even the top twenty on the planet. Fighting two against one, they held absolute superiority.

They had expected Ye Zhongming to be tough, even with his blindness, but they never imagined his choice would be...

To fight back!

The Staff of Nature was too famous. Water Bottle Barrier was too famous. Most people's first reaction upon seeing it was defense.

But this staff wasn't just for defense—it could attack too.

Instead of the expected barrier, a gigantic flaming bird erupted from the staff, hurtling toward the two bosses.

Ye Zhongming hadn't loaded a water gem into the Staff of Nature—he'd used a fire gem, and the highest-grade one at that!

Thus, the fire gem's ability—Blazing Phoenix—was unleashed.

The battlefield was instantly engulfed in chaos as attacks collided.

All three combatants acted swiftly, their techniques landing almost simultaneously.

Ye Zhongming was pummeled by the barrage.

The energy notes came first.

These weren't simple projectiles—their laughter-like sounds disrupted mental focus. Even someone with Ye Zhongming's immense mental energy felt slightly affected.

And when the notes struck, they didn't damage armor or flesh—they attacked the mind directly. Caught off guard while counterattacking, Ye Zhongming couldn't dodge them all.

This left him momentarily vulnerable, forced to rely on pure defense against the remaining attacks.

Tornadoes, tiger claws, and tiger tail—each left their mark on Ye Zhongming. By the time the assault ended, he had to brace himself against the Mountain and Water EternalWorld's barrier just to stay upright.

Such was the might of two true masters. A single exchange had worsened Ye Zhongming's injuries by another 30%.

But the two bosses didn't come out unscathed either.

A highest-grade fire gem unleashed through the Staff of Nature wasn't something to be taken lightly. Both were forced dozens of meters back before the searing heat subsided.

They glared at Ye Zhongming, furious and disheveled.

The Chairman's golden robe had lost even more durability. At this rate, it would be destroyed before the battle ended.

The Director, though showing no obvious wounds, had charred marks on his scalp and pinky fingers—proof of injury.

His mental-energy-consuming barrier had either broken or been dismissed to conserve energy.

All three chugged potions simultaneously, then straightened up.

"Again!" the Chairman snarled.

Chapter 1537: Killing (1)

The mask worn by the Director of God Hall was called "Five Emotions Spectrum."

To obtain this piece of equipment, he had once exhausted the full might of God Hall, mass-producing and hunting down level-eight mutated lifeforms, even launching a cross-border war, before finally securing it from a level-eight wheel.

At the time, God Hall's strength had dropped by at least 30%.

But the Director believed it was worth it.

And history proved him right.

Since acquiring the Five Emotions Spectrum, the Director's power had ascended to another level. Alone, without assistance, he could already contend with level-eight mutated lifeforms. Under his leadership, God Hall's strength quickly recovered and even surpassed its former heights.

The Director himself once said that the Five Emotions Spectrum was, after the Demon Vine, another pillar of his that he had obtained.

Now, this equipment was operating at full power.

Around the Director, five enormous facial expressions floated in midair. Alongside the initial smiling face, there were also crying, angry, sorrowful, and shocked faces.

The five expressions lined up in a row, creating an eerie and awe-inspiring scene.

"The boss is going all out."

A researcher beside Dr. Ziche watched the battle unfold on a nearby energy screen and couldn't help but sigh.

The last time the Director had fought with everything he had was when they slayed a level-nine lifeform—something these researchers hadn't witnessed.

Dr. Ziche was currently using God Hall's unique secret technique to recall their mutated creatures, sparing only a glance at the screen before remaining silent.

This device was used for remote control of experimental subjects, consuming a significant amount of energy. But since the Director was in combat, letting the researchers observe wasn't a bad idea.

"Five Emotions Overwhelm Heaven... the King of Cloud Peak... sigh."

Dr. Ziche murmured under his breath.

When he learned of Tong Lu, Silver, and Cheng Ou's deaths, along with Ah Xiu's severe injuries, his heart was shaken to the core.

He had never imagined that a single person could accomplish such feats.

As a member of God Hall, he naturally hated Ye Zhongming—but at the same time, he couldn't help but feel awe toward the King of Cloud Peak.

One man, challenging the combined might of three major factions.

Even if he were destined to die here today, this moment would be remembered forever.

What Dr. Ziche had referred to as "Five Emotions Overwhelm Heaven" had already been unleashed.

Each of the five spectral faces—smiling, crying, sorrowful, angry, and shocked—launched their own attacks. Colorful musical notes rained down upon Ye Zhongming, each carrying a different debilitating effect.

Every time a note struck its target, it left a mark on Ye Zhongming's body. By now, his form was already dotted with multicolored lights.

Meanwhile, the Chairman of Soul Merchant had done something even more extreme—he shoved his head into the central maw of his three-headed tiger.

When he pulled it back out, his face was riddled with seven or eight bloody holes.

Yet he was still grinning.

Then, his expression turned solemn, and he let out a deafening roar toward Ye Zhongming.

A gigantic spectral tiger head materialized, its jaws wide open, descending upon Ye Zhongming with crushing force.

The sheer pressure of this attack surpassed the previous tiger claws and tail strikes.

Ye Zhongming wasn't idle either.

He had initially tried attacking the floating emotion faces, but finding them immune, he swiftly changed targets.

With a sweep of his palm, the Mistveil Terror Gauntlets unleashed "Mountain-Crushing Palm"—a colossal palm-shaped shadow crashing down toward the God Hall Director's head.

Simultaneously, a beam of light shot from his wrist, streaking toward the Chairman.

In his other hand, his weapon switched from the Undead Sand Moon Blade to Wind and Thunder, which he plunged into the ground in a reverse grip.

A shockwave of energy erupted from the blades, surging forward.

This was the power imprinted upon them by the molten hammer from the Secret Realm's Lava Sea.

Though the number of skills hadn't increased—still just the energy shockwave—Ye Zhongming had now mastered the hammer's energy flow, refining the power infused into Wind and Thunder.

This shockwave was far stronger than the one he'd used against the Secret Realm monsters.

Ye Zhongming's assault wasn't just aimed at the two leaders—it also targeted their attacks.

The three combatants had unleashed a flurry of skills in this brief exchange. Though described slowly, the actual clash took mere seconds.

The collision of energies shook the entire battlefield.

Even after activating "Five Emotions Overwhelm Heaven," the God Hall Director still had strength to spare. Seeing Ye Zhongming's Mountain-Crushing Palm descending, he produced a small cloth pouch from his sleeve.

From it floated out dandelion-like wisps, spreading across the sky above him. When the palm struck, it only managed to disperse some of the fluff.

However, the Wind and Thunder's shockwave forced him to cross his arms in defense, his body skidding backward uncontrollably.

Despite digging his heels in, he was still pushed over ten meters, leaving two deep trenches in the ground.

By the time the shockwave subsided, "Five Emotions Overwhelm Heaven" had ended.

A trickle of blood seeped from beneath the Director's mask, staining his robes.

Chapter 1537.5- Killing (1)

The Chairman fared even worse.

Though his attack hadn't been his absolute strongest, it was the most powerful strike he could muster in such a short time. Seeing Ye Zhongming's counter, he hastily tossed out a green-grade apron—a dedicated defensive item.

He assumed it would at least block most of the seemingly weak shockwave.

But the apron was instantly shredded, forcing him to rely again on his golden robe and sheer toughness to endure the damage.

When the dust settled, the golden robe was covered in cracks, its glow flickering weakly, clearly on the verge of destruction.

As for the beam of light Ye Zhongming had fired from his wrist?

Upon hitting the Chairman, it vanished, leaving the Soul Merchant leader utterly baffled and paranoid.

Perhaps due to his thick hide or the golden robe absorbing the impact, he showed no visible injuries—for now.

Ye Zhongming, meanwhile, collapsed to the ground, his body drenched in blood.

Since his rebirth, he had never been this battered.

The Chairman's tiger-head strike had been devastating. Though Ye Zhongming had neutralized some of its force with his own skills and blade energy, the residual power had still wrecked his body.

This was the full-force attack of a top-tier eight-star evolved—Ye Zhongming's injuries had officially crossed into critical territory.

But what truly tormented him was "Five Emotions Overwhelm Heaven."

Every spectral face's attack had left a mark on him. When the technique concluded, sets of five marks—at least ten sets—detonated simultaneously.

Since the Five Emotions Spectrum's assaults targeted the mind and spirit, these explosions did the same.

For a moment, Ye Zhongming's world spun, his consciousness blanking out entirely as his mind endured colossal trauma.

Had it not been for his oceanic mental reserves and unyielding will, this strike would have either killed him outright or reduced him to a drooling idiot.

Even so, the bizarre attack caused countless micro-fissures to split open across his skin, venting excess energy through his flesh.

His blackout lasted only an instant, but the near-death experience left him too weakened to stand, forcing him to remain seated.

The two leaders yearned to press their advantage, but they too were still reeling from the Wind and Thunder's shockwave, unable to attack immediately.

However, though they couldn't act, their battle pets could.

With a mental command, the three-headed tiger roared and charged, while the previously vanished Demon Vine resurfaced.

From the earth, a few meters behind the Director, three massive wooden vines—each a meter thick and studded with thorns—erupted.

Instantly, they unleashed a barrage of wooden spikes, blanketing the area where Ye Zhongming lay.

Trapped, his body numb and aching, unable to wield the Staff of Nature for defense, Ye Zhongming still had one last card to play.

The Demon Bee Hive emerged from his spatial storage, releasing two ice birds.

The birds sprayed twin gusts of frost before Ye Zhongming, the air rapidly solidifying into an icy barrier.

The first wave of wooden spikes embedded themselves into the half-formed ice wall.

Then the three-headed tiger arrived, leaping toward the ice birds blocking its path. Its claws extended unnaturally, gaining an extra meter of length—clearly a talent ability.

The two ice birds' magic crystals were still purple, but they were now speckled with dense orange dots—a sign they were on the cusp of evolving to level eight.

They would have ascended within a month if Ye Zhongming had not summoned them, continuing to feed energy into the Hive.

Most of the Origin Pearls he'd acquired had been funneled into them.

This battle wouldn't have been so brutal if they'd already been level eight.

Now, the near-level-eight ice birds clashed with the level-eight three-headed tiger, while the three supreme evolved faced off once more.

The God Hall Director lifted his hand slightly, and the roots of the Demon Vine slithered into his grip.

Holding this legendary plant-type battle beast, he prepared for the final showdown.

The Chairman, though uneasy about the mysterious vanishing beam, shared the same thought:

Kill Ye Zhongming, and the beam won't matter.

Having chugged a recovery potion, Ye Zhongming staggered to his feet, sparing a regretful glance at the two ice birds.

Who knew how long they could last?

Stowing Wind and Thunder and Undead Sand Moon Blade, he retrieved the Reaper Mimic Shooter again.

With a twist of his hands, the firearm split into two, each radiating terrifying power—enough to tense the two leaders.

Ye Zhongming tilted his head toward his opponents, bowed slightly, then—

Launched himself at them like a cannonball!

Blind, he had chosen melee combat for the final strike!

The Chairman and Director, fully alert, marshaled every ounce of their remaining energy!

Chapter 1538: Killing (2)

Clang! Clang! Clang!

The twin guns in Ye Zhongming's hands clashed several times with the Director's ruler and the Chairman's crank-like weapon.

Each side took a step back.

Ye Zhongming held an absolute advantage in raw strength, but his weapons weren't designed for close combat, forcing him to hold back. As a result, the three were evenly matched.

The Director and Chairman grew even more wary. How could a man in Ye Zhongming's state still possess such power?

Moving in perfect sync, they pressed forward, refusing to give Ye Zhongming any breathing room.

Then—

Ye Zhongming's guns fired.

The two leaders instinctively flinched.

But the shots missed.

They relaxed slightly, only to tense up again as Ye Zhongming's muzzles swung toward them. They dodged before the triggers were pulled, shifting positions preemptively.

At the same time, their weapons lashed out at Ye Zhongming.

The Chairman's crank weapon, which had earlier unleashed those razor-sharp whirlwinds, now emitted eerie whistling sounds with each swing. Tiny black particles were scattered through the air, and every time Ye Zhongming touched them, his body grew heavier.

The Director's ruler, meanwhile, revealed its true power. With each strike, strange Sanskrit chants reverberated, assaulting Ye Zhongming's hearing and disrupting his movements.

The battle was fast and cautious. Within the confined space, each sought an opening to land a decisive or fatal blow.

"Wait—your guns!"

The Chairman suddenly shouted, retreating rapidly. The Director, though confused, followed suit.

Ye Zhongming only grinned. "Too late."

As he spoke, he aimed one gun skyward and the other at the ground, and fired.

Two shots later, the surrounding space warped violently, trapping all three in a distorted field.

"How did your guns downgrade to gold-grade?!"

The Chairman's voice was shrill with disbelief. Earlier, his special scan had confirmed the weapon was purple-grade.

It wasn't that he lacked experience, but he'd never seen equipment downgrade without damage, let alone split into two weaker copies!

"What the hell?!"

The Director, though startled, didn't stop attacking. His ruler descended toward Ye Zhongming, its surface shimmering with the phantom of a scholar reading a book—a built-in skill.

But before it could reach Ye Zhongming, the attack froze midair, wobbling unstably before locking in place, completely immobilized.

Only then did the Director voice his shock.

The Chairman also noticed the anomaly. His movements were restricted, and he was trapped in a cramped space where swinging his weapon became a struggle. Advancing or retreating—both were impossible.

This was the Reaper Mimic Shooter's third full-auto mode ability:

"Extreme Lockdown."

Once activated, it sealed both user and targets within a confined zone. Until the skill ended or was broken, no one could leave, and nothing outside could enter.

To execute this, Ye Zhongming had first needed to "set the guns"—firing shots at key nodes to lay the groundwork.

His earlier "misses" hadn't been failures. They'd been making preparations.

The ability itself had no direct offensive power, yet it was the most unique feature of this purple-grade weapon.

In this space, every target's movement was severely restricted.

Simple. Almost useless—at first glance.

But there was one exception to the lockdown's rules:

The Reaper Mimic Shooter itself.

People couldn't move.

But the guns could.

Ye Zhongming's muzzles swung toward the two leaders.

Neither had ever encountered such a skill. Shock gave way to cold focus—they were, after all, among the planet's elite.

"Find its limit—break it!"

The Director's order was crisp. The Chairman understood instantly.

Such a small, rigid space had to have a durability threshold. Overwhelm it, and the prison would shatter.

Simultaneously, they tossed out defensive items—not even bothering to target Ye Zhongming—before unleashing their attacks.

The Chairman's shield was a small, exquisite square, its surface painted with multicolored concentric circles. It hovered protectively before his torso.

Chapter 1538.5- Killing (2)

Behind it, his face twisted in frustration.

This was a one-time-use item—something he'd hoarded until now.

The Director, meanwhile, produced an ancient metal cup. Tipped upside down, it spilled a misty liquid that pooled around his waist, blocked by the lockdown's boundaries.

Their attacks, however, were far more spectacular.

The Director's ruler morphed into a brush, scribbling two giant characters in the air: (Harmony). The ink-splashed words should have shot toward Ye Zhongming, but they stalled mid-flight after expanding slightly.

The Chairman's ten rings each emitted a wisp of smoke, coiling upward until the lockdown's walls flickered ominously. But the smoke burned out too quickly to break free.

Then—

Ye Zhongming struck back.

Twin bursts of black bullets erupted from his guns, each streaking toward a target. Upon hitting their defenses, the rounds detonated—not with fire, but with frigid devastation.

"Fireworks Cold."

This was the skill's name.

By all logic, these guns shouldn't have another ability—"Extreme Lockdown" was already their signature move.

However, this ability would be much less useful to Ye Zhongming if that were the case.

But the downgrade to gold-grade had created an opportunity.

Ye Zhongming had one more trick:

The Reincarnation Clip.

Acquired long ago, this item had seen little use as Ye Zhongming's arsenal outgrew it. Even after two upgrades, it only reached "Clear" grade—the third of five ranks (Chaos, Mist, Clear, Pure, Perfect).

At this level, it could modify gold-grade equipment—which was why Ye Zhongming had attached it to one of the split guns.

What followed was a happy accident.

Because the two guns were originally one, the Reincarnation Clip's effects spread to both.

At Clear grade, it not only enhanced two existing abilities but also added two new skills.

"Fireworks Cold" was the first.

The split guns turned from a very useful rifle into two big handguns that were suitable for close combat. The thick barrel was enough to call them hand cannons.

The bullets they fired had a thick explosive aura to them.

This shot shattered their defenses, and the ice element energies hit their bodies.

The two of them felt a bone cutting coldness, and their various body stats were quickly dropping.

Extreme Lockdown reduced their movement space, and the ice element caused them to slow down.

Ye Zhongming's gun barrels glowed ominously as the icy explosions faded, charging the next strike.

He knew that the first skill couldn't kill the two of them, so the second one was prepared right after he used the first. Before the first even ended, the second arrived.

The light disappeared, no, it was fired. Two meteor-like projectiles blasted forth, crossing the short distance in an instant.

At this range, with no room to dodge, hits were guaranteed.

Still, Ye Zhongming's impaired vision made headshots risky. He aimed for center mass.

Impact.

Both leaders convulsed violently before being catapulted backward.

The Extreme Lockdown shattered at that moment.

Ye Zhongming stood firm, but his gun-wielding hands trembled visibly.

“Flowing Fire Twin Stars.”

Though "Flowing Fire Twin Stars" didn't drain stamina, it consumed mental energy—and Ye Zhongming was running on fumes.

Even his bottomless reserves were strained after Cloud Slice, the Bone Shattering Staff, and countless other skills. The emptiness he felt now usually only appeared after marathon crafting sessions.

He gulped a mental energy potion and palmed the Secret Realm Key.

If these two attacks hadn't killed the leaders, he'd have to activate his last resort early.

The "Extreme Lockdown" had been his best shot. If they survived, the Demon Vine and three-headed tiger would rejoin the fight—and in his current state, Ye Zhongming couldn't handle that.

So—

Were they dead?

Chapter 1539: Now and the probable future

The director of the God Hall lay on the ground. Unexpectedly, that eerie mask had fallen onto his chest and had now grown significantly larger, resembling a shield-like object. Its surface was blackened from gunfire, and a faint, bizarre expression—somewhere between a smile and a cry—could vaguely be seen.

The director revealed his true face in front of others for the first time. It was a very young face, pale in complexion, made even more abnormal by the blood flowing from his nose and mouth. What left the deepest impression, however, were his eyes—they actually had double pupils of nearly equal size!

He quickly sat up, and the mask on his chest fell to the side. He grabbed it and put it back on his face, where it instantly shrank back to its proper size.

Only a faint crimson glow could be seen in his gaze in the brief moment before his double-pupiled eyes were covered again.

The Chairman's body fell to the ground, his golden robe now completely dull and lifeless, with a large hole torn through it. A massive amount of blood gushed out from the wound.

His breathing was nearly imperceptible, as if he were on the verge of death.

But then, the Chairman's body suddenly faded, as if the person here had never been his true self, but rather an incredibly realistic computer-generated projection.

After flickering twice, his body gradually vanished. Before disappearing completely, he sat up and gave Ye Zhongming a strange smile.

“See you next time, Ye Zhongming.”

After uttering these words, the Chairman completely vanished from the spot. Both Ye Zhongming and the director found it somewhat unbelievable.

Ye Zhongming believed that people like the Chairman and the director must have some final life-saving measures—such as his Second Life or elemental spirits—but the Chairman’s method was rather bizarre. Had he been teleported to a safe location?

Though he couldn’t see it, he could clearly sense it.

Along with the Chairman, his three-headed white tiger, and... the Mountain and Water Eternal World had also disappeared.

The director stood up, and the Demon Vine appeared in his hand.

A pair of ice birds, their feathers somewhat disheveled, flew to the top of Ye Zhongming’s head, glaring fiercely at the last remaining opponent before them.

“Using battle beasts to gain vision... I never expected your connection with your battle beasts to have reached this level. Impressive.”

The director glanced at the two ice birds, his eyes beneath the mask filled with curiosity and envy. As a professional researcher, he could naturally tell how special these two ice birds were. Two level-seven beasts holding their own against a level-eight was not something ordinary battle beasts could accomplish. After all, the three-headed white tiger was no ordinary level-eight lifeform.

“A bit late to realize it,” Ye Zhongming said softly, the two of them maintaining a delicate balance between them.

“Actually, I know that today is the best chance to kill you.” The director paused, his voice no longer concealed, revealing a tone that matched his youthful age.

“I can hardly imagine what kind of force would be needed to kill you when Yellow Ball, Yangos, Red Hair, and even the female guards are by your side.”

“At the very least, the God Hall and I cannot do it.”

Ye Zhongming, his eyes closed, tilted his head slightly. Hearing this, he suddenly smiled.

“Perhaps today was the best chance to kill me, but what I don’t understand is... why did you hold back earlier?”

If the Chairman of Soul Merchant were here, he would have been utterly shocked, for Ye Zhongming’s words implied that the director of the God Hall had not actually wanted to kill him!

The King of Cloud Peak had slain multiple top-tier experts of the God Hall. It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say he had completely destroyed the organization's core leadership.

The director pondered for a moment but did not explain. Instead, he looked up at the sky above the forest.

"I've always believed that humanity is not alone in this universe. Ever since I was a bullied lab assistant in a research institute, I've held this belief. And in fact, hasn't it been proven true?"

Ye Zhongming nodded. All core members of major factions should have learned of this by now.

"I just never expected that the lifeforms accompanying us in the vast cosmos would come to Earth in such a manner."

"I... despise this method. I would rather they arrived with an armada of warships, using incomprehensible force to conquer and enslave us."

"Perhaps so many people wouldn't have turned into disgusting monsters in that case. So many wouldn't have abandoned their humanity for a piece of bread or a biscuit. Perhaps we wouldn't even be enemies, but comrades fighting side by side, joining countless others across the world to resist the beings that enslave us."

"Even if... we were to fail in the end, even if we were to die."

Ye Zhongming listened quietly to these words from the God Hall's director, who had just moments ago been locked in a life-or-death struggle with him. Suddenly, he felt he understood the man's actions a little better.

Previously, Ye Zhongming had clashed with the God Hall, even destroying one of their laboratories, killing their highest-level experimental subject at the time, and convincing Dr. He to defect.

Logically, the God Hall should have retaliated fiercely. Back then, Cloud Peak was not what it was now—they were still embroiled in the chaos of developing the secret realm and were arguably at one of their weakest points since the apocalypse began.

Yet, the God Hall's response had been to retreat rather than fight, seemingly cutting their losses to regroup for a future comeback. Later, however, they vanished entirely, never harassing Cloud Peak again.

Many assumed the God Hall had been intimidated. Ye Zhongming, of course, didn't believe that, but he did think they had been conserving their strength, lacking confidence in defeating Cloud Peak.

After hearing these words, Ye Zhongming realized this director was a rather complex individual. Was he noble? It didn't seem so—many of the God Hall's actions didn't align with nobility. They had avoided conflict with Cloud Peak, but there was ample evidence they had used many of the apocalypse's typical ruthless tactics against others. Was he hypocritical? Yet it was true they had never sought revenge after the Flame Tiger Project, and just now, this leader had deliberately held back from going all-out to kill Ye Zhongming.

Whether he could have actually killed Ye Zhongming at full strength was another matter, but the fact remained that he had held back. The Demon Vine's abilities were surely far greater than what had been displayed.

Ye Zhongming couldn't discern how much of his words were true or false. Even the reason for his restraint was questionable—perhaps, in a more cynical interpretation, he had wanted Ye Zhongming to kill the Chairman first before unleashing his full power.

Even now, with the director still capable of fighting and the Demon Vine, was Ye Zhongming truly as exhausted as he appeared?

Habitually, Ye Zhongming refused to view an apocalypse survivor—especially one who had just been fighting him—in too positive a light.

“Do you have this?”

The director took out an object and showed it to the ice birds—Ye Zhongming's current “eyes.”

Ye Zhongming nodded.

“As I thought...” The director put the item away, and the Demon Vine likewise vanished.

“I’m not negotiating or even requesting...” The director’s tone carried complex emotions. “Rather, perhaps soon, we will meet again in a different form, even under different identities. When that time comes, I hope our thoughts will align.”

After these ambiguous words, the director turned and walked away. Behind him, the spliced monstrosities controlled by Dr. Ziche reappeared. With a wave of his hand, both man and beasts gradually faded into the forest.

Chapter 1540: Three big news

Recently, three extremely shocking events occurred in the country.

The first incident was the appearance of many terrifying monsters in the northwest region. The exact count was impossible to determine, but according to many eyewitnesses, their numbers were at least in the tens of millions.

These monsters did not possess the vast array of innate abilities seen in Earth’s mutated lifeforms, but their physical attributes were all exceptionally formidable—both their offensive and defensive capabilities were terrifyingly strong. Evolved who knew nothing about them suffered heavy losses in the initial encounters.

More importantly, despite their overwhelming numbers, these monsters displayed remarkable discipline in their movements. After swiftly seizing control of vast territories upon their emergence, they halted their expansion. Though they frequently launched hunting expeditions, their actions followed a strict pattern—each operation was executed like a well-organized military force, with main assault groups, scout units, aerial troops, and backup forces.

This behavior left the evolved observing them from the periphery, both amazed and wary, deterring them from reckless action.

The evolutionary level of these monsters was also alarmingly high. According to intelligence gathered by an organization after days of observation, aside from some juveniles, the average evolution level of these suddenly appearing creatures was around level six!

After over five years of the apocalypse, the average level of zombies and other mutated lifeforms on Earth was only just above level five! And the evolved themselves? Barely over four stars on average!

Where did these things come from?

This question became a mystery for many.

The uproar might not have been so immense if the shock had been limited to the sudden appearance of these mutated lifeforms. The critical factor was that the territories they occupied had previously been controlled by one of the country's three major alliances—the Soul Merchant, the God Hall, and Pin Palace!

At first, people assumed that since these three alliances had even managed to kill a level-nine lifeform, dealing with these monsters shouldn't be a problem. Even if they couldn't eradicate them immediately, given some time—half a year, maybe a year—they should succeed. Once they harvested millions of magic crystals, the country might well fall under their complete dominance.

But as reports continued to pour in, the truth stunned everyone.

The three alliances collapsed!

Their main forces were ambushed and annihilated by the monster horde!

The God Hall migrated to the central region!

Soul Merchant's base was destroyed!

The leader of Pin Palace went missing!

One shocking piece of news after another sent shockwaves through the evolved of the country.

The flood of unverified information spawned countless rumors—some even claimed that the Chairman of Soul Merchant had died, that Wen Yan had perished, and so on.

It wasn't until a certain occasion that the leader of a faction that had participated in the three-alliance coalition revealed some truths.

He said the coalition's main forces had indeed clashed head-on with the monster army. At the time, the human evolved had already begun their retreat, caught in the chaos of reorganizing their ranks. The monsters suddenly attacked, and though the terrain favored the humans—who used hills, rivers, and forests to their advantage—the sheer numbers and overwhelming strength of the monsters led to a crushing defeat.

Fortunately, many evolved had already started withdrawing, and those who realized the danger quickly fled the battlefield, preserving at least some of their strength.

As for God Hall, they had migrated again, this time to the densely contested central region, where they seized a county as their new headquarters. This enigmatic organization no longer seemed intent on maintaining its elusive, shadowy existence.

Pin Palace, meanwhile, appeared in the southwest. Witnesses spotted the colossal Thousand Year, with Mr. Wen on its back. Those who saw them followed at a distance, only to watch as Pin Palace crossed the border into what had once been Myanmar—and then vanished.

No one knew their final destination. The observers didn't dare follow any further.

That area was covered in dense forests, among the most dangerous regions on the planet outside of dungeons. For reasons unknown, Pin Palace marched straight into them without hesitation.

As for Soul Merchant, they remained as mysterious as ever, with no concrete information available.

But one thing was certain: this tripartite alliance was finished.

The defining moment came when God Hall publicly withdrew from the coalition.

One openly quit.

One fled the country.

One vanished without a trace.

Thus, one of the country's three major alliances—composed of God Hall, Soul Merchant, Pin Palace, and numerous more minor factions—disintegrated.

From its formation to its downfall, the alliance had lasted barely any time at all. What had happened?

Whispers began circulating that this incident was related to Cloud Peak and Ye Zhongming—that Ye Zhongming had summoned those monsters from another dimension.

The reason for the three alliances' destruction, some claimed, was that Cloud Peak had launched a surprise attack, killing many of their core members and ultimately leading to this outcome.

However, the truth of these rumors remained unverified.

The second incident was the appearance of strange luminous formations in multiple regions across the country. At first, people were too afraid to approach them—the emergence of the dungeons had left deep psychological scars on many survivors.

But eventually, a few bold individuals discovered that once the light faded, these formations seemed harmless. Venturing inside, they found numerous chests. Upon opening them, they discovered a variety of bizarre items:

Weapons.

Battle armor.

Medicines.

Scrolls.

Even eggs and cocoons containing juvenile battle beasts.

In the following days, more and more of these formations and chests appeared. People began frantically searching for them, as the items inside were all treasures—though clearly not from the wheel, they were even more valuable and powerful than ordinary wheel rewards.

Many individuals and factions rose to prominence overnight, making rapid advancements quickly.

Compared to the collapse of the three alliances, the second incident completely overshadowed the first in public attention.

People couldn't help but wonder: Where did these chests come from? Why did they contain such precious, never-before-seen items? Were there hidden side effects to using them?

The third incident was related to the first two.

Five Ring Money issued an announcement:

"In light of the recent upheavals in the country, all major rankings will be recompiled and released simultaneously in ten days. We invite everyone to evaluate them at that time."

This sent shockwaves through the community!

Last time, the rankings had already caused a stir due to Cloud Peak and Ye Zhongming. Now, they were being completely reset, with a new methodology.

What did this mean?

Many realized that the decline of Pin Palace, Soul Merchant, and the God Hall—alongside the rise of new factions—might be the primary reason for the reshuffle. As a result, anticipation for the new rankings reached a fever pitch.

Meanwhile, Cloud Peak, which had dominated the last rankings, remained unusually quiet during this period, so much so that people nearly forgot about them.

And Cloud Peak truly was quiet—because their focus was entirely on Ye Zhongming's eyes.