

## **Apocalypse 1566**

### Chapter 1566: Collapse

King Meibuning gazed at the Collapsed Canyon amidst the snowstorm, his mood sinking to its lowest point.

The agreed assembly time had arrived, yet of the promised fifty thousand warriors, only slightly over twenty thousand had come—more than half were missing.

Though messengers had delivered word that the absent forces would arrive within a day or two, even with their addition, the total would barely reach thirty thousand.

So, where were the remaining twenty thousand?

Days earlier, he had sensed something amiss when several groups that were supposed to rendezvous with them along the way had failed to appear.

King Meibuning was waiting for answers.

Though his scouts had yet to return, he already harbored a grim suspicion—those who hadn't arrived were likely dead.

What baffled him was this: Who could oppose him so fiercely? Who possessed the strength to slaughter so many of his allies in such a short time?

His first thought was Black Dragon City.

Yet King Meibuning hesitated to believe that those from the country were responsible.

He didn't deny that Black Dragon City's evolved were formidable in strength and numbers.

But like many of his warriors, he had always regarded them as complacent, content to shelter within their walls and exploit the rich hunting grounds outside, squandering their advantages in comfort.

Meanwhile, his own people, the great warriors of the North, struggled against the elements and mutated creatures in the frozen wastelands.

It wasn't fair.

He couldn't deny that Black Dragon City's fighters had spines—they hadn't cowered, agreeing to face them in battle at the Collapsed Canyon.

But while they might dare a decisive battle, would they truly venture deep into the northern wastes to ambush his forces?

King Meibuning doubted it.

More likely, they had agreed to fight only because they believed their numbers guaranteed victory. Marching into the ice plains to strike at his warriors? That required a boldness he didn't credit them with.

To kill twenty thousand of his men, Black Dragon City would need to send at least a hundred thousand warriors—such was his confidence in his forces.

Yet a hundred thousand troops crossing the tundra? He would have detected them.

If not Black Dragon City, then who?

"My King!"

A voice called from behind—his subordinate, bearing the news he awaited. Without turning, Meibuning gave a slight nod.

"Our scouts have returned from Black Dragon City. There's no sign of mobilization, not even troop gatherings."

Meibuning scoffed. Were these cowards so fearful that they hadn't begun preparations even as battle loomed? Were they planning to flee?

If so, then the disappearance of his warriors had to be someone else's doing.

But who? The tribes further north? Or perhaps a large-scale attack by mutated creatures?

The possibilities made his head throb.

"Some of our scouts tracking our missing forces have returned. They've found the Ural, Rosduv, and Anjie squad..."

He listed over a dozen squad names in one breath.

"All annihilated. No survivors. Confirmed deaths exceed three thousand. The wounds suggest evolved, mostly ambushes. No enemy corpses were found; they must have taken them all."

Meibuning's face twitched. Among the fallen were several elite squads he had valued highly, led mostly by seven-star evolved with great potential. Now, they were all dead.

This meant his expeditionary force's strength had been crippled.

"The Snow Mountain Locomotive squad, the Peter's Sovereignty squad, the Arctic Fox squad..." He listed more names before Meibuning whirled around, eyes blazing.

He swallowed hard before continuing. "These squads were also attacked, but there were survivors. They've been brought back. Their accounts vary—some say mutated creatures, dragons, assaulted them. Others blame evolved in full blue gear. A few claim it was just a handful of attackers... with Eastern features."

"How many survivors?"

Meibuning forced calm, clinging to a thread of hope.

"A... a fair number, but..." He hesitated. "Most are four- or five-star evolved humans. Those above six stars were all killed."

Meibuning shut his eyes in anguish.

These squads had been the backbone of his forces, either vast in numbers or led by elite evolved humans. Among them were three eight-star warriors, over fifty at seven-star, and countless six-star.

Now, all were gone.

Silently, he tallied the losses. Even if the rest arrived, his seven-star elites would number fewer than a hundred. Eight-stars? Including himself, only three remained.

Though confident in his own strength, capable of facing two opponents of equal rank, his forces couldn't match that. Against Black Dragon City's eight-star fighters, they would be outmatched at the highest level.

Already outnumbered, how could they fight if even their elite strength fell short?

Whoever had struck his forces aimed to cripple them before the battle, ensuring their defeat at the Collapsed Canyon without a fight.

Who?

Meibuning burned with the urge to slaughter them all.

"My King... what do we...?"

He ventured cautiously.

The situation was dire.

"We... retreat."

Though rage simmered, Meibuning hadn't lost reason. A year to rebuild, and they could return with strength enough to crush Black Dragon City.

Orders spread swiftly. The northern warriors packed their gear, cursing as they prepared to withdraw, the camp descending into chaos.

Then, the thunder of countless footsteps came from the rear of their camp—enough to make their scalps crawl.

"Meibuning, to come all this way and flee without a fight? This isn't like you. Or have you decided to be a faithless coward?"

A voice rang out in a fluent foreign tongue.

An army of over fifty thousand had appeared a kilometer behind the northern forces. At its forefront stood five figures: Hai Dayu, Old Long, Ah Kai, Yan Shuangfei, and White Skin.

Chapter 1567: Wolf King reappears

"Brother Ye..." Xiao Xuan had already become a seven-star evolved, the most outstanding performer in recent times. Usually gentle and amiable, meticulous in his work, and fearless yet calm in battle, he had earned Ye Zhongming's admiration.

The Youth Army now numbered only around 230, less than half of what it had been when they first set out.

But this was no longer the same Youth Army as before.

Now, the lowest evolution level among them was five stars, with over a hundred having reached six stars. The three most outstanding performers had even become seven-star evolved!

Before, when they had followed Ye Zhongming out of Black Dragon City, their highest evolution level had only been four stars.

The Youth Army had undergone brutal trials, tempered by powerful mutated creatures and evolved, and had truly grown.

They had become part of Cloud Peak. From now on, the Youth Army would be one of the main forces of the villa, just like the subordinates of many core members. In the future, they would continue to recruit youths who met the age requirements. In a few years, these boys and girls, grown into young men and women of seventeen or eighteen, would undoubtedly shine brightly.

Now, they were traveling through foreign lands alongside the female guards and Ye Zhongming, heading toward an unknown city.

"They're worried about the situation in Black Dragon City and asked me to ask you... If we can go back to help?"

Though Xiao Xuan was now the Youth Army's camp officer, he still felt nervous facing Ye Zhongming. It couldn't be helped—he had personally witnessed Ye Zhongming effortlessly kill a foreign evolved of the same level. That overwhelming strength only deepened his awe.

He knew the rule in the apocalypse: always obey the leader and never question their decisions.

But the youths from Black Dragon City were too worried about the battle against the foreign evolved, so he had mustered the courage to ask.

It was worth it to these youths even if it might displease Brother Ye.

No matter their bittersweet memories in Black Dragon City, that was where they came from.

Ye Zhongming remained silent, but Xiao Min said, "Don't worry. We've already wiped out nearly a third of the enemy forces, half of their eight-star evolved included. If Black Dragon City still can't secure victory after that, they might as well hand the city over to Cloud Peak. Keeping it would be a waste."

Since the Youth Army had joined Cloud Peak, the female guard's attitude toward them had noticeably changed—they spoke more freely and no longer kept them in the dark about certain matters.

Ye Zhongming's stance was clear: he would help Black Dragon City, but only to a certain extent.

He planned to establish a foothold in the northern region. It didn't necessarily have to be Cloud Peak itself—they could rely on other forces. A place like Black Dragon City, with its large population, sturdy defenses, yet lack of unified leadership, was perfect.

Opening shops, even buying an entire street, and doing business with the locals were just the beginning. In the future, Cloud Peak would gradually infiltrate and turn Black Dragon City into its sphere of influence.

This was different from outright annexation. Black Dragon City was too far from Cloud Peak's headquarters—a distant outpost. The local factions were deeply rooted; even if they installed a puppet leader, a newcomer would face overt and covert resistance. If they chose a local, trust would be an issue.

Thus, turning it into a "territory" was the best solution.

The outpost was too far. Even with teleportation arrays, they couldn't be used freely—the energy cost was too high.

Cooperation was key. Black Dragon City would retain some independence, and Cloud Peak wouldn't waste too many troops on garrisoning it.

This meant Black Dragon City had to ensure its own safety most of the time—a necessity for Cloud Peak's interests. Otherwise, everything they built would be destroyed.

Cloud Peak could provide Black Dragon City with weapons and equipment, but not the courage to keep fighting.

If they became overly dependent on the top faction in the national region because of Cloud Peak's intervention, Black Dragon City's future would be doomed.

This decisive battle against foreign factions was a case in point. Ye Zhongming would help, but he wouldn't fight their battles for them. Keeping Black Dragon City on edge, reminding them of what evolved should be like—that was what Ye Zhongming wanted to see.

Xiao Xuan stuck out his tongue, scratched his head, and returned to his team.

After joining Cloud Peak, some mannerisms fitting his age had resurfaced—perhaps because his heart had grown lighter.

Night fell. The Cloud Peak team dug several snow caves in a relatively sheltered spot and settled in to rest.

They weren't worried about ambushes from mutated creatures—the two ice birds, Yangos, and the undead dragon-fish patrolled the skies, able to detect threats early.

As for the ice storms, they were nothing to the flying creatures. The ice birds were immune, while Yangos and the undead fish-dragon could evade them with their speed.

Ye Zhongming sat with his eyes closed, turning an object in his hands and studying it carefully.

He had possessed it for some time, but still didn't know how to use it.

He had finally decided to examine it himself, using his skills as a top-tier smith to uncover its secrets. Even if he failed and destroyed it in the process, he was willing to accept that.

But before he could begin, Ye Zhongming's expression suddenly changed. He shot out of the snow cave, followed by Xia Bai, Yellow Ball, and then the female guards.

The Youth Army didn't know what was happening, but hearing the commotion, they wanted to see for themselves. However, they were strictly ordered to stay inside and were left to wait anxiously.

Ye Zhongming stood on the snowfield, gazing into the distance. Above, Yangos, the ice birds, and the undead dragon-fish circled the skies.

Xia Bai, the female guards, and Red Hair stood beside Ye Zhongming. Even Nine Treasures emerged from underground.

They all stared in one direction.

Across the icy plains, the wind howled, and small but sharp snowflakes stung their faces.

A snow-white figure slowly approached from afar—a form all too familiar to Cloud Peak's members.

It was the Snow Wolf King they had seen in Black Dragon City!

The creature had quietly followed them here!

"You don't seem to follow the rules very well," Ye Zhongming said calmly, his voice carrying clearly across the kilometer of snowy plains despite the wind and snow.

Chapter 1568: Two level nines

The Snow Wolf King stopped there, looking at Ye Zhongming, its large mouth slightly open.

"I agreed to stop attacking Black Dragon City, and I stopped. I agreed not to attack Black Dragon City for six months and will keep that promise. I agreed not to interfere when you went to kill those mutated creatures in Black Dragon City, and I didn't interfere. Tell me, which of my promises have I broken?"

Ye Zhongming fell silent for a moment, then suddenly smiled. "It does seem that way."

The Snow Wolf King's mouth split open even wider.

"I suppose you didn't come here just to check on how I'm doing. So then... you're here to kill me?"

Ye Zhongming looked at the level-nine lifeform.

Though only verbally, he had previously made agreements with the Snow Wolf King. Even though level-nine lifeforms had their own dignity and wouldn't casually break their word, the reality was that this level-nine creature was vindictive and had been keeping an eye on the people from Cloud Peak.

It had kept its promises, but beyond that, it had no such obligations.

"Of course," the Snow Wolf King licked its lips. "If I weren't afraid that you evolved would stop your infighting and unite against me upon seeing me, you wouldn't have made it here."

Standing on the icy plains at night, facing a giant level-nine wolf that could speak human words, was not a pleasant feeling.

Ye Zhongming nodded, still somewhat admiring the Snow Wolf King.

Under the wide-ranging surveillance of Yangos, the ice bird, the undead dragon-fish, and the others in the air, and given Ye Zhongming and his companions' acute senses, the fact that the Snow Wolf King had been able to silently follow them without being detected proved that its ability to conceal itself matched its level-nine strength.

But... Ye Zhongming couldn't shake the feeling that something was off.

Back in Black Dragon City, due to its suspicious nature, the Snow Wolf King had only briefly engaged with the Cloud Peak before retreating after its subordinates were defeated, even making several agreements with Ye Zhongming regarding Black Dragon City.

One could say Ye Zhongming had gained the upper hand.

Though the decisive factor in that battle had been the defeat of the Snow Wolf King's subordinates, given its level and insight, it couldn't have missed the fact that while Cloud Peak currently had no level-nine fighters, their numerous level-eight members and the formidable collective combat power of the female guard meant they were not weak against a level-nine opponent.

This time, the Snow Wolf King had come alone, without its subordinates, clearly to avoid repeating past mistakes. But... knowing that it was unlikely to keep the Cloud Peak team here, why had it still appeared?

The only explanation was...

"I thought a being ranked among the top in the country would be full of pride, but it seems I was wrong. Call out your helper—let me see who it is."

Ye Zhongming's aura steadily intensified. He knew an intense battle was unavoidable today.

Even if he wished it weren't so.

What he wanted most right now was to find Talking Lady. For the sake of caution, he had already delayed for some time.

But now, he would have to get through this first.

The Snow Wolf King fell silent for a moment before speaking. "Human, you are impressive."

Ye Zhongming and the others said nothing, turning their bodies slightly toward a certain direction. A powerful aura surged into the sky from their flank, no longer concealed.

Another level-nine!

The hearts of the Cloud Peak team sank.

They wouldn't be afraid if it were just the Snow Wolf King alone. With Ye Zhongming, Xia Bai, Yangos, Yellow Ball, Red Hair, the undead dragon-fish, and the ice bird, they could handle it. Add in Nine Treasures and the female guard providing support; they might even secure a victory.

But facing two level-nine opponents? Their current strength wasn't enough.

The situation had suddenly turned extremely dire.

Compared to their time in Black Dragon City, Cloud Peak now had the Youth Army, but their evolution levels were too low to be of help. Meanwhile, their opponents had gained an additional level nine. The balance of power was no longer even close.

The ground trembled slightly as something descended from a nearby mountain. Though the tremors weren't rapid, the vibrations made it clear this creature was moving very quickly.

Soon, the figure of this lifeform appeared in their line of sight.

Xiao Xuan and the others peered over the edge from the snow pit. Many of them gasped in shock.

"It's... the Human Bear King!"

Many voices trembled.

If it had been any other level-nine lifeform, the Youth Army might not have recognized it. But they knew this Human Bear King all too well. It often wandered near Black Dragon City, eating the sweets humans prepared before leaving. Many had gone to the city walls early on to watch, and the Youth Army was no exception. Some of them, who had held low status in their former factions, had even been sent out to deliver food to this powerful being, coming within mere meters of it.

The two strongest level-nine lifeforms in the country's northern region had joined forces beyond the border to attack Cloud Peak together!

"Boss Xuan, let's go! Even if we can only help from the sidelines!"

The selection and training during this phase had forged an unyielding will in these youths. Even facing level-nine lifeforms, they showed no intention of backing down.

Xiao Xuan gritted his teeth, thinking momentarily before saying, "If things go badly later, we'll cover Brother Ye's retreat!"

The young faces turned solemn as they nodded. They knew what this meant—they would likely have to lay down their lives to accomplish this task.

The Human Bear King was far larger than the Snow Wolf King. When it moved, it was like a mobile villa—nearly ten meters tall and twelve meters long, giving it an absolute physical advantage over the evolved whether it walked on all fours or stood upright.

It was called the Human Bear King because it preferred walking on its hind legs. It would look like a white-furred giant if not for its ferocious bear head.

"Old Wolf, you've picked some good ones. Today, we'll eat our fill."

The Human Bear King had also learned human speech, though even the Youth Army, who had seen it many times, were hearing it speak for the first time.

"Let's fight first. They won't be easy to deal with," the Snow Wolf King said cautiously. It was inherently suspicious and vengeful, but it never underestimated its enemies.

The Human Bear King was less concerned. Its gaze lingered more on Yangos and Nine Treasures, as if their flesh would be especially delicious.

This blunt stare made Yangos extremely unhappy.

But the wicked dragon knew better than to speak up.

Ye Zhongming raised his hand, and the entire Cloud Peak team's aura shifted instantly.

Running wasn't an option against two level-nine lifeforms. They had to fight.

"This time, your chances still aren't great," Ye Zhongming said to the Snow Wolf King before pulling out an object.

It was a glowing card, its back adorned with intricate blue and purple patterns, its front depicting a pair of crossed, strange horns.

Ye Zhongming tore the card apart.

Chapter 1569: Confusing decision

The Snow Wolf King and the Human Bear King simultaneously stepped back.

They sensed an inexplicable threat.

It was as if something could drag them into an unknown and dangerous place.

The card Ye Zhongming had used was a functional card.

Demon Horn Technique.

Though it was called "Demon Horn," it had nothing to do with growing horns or anything of the sort. It was a one-time-use dark-element bloodline temporary upgrade card.

In other words, any dark-element bloodline could be temporarily elevated to its highest rank after using it.

That is—Super grade.

Ye Zhongming's bloodline was currently at the Advanced grade. He would normally need a Super Bloodline Upgrade Crystal to upgrade it to Super grade—something extremely rare and difficult to obtain.

After building a formidable force, Ye Zhongming had not only armed his subordinates to the teeth but also stocked his personal storage with many high-quality items.

Especially recently, after facing a level-nine lifeform in Black Dragon City, the King of Cloud Peak had begun preparing to solo-kill a level-nine.

At present, Ye Zhongming's chances of solo-killing a level-nine were minuscule. At best, he might stand a chance against a newly evolved, weaker level-nine whose abilities he countered. Against others, escaping alive would already be an achievement.

Even so, Ye Zhongming prepared with solo-killing as the standard. That way, when he truly faced a level-nine, he could fight more effectively with his team's support.

This Demon Horn Technique functional card was one such preparation.

Ye Zhongming's body swelled slightly as dark energy enveloped him. His eyes turned pitch-black, as if merging with the shadows.

Behind him, a massive black hole appeared, crackling with red lightning. A monstrous silhouette emerged from within, growing clearer as it approached.

When it fully materialized, the Cloud Peak team realized—it was the Lightning Sand Monster, but its appearance had drastically changed.

Now over five meters tall, its body was nearly indistinguishable from sand—only the swirling vortexes beneath its feet as it moved betrayed its true nature. It was clad in a suit of red-and-purple mixed metal armor, its intricate engravings putting even the finest craftsmen to shame. Over the armor, currents of electricity continuously surged from head to toe before vanishing into the sand vortexes.

Its head was covered by a helmet of the same design, with two horns extending outward, arcs of dazzling lightning crackling between their tips.

Its hands were massive, rock-solid when clenched, razor-sharp when spread.

This was no longer the Lightning Sand Monster.

It was the Lightning Sand King.

With Hell Envoy temporarily elevated to its highest rank via the functional card, the Lightning Sand Monster had also been enhanced.

But that wasn't all.

Almost immediately after Ye Zhongming activated his bloodline, fine grains of sand began drifting down from the sky, mingling with the snowflakes in a spectacular display.

Fighting on sand granted Ye Zhongming and the Lightning Sand King a battlefield advantage.

"You all handle the white bear. Just stall it. This stupid wolf—leave it to me and Red Hair."

Ye Zhongming's voice was icy and low. As he spoke, he strode toward the Snow Wolf King.

The snowflakes in the sky abruptly stopped.

Starry Sky had been activated.

The rest of the Cloud Peak team didn't waste a second worrying about their leader's battle. They immediately focused on the mountain-like Human Bear King.

"Damn it, today's the day I slaughter a level-nine!"

Yangos had stayed quiet earlier, assessing the situation. But now, things were clear—Ye Zhongming and Red Hair would take on the Snow Wolf King, while the rest (himself, Yellow Ball, the two ice birds, the undead dragon-fish, Xia Bai, and the female guard) would handle the Human Bear King.

The wicked dragon was confident that even if they couldn't kill it, they certainly wouldn't lose.

After all, it wasn't just Ye Zhongming who had grown stronger—his battle beasts had too.

Yangos, Yellow Ball, and the ice birds had all consumed Lan You's petals, absorbing immense energy that placed them at the pinnacle of their respective grades.

The undead dragon-fish, uninterested in Lan You's gifts, had inherited the legacy of the Nine-Winged Crow. Though no one knew what benefits it had gained, it was undoubtedly terrifying—so much so that even the usually brash Yangos dared not provoke it.

The two ice birds were slightly weaker than the other three, but this was the northern wasteland—their home turf. The environment naturally amplified their abilities, making them a formidable duo.

As for Xia Bai and Nine Treasures, Yangos had always suspected they were hiding trump cards. He refused to believe that a giant earthworm capable of absorbing energy from the soil would only spit poison.

And the female guard?

...Best not to talk about them. Yangos considered those women absolute madwomen. He wasn't sure he could escape unscathed if they were truly enraged.

With such a lineup against the Human Bear King (ranked 10th in the country rankings), Yangos felt more than prepared.

And even if things went south, he could always fly away.

Thus, his arrogance returned in full force.

He launched the first attack, swooping down from the sky—only to halt mid-descent and unleash a torrent of dragon’s breath.

The wicked dragon’s strike marked the official start of the battle.

Meanwhile, Ye Zhongming had closed in on the Snow Wolf King.

With a light downward press of his palm, the space around them trembled.

The Snow Wolf King watched warily, unsure of what was happening.

The answer came swiftly.

A dark-energy gate materialized not far from Ye Zhongming.

Then another.

And another.

Over thirty dark gates had appeared in moments, encircling the battlefield, even hovering midair—all wide open, their purpose unknown.

The paranoid and cautious Snow Wolf King suddenly wondered:

Had attacking this human been a mistake?

Ye Zhongming had no such doubts.

Since battle was inevitable, victory was the only option.

He launched his assault, charging straight at the level-nine lifeform. His specially crafted Black Earth Armor materialized over his body.

Then he did something that baffled the Snow Wolf King.

Using the Earth Spirit's Gravity Leap ability, he tripled the gravity in a massive area around them.

The range was vast, the multiplier high, draining the Earth Spirit's energy reserves in one go.

This meant that he could no longer refresh his Black Earth Armor for the rest of the battle.

Was he giving up defense?

But in this state, he himself would also be affected!

And the Snow Wolf King was a hybrid of agility and raw strength!

Chapter 1570: Strong attack

The Snow Wolf King had reached level nine through countless battles, yet even now, it couldn't fathom why this human had chosen such a tactic.

Under the same gravitational conditions, the Snow Wolf King would undoubtedly be far more agile than the King of Cloud Peak.

Ye Zhongming smirked—though with his bloodline activated, his face no longer carried its usual sharp handsomeness, instead exuding a cold, ruthless aura.

The Lightning Sand King arrived at the battlefield, treading upon swirling sand vortexes.

Even with its paranoid nature, the Snow Wolf King knew today would end in a fight to the death. Its fur bristled, transforming it into a spiked wolf.

This was clearly one of its offensive skills— it revealed its true power right from the start.

The raised fur slowly lifted from its body...

The sight was eerie. Fur that should have been attached to its skin simply detached, floating midair while still maintaining the wolf's silhouette—something utterly inconceivable.

Even Ye Zhongming, poised to attack, paused slightly, sensing the unusual nature of this move.

The fur swiftly drifted away from the Snow Wolf King's body, gradually forming an entirely new Snow Wolf King, while the original one regrew fresh fur.

Two identical Snow Wolf Kings now stood side by side.

Had there been anyone from the Five Ring Money's intelligence division present, they would have informed Ye Zhongming that this was the Snow Wolf King's most infamous skill—Twin Lives.

Of course, this was only recorded in the Five Ring Money's classified database. To the outside world, such details were top secret.

Ye Zhongming had no idea what the sudden doubling of the Snow Wolf King meant, but he decided to ignore it—he would fight on his own terms.

The sheer gap in strength between him and a level-nine left him no other choice.

Standing silently, he observed the two Snow Wolf Kings while the Lightning Sand King launched its attack.

It spread its hands, struck the horns on its head, and two bolts of lightning instantly split toward the twin wolves.

The twisting arcs shimmered in a surreal pink hue, reaching the wolves instantly.

Neither beast moved. Instead, snowlotus flowers bloomed around them, intercepting the lightning.

Each wolf bore one.

At least for now, there was no discernible difference between the two.

The failed initial assault seemed to enrage the Lightning Sand King. With a soundless roar, it stomped the ground, causing the sand vortex beneath it to erupt in a storm of yellow grains, enveloping its body. Simultaneously, lightning surged from its armor, forming a thunderous sand sphere.

Then, without hesitation, the sphere slammed straight into the level-nine lifeform.

In terms of sheer audacity, the Lightning Sand King feared no level-nine.

Amidst the sand and lightning, the air itself crackled with deafening static.

The massive sphere crashed into the left-side Snow Wolf King—the original, at least visually.

Both wolves howled in unison, their eyes unleashing a crimson glow—the same Killing Red skill they had used against Nine Treasures in Black Dragon City.

Back then, Nine Treasures had been wounded by it.

The crimson light collided with the thunderous sand sphere, erupting in a blinding flash. Sand and fragmented lightning scattered violently, a shockwave of energy rippling outward.

The Lightning Sand King's body reappeared—but its sand and lightning were gone, its magnificent armor shattered, the once-crackling currents vanished.

It tumbled midair, a shadow barely visible amidst the residual energy. The sheer density of lightning and sand had blurred all vision.

Beneath the Lightning Sand King's dark silhouette, a speck of red emerged—not the purple of its armor, but a vivid scarlet.

From the Snow Wolf King's perspective, a red dot appeared, then expanded violently.

It was the tip of a spear.

By the time it occupied a third of the wolf's vision, the dot had morphed into a blooming crimson flower, carrying apocalyptic force as it barreled toward both Snow Wolf Kings.

The wolf bared its fangs, conjuring a massive ice blossom to meet the crimson flower.

But unlike the earlier collision, this encounter was eerily silent.

The crimson flower shattered upon contact, its fragments adhering to the ice like parasitic petals.

The Snow Wolf King froze, bewildered.

The ice flower rotted under the red fragments a second later, crumbling uselessly.

The spear-tip reappeared, piercing through a gap with lethal precision.

At the Snow Wolf King's level, ordinary weapons couldn't breach its defenses. Only supremely powerful skills posed a threat.

Yet this spear pierced its flesh.

Right below the neck—into the thickest part of its chest.

Blood seeped out, scarlet streaked with silver droplets.

The second Snow Wolf King lunged, biting down on the spear and yanking it free, attempting to drag its wielder forward.

But the wounded wolf suddenly whimpered, twisting sideways.

At the same moment, a gunshot rang out.

Close. Dangerously close. Almost directly behind the Snow Wolf King.

An ice flower bloomed over its exposed flank, intercepting what could have been a battle-altering shot.

Ye Zhongming materialized there, Harvester Mimic-Shot in hand, having launched a point-blank ambush.

The ice shattered—but the bullet's momentum wasn't spent. It struck the Snow Wolf King.

The massive body shuddered as the level nine beast howled in agony.

Still gripping her spear, Red Hair was dragged forward by the second wolf's bite, crashing through the ruined ice flower. Unlike in Black Dragon City, where the shattering ice had dealt splash damage, this time, nothing happened—likely due to the red petals' prior corrosion.

Meanwhile, the Lightning Sand King's body slammed into the ground with a thunderous impact.

All of this had transpired in mere seconds.

Ye Zhongming fired once, saw the wounded wolf twist toward him with unnatural agility, and knew he wouldn't get a second shot. The Snow Wolf King would be upon him in a blink at this distance.

He leaned back, vanishing into a dark energy gate.

The wolf's claws swiped through empty air, failing to leave even a scratch on the gate.

Injured. Outmaneuvered. The Snow Wolf King raged.

Ignoring potential dangers, it charged headfirst into the gate.

If the King of Cloud Peak could enter, so could it.