

Apocalypse 1716

Chapter 1716: Good thing (2)

The room fell silent.

Everyone was stunned by Xia Lei's ambition.

Nine-star—this level felt distant and almost illusory to many.

Even after becoming eight-star evolved themselves, the core members never imagined they could quickly obtain enough level-nine demon crystals to spin for nine-star evolution potions, given how difficult it was to hunt level-nine lifeforms.

Privately, they estimated that even with their leader's involvement, gathering enough crystals would take at least two years. With extraordinary luck, maybe one year.

But now, Xia Lei had outright declared her intentions—clearly, this formidable woman had no plans to wait that long.

While everyone wanted this to happen, wasn't it too difficult?

Did the two level-nine corpses brought back by the Death King Tree give her such confidence? But that creature wasn't exactly reliable.

To accelerate Ye Zhongming's advancement to nine-star, they naturally needed to hunt level-nine lifeforms faster and in greater numbers. Though the population of level-nine lifeforms was currently growing, killing them remained extremely challenging. Even with Cloud Peak going all out, taking down one per month was already impressive—after all, level-nine lifeforms had their own territories, and traveling between them took considerable time, not to mention preparation. This pace was already the envy of other factions.

Xia Lei smiled. "I'm not boasting. This is a rational analysis—maybe a bit crazy, but absolutely feasible." Without giving others time to ponder or question, she continued, "Second, internal reasons."

The atmosphere in the room instantly tensed.

Internal issues—those words were alarming.

"Perhaps Cloud Peak's dominance has inflated some people's confidence to dangerous levels. Maybe the ease of obtaining equipment has left everyone's pockets overflowing with more crystals than evolved from other factions. Or maybe our comprehensive protection has made them think danger is fading."

Xia Lei stood, her gaze sweeping across everyone in the room. Very few could meet her eyes—a testament to her authority.

Everyone knew Ye Zhongming treated his subordinates exceptionally well. No matter how many he killed outside or how 'ruthless' his orders seemed, to those loyal to him and Cloud Peak, he was more like a friend.

But Xia Lei was different.

She smiled more than Ye Zhongming and appeared more approachable, but everyone knew—those smiles and warmth lasted only as long as you didn't cross her or threaten Cloud Peak's interests. Otherwise, she'd still smile... while plunging a knife into your heart.

The reason the Chameleon focused most of its efforts externally was that Xia Lei handled internal affairs—dirty work she was both willing and adept at. *räNÖbΞ S*

During the downsizing, no one had openly opposed her, though some had shown reluctance or even passive resistance.

But if there had been genuine internal issues, none would have dared disobey.

Their tension wasn't fear—just confusion. Cloud Peak had always been united, its members bound by brotherhood and shared life-and-death experiences. Even competition among them was spirited yet warm.

What problems could such a team have?

"First, lack of ambition." Xia Lei's expression hardened.

"Confidence is good. Pride in Cloud Peak is good. But many have grown complacent in that confidence and pride. They don't fear battle, yet they avoid it. They enjoy the equipment and scrolls Cloud Peak provides, but lack the drive to contribute value. Just look at the dwindling numbers at the training grounds—you'll understand."

When things come too easily, they're rarely treasured.

This mentality had begun creeping into Cloud Peak's ranks. Though still elite and willing to die for Ye Zhongming, many had lost their former hunger to push forward.

Hadn't Xia Lei just spoken of propelling Ye Zhongming to become the first nine-star? Against that goal, such complacency was unacceptable, making her crackdown inevitable.

"Second, arrogance."

Xia Lei was ruthless and domineering externally, but she adhered to principles and kept her word, just like Ye Zhongming. This was crucial for a faction's reputation.

Though not a commercial entity like the Cannibal Chain or Five Rings Money, Cloud Peak had many business dealings. Losing credibility would hurt their income, and demon crystals was the lifeblood of their rapid growth.

Beyond Ye Zhongming's craftsmanship, their ability to convert every advantage into vast amounts of crystals—which then funded evolution potions, scrolls, bloodlines, and jobs—was key. This virtuous cycle couldn't be disrupted.

"Some of our warriors, feeling invincible, have grown lax and entitled. They act as if only their comrades matter, treating others as disposable—issuing orders, breaking promises. This worsened after we became the national No. 1 and expanded last time."

"Clearly, some have 'floated away'—forgetting that besides enemies, we also have allies. They need a wake-up call."

"This includes 'factional mentalities.' I won't elaborate—you know what I mean."

Several expressions flickered uneasily.

Ye Zhongming remained silent and calm, which only deepened the unease.

"Third, carelessness!"

Xiao Hu blinked, confused by the term.

"Cloud Peak distributes weapons and equipment, with periodic upgrades. Weapons can be passed down, but many restricted gears require specific user qualifications—yet we never reclaimed them during upgrades."

"Over time, many warriors accumulated multiple such items. I don't oppose trading them for personal needs, but their methods? Selling at dumping prices, disrupting markets—fine, we're wealthy enough to absorb the losses. But some just offload them without vetting buyers, flooding our rivals with our own gear."

"How does it feel to be attacked by equipment you once owned?"

"And my orders? Destroy all crystal weapons and gene warriors thoroughly after combat damage. Yet some still neglect this, letting factions recover fragments or remains. As captains, how do you justify this?!"

A few examples made her point clear: she despised this negligence.

The downsizing targeted not just personnel but also resource allocation, directly addressing these behaviors.

After letting them digest her words, Xia Lei clapped. "The specifics of the downsizing I'll discuss with Zhongming later. Now, my goal: how to push him to nine-star."

"The Death King Tree was a fluke. My real confidence comes from these factors." Her sternness melted into a smile as she turned to Le Dayuan.

"Master Le, you explain the first one."

Chapter 1717: Good thing (3)

Le Dayuan laughed heartily and stood up, taking out a key from his spatial ring.

It resembled both gold and silver, with a beautiful matte finish.

A pink heart-shaped crystal hung from it.

Le Dayuan was about to say something when he noticed the pendant, his expression stiffening awkwardly. He quickly removed it, muttering, "This Old Liu, still playing with such things."

The others chuckled good-naturedly, with Xiao Hu and Candy—who were usually close to Le Dayuan—even teasing him.

"Ahem, you two, quiet down."

Le Dayuan put on a stern face, pretending to scold Little Tiger, but it had no effect. Instead, Xia Lei shot the mischievous boy a glare, making him shrink like a mouse spotting a cat.

Little Tiger had no choice—aside from his usual fear of Xia Lei, he also felt guilty about some of the earlier issues, like the "factional mentalities." While not entirely his intention, recent incidents had occurred partly due to his leniency.

"Remember that combat robot I built?"

Everyone nodded, including Ye Zhongming.

That awe-inspiring mechanical warrior had left an indelible impression. Its diverse combat methods, dual energy systems, and unique control mechanisms had opened a new door, revealing an entirely different world.

Of course, its astronomical resource consumption was equally unforgettable—it was practically a money-devouring machine.

Le Dayuan had said back then that it was still in the refinement stage, and without solving certain issues, it couldn't achieve optimal combat effectiveness.

"Solved?" Ye Zhongming's eyes gleamed.

That creation had deeply shocked him, too. At the time, Sister Hong's breakthrough in spatial equipment crafting and the emergence of this robot had given Ye Zhongming immense confidence, assuring him that he could stay ahead of the entire country, even the world.

Now, hearing Le Dayuan mention this secret weapon again, how could the King of Cloud Peak not be excited?

Le Dayuan smiled again. Though he didn't immediately confirm, everyone could already guess the answer.

"To be honest, that earlier prototype was a failure."

Except for Xia Lei, who already knew, Ye Zhongming and the others were stunned. A failure?

"No matter what solutions Old Liu and I tried, we couldn't find a perfect design." Le Dayuan's tone carried obvious regret.

"If we prioritized energy efficiency to let the robot last a full battle, control became unstable. If we perfected control, energy consumption skyrocketed, drastically shortening operation time. Plus, even after Zhongming's enhancements, some materials couldn't withstand prolonged, high-intensity combat—they'd break too easily."

Liu Zhenghong and Le Dayuan were arguably the top scientific minds on the planet, yet even they had their limits.

"Later, I changed my approach. Instead of pursuing one perfect machine with all advantages, I split them into two specialized models—melee and ranged."

With that, Le Dayuan picked up the key and gestured for everyone to follow him to the open space behind Ye Zhongming's villa, usually used for skill practice.

Pressing a button on the peculiar key, two beams of light shot out, landing on two spots in the clearing.

Two combat robots appeared before the group—one tall, one short.

At a glance, they shared similarities yet had stark differences.

Both had identical materials and design aesthetics, clearly from the same series. But one was tall, the other short, with distinctly different weapon configurations.

"The shorter one is the ranged combat robot, powered by demon crystal energy."

Le Dayuan approached the "shorter" robot, still a behemoth at 3.5 meters tall and over 10 meters wide.

The others gathered around, examining this metal monstrosity up close.

This so-called "ranged combat robot" barely qualified as humanoid—it more closely resembled an armored vehicle.

Its 10-meter-wide torso supported three metal heads, faceless except for a smooth metal plate.

The body was an irregular rectangular block, engraved with energy-pulsing patterns. Certain sections stood out—likely weapon ports.

The base combined treads with wheeled mechanical legs.

"The ranged robot has several attack modes: micro-engraved machine guns in the heads, shoulder-mounted sniper cannons, a demon crystal blaster on the torso, and elemental projectors at the bottom and sides."

As Le Dayuan spoke, the robot's faceplates slid open under his control, revealing 15 firing ports per head—three rows of five each.

"Micro-engraved machine guns, as the name suggests, fire micro-engraved bullets. The three rows fire standard, armor-piercing, and elemental types respectively."

Le Dayuan effortlessly leaped onto the robot's shoulder, pointing out the head mechanisms.

"This design accounts for the structural needs of micro-engraved bullet firing. They don't require much space, and their energy circuits are simple, so we placed them here."

"Their power speaks for itself—you've all used micro-engraved bullets. These won't match your individual shots, but their density compensates. They can unleash rapid, sustained high-intensity damage."

"Standard bullets fire fastest, armor-piercing next, elemental slowest. At full capacity, each head fires 480 rounds per minute—1,440 bullets collectively. With a full magazine, it can sustain this barrage for 20 minutes."

The listeners were dumbfounded.

These were micro-engraved bullets—ordinarily devastating in power. When Ye Zhongming loaded them into his purple-grade sniper rifle with gun skills, they could threaten level-nine lifeforms!

Though this machine couldn't replicate Ye Zhongming's personal firepower, even retaining 10% of that potency made its sustained attacks terrifying.

At full output, it could unleash nearly *30,000 micro-engraved bullets* in 20 minutes. The mere thought was spine-chilling.

*"The crystal blaster has nine ports. The top one here is the largest crystal cannon, one tier below the Annihilator's ultimate model. Below it are three medium-caliber crystal cannons with slightly weaker power. Further down are five crystal machine gun ports with nearly 170-degree firing arcs. When all fires simultaneously, their placements ensure almost no blind spots except directly behind. As for rear attacks—the three heads rotate 360 degrees, and the robot itself moves agilely, so flanking isn't an issue."

Chapter 1718: Attacking

Under Le Dayuan's control, the ranged combat robot rotated slightly, its demon crystal machine gun barrels sweeping back and forth, demonstrating nearly 300 degrees of firing coverage. The rapid swiveling of its head compensated for the remaining angles.

Simply put, these weapons alone ensured the machine had virtually no blind spots in its attacks.

"Let's talk about the elemental projectors."

Le Dayuan pointed to several cylindrical tubes extending from the robot's sides and base. These weren't particularly thick - the largest being roughly the size of a two-liter soda bottle - but their surface patterns were visibly the most intricate among all its weapons.

"Micro-engraved bullets and demon crystal weapons use demon crystal energy, while the elemental projectors rely on natural gemstone energy."

As he spoke, Le Dayuan deftly removed a metal panel, revealing the internal structure. Though no one could decipher the components, the circuitry was astonishingly complex and beautiful. Multicolored lines, intricate yet orderly, emitted a soft glow with energy pulses like a heartbeat, clearly demonstrating their power.

The group was initially surprised but quickly realized - if Le Dayuan could extract energy from demon crystals, harnessing natural gemstones was no challenge.

"Like demon crystals, higher-grade gems contain more energy. However, the projectors are extremely energy-intensive. Even high-level natural gemstones can't sustain prolonged use, so they're only activated when enemies get too close. Fortunately, their attacks are area-of-effect."

Le Dayuan rejoined the group. "I've resolved the energy issues. This machine can provide versatile battlefield support - whether independently suppressing an area or coordinating with allies. Right now, it's Cloud Peak's most formidable ranged firepower."

Frowning slightly, he continued: "For control, I used an AI computer. It has dozens of sensitive radars here, here and here," he pointed, "providing full 360-degree surveillance within 2,000 meters. This tablet controls it." He handed Ye Zhongming a tablet with an idiot-proof interface.

"Sigh." Le Dayuan's exhalation drew attention. "The computer works, but I believe evolved could perform better."

Everyone nodded. Modern evolved excelled in senses and reflexes - surpassing machines in combat though not calculations.

"To maximize combat capacity - magazine size, energy circuits, heat dissipation - our original control method became unfeasible. We had to settle for computer control."

Ye Zhongming smiled. "Brother Le, this is already incredible. No need for perfection."

Le Dayuan nodded. "I know, but it's still a regret. Thankfully, the ranged robot just needs accuracy and firepower. My vision found its place in the melee robot."

Eagerly pressing his universal controller, the taller, humanoid robot's chest opened, revealing... a cockpit.

"This one's for close combat. It has an enhanced full-body energy shield with two energy sources: demon crystals... and life energy."

Ye Zhongming studied the cockpit thoughtfully, understanding "life energy."

"It requires a pilot with strong mental power, exceptional physique, and combat experience. Operating it is like personal combat, just more exhausting. This was mostly Old Liu's work."

"The pilot enters the liquid chamber where neural interfaces connect. After a complex but brief compatibility test, control transfers. Once linked, other methods like this key won't work unless released."

The group needed a moment to process this sci-fi revelation.

"The system calculates operational time based on combat intensity, compatibility and damage. Data shows about 30 minutes at full capacity - though melee combat has more variables than fixed ranged firepower."

Guang Yao, intrigued, asked: "What's 'compatibility'? What's the standard?"

"Testing." Le Dayuan pointed at the cockpit. The group exchanged glances - the only way to know was to try.

"Post-combat, pilots are extremely fatigued. Beyond 25 minutes, most can barely stand, needing two days to recover."

Seeing their horrified expressions, Le Dayuan shifted gears: "But once you see its weapons, you'll volunteer."

Beyond the energy shield, the melee robot's modular weapons were just the start - every part functioned as an exquisite mechanism enabling unimaginable attacks.

For example, just its wrist could split into three sections: the first launching ten shurikens, the second releasing hair-thin metal needles, the third firing grappling hooks - all components crafted by Ye Zhongming, minimum blue-grade!

Faced with this kaleidoscopic arsenal, Cloud Peak's elites were utterly convinced.

"Oh, a researcher suggested naming these 'Bear One' and 'Bear Two.' Any idea why?"

Le Dayuan asked, utterly baffled.

Chapter 1719: A bit more compatibility

Driven by intense curiosity about the machine's combat capabilities, everyone clamored for immediate testing. Even the most mild-tempered individuals, after enduring over six years of apocalypse, had become battle fanatics. The allure of controlling a combat robot with nearly a hundred different attack methods was irresistible.

After inquiring about the testing time required from Le Dayuan, Ye Zhongming granted their request.

"If the compatibility is high enough, even an eight-star evolved piloting this machine can fully compensate for the inability to use personal skills," Le Dayuan explained excitedly. "Imagine - customized weapons crafted by Zhongming, with their abilities fully utilized through hand sensors and special neural control methods."

"This was one of our biggest challenges - I spent half my development time on this aspect alone," he continued, enthusiasm undimmed. "Additionally, bloodline abilities still function, working synergistically with the machine's capabilities."

"As for defense," Le Dayuan chuckled, "between the energy shield and the metal armor's protection, it rivals gold-grade equipment. If Zhongming enhances the external armor, this becomes a full purple-grade defensive fortress."

Hearing these hidden capabilities, the core members grew even more eager. Researchers prepared large quantities of interface fluid for the liquid cockpit, while others loaded weapons and energy sources to optimal levels for testing.

Seizing the opportunity, Le Dayuan used another computer to explain the weapon systems to potential pilots. The core members' exceptional memories required only one demonstration before they could begin familiarization during actual operation.

Considering the requirements went beyond evolution level to include physique and mental strength, Ye Zhongming suggested summoning qualified subordinates as well. Since they were going to test, it was best to decide on the members. Within minutes, over sixty candidates arrived, mostly seven-star evolved with a few six-star specialists in physical or mental disciplines. Along with the core members, there were around a hundred.

Things were prepared quickly.

Little Tiger volunteered first, earning a kick from Le Dayuan for his eagerness. As the liquid cockpit sealed, the previously inert machine seemed to come alive, though test cables spoiled the illusion somewhat.

"Can you hear me, Little Tiger?" Le Dayuan spoke through the connected microphone.

After a three-second delay came the reply: "Loud and clear, Old Le! This is fun - hey, what's this liquid? Tastes kinda sweet." The group collectively facepalmed at Little Tiger sampling unknown fluids.

"Sink your mental energy into the machine and follow my instructions."

Following Le Dayuan's step-by-step instructions, Little Tiger gradually mastered basic controls. Data cables monitored his performance, with compatibility percentages displayed, starting at 25% and climbing to 79% after completing the test sequence.

"These are all basic actions. The data will judge the user's state when he is piloting the machine. The tougher it is to control, the lower the compatibility."

Le Dayuan gave a simple explanation. There were definitely more complicated things involved, like the calculation methods, and it wasn't as easy as he made it sound.

Ye Zhongming and the others looked at Le Dayuan, unsure if the number was good or bad.

"Acceptable... but not ideal," Le Dayuan judged with a frown. He told Little Tiger to get out. With the previous settings, people on the outside could speak directly with those inside.

Little Tiger was well behaved; he opened the cockpit and jumped out.

Little Tiger emerged pale-faced, demonstrating the strain even simple operations caused.

Le Dayuan asked a few questions, and Little Tiger replied. He also asked if he was suitable for this machine.

Little Tiger was one of the experts in Cloud Peak, and his body was very strong. Although his mental energy wasn't outstanding, it was as good as an eight star evolved.

One could see that Little Tiger found it tough. A simple set of actions consumed a huge amount of energy. If he were in battle, he wouldn't last for long.

“Change.”

Ye Zhongming waved, and people entered the cockpit one after another.

Testing continued for over an hour with twenty candidates. The highest score came from one of Guang Yao's subordinates at 80% - still only backup pilot material according to Le Dayuan. Ye Zhongming's hopes for mass production were dashed when Le Dayuan explained both material scarcity and pilot rarity made it impossible.

The breakthrough came when Dong Chenlu, a seven-star female mental specialist from Liang Chuxi's team, achieved over 90% compatibility. She maintained control for twenty minutes of simulated combat

before collapsing exhausted - with Le Dayuan predicting thirty minutes of normal operation after training.

By the end, only four exceeded 90%: Dong Chenlu, Sheng Yuan (unsuitable as a pilot), Park Xiuying (also unsuitable), and Er Lei from Ah Tao's Secret Realm team at 94%.

"Boss, your turn!" The group urged Ye Zhongming forward, secretly hoping he'd avenge their mediocre performances.

They might not be able to, but their boss definitely could.

Ye Zhongming smiled and jumped in.

After completing all the connections, Ye Zhongming began executing the actions.

Ye Zhongming's test immediately stood out - movements were flawlessly precise and fluid, as if the machine were his own body. Le Dayuan's eyes lit up. Starting at 80% compatibility, his numbers skyrocketed during simulated combat while observers watched in awe.

Ye Zhongming didn't try out much and just entered battle mode. Even if the enemy was just air, everyone was nervous.

They understood how terrifying this machine was.

"Over 95!" a researcher shouted as the numbers kept climbing - 96%, 97%, then 98%. Just as it seemed to stabilize, it ticked up to 99%, leaving the 80%-scoring members utterly stunned.

"Amazing! As expected of our boss!" Little Tiger and Tong Hu murmured repeatedly.

Le Dayuan was about to ask about Ye Zhongming's energy consumption when everyone froze - two terrifying energy signatures had collided near Cloud Peak's perimeter, shaking the very air. Without hesitation, Ye Zhongming's robot sprinted toward the disturbance, covering the distance to the walls in seconds while the entire base mobilized into defensive positions within ten seconds.

Chapter 1720: Stop fighting

Ye Zhongming closed his eyes, yet he could clearly sense everything around him, even better than with his normal vision.

This was the result of his consciousness connecting with the sensors and radar of the close-combat robot's entire body, allowing the King of Cloud Peak to now see in a full 360 degrees.

He moved extremely fast, leaping over the walls of Cloud Peak and landing outside. After pausing briefly to confirm his direction, he shot forward like an arrow.

Though Cloud Peak Villa was not particularly bustling—it was more of a fortress than a marketplace—critical transactions, such as those involving genetic lifeforms, magic crystal weapons, and the like, still took place within the villa. Outside, people were either coming or going when they witnessed this scene.

They stared in shock at the massive robot seemingly flying through the sky, guessing it must be one of Cloud Peak's secret weapons. There had just been an intense energy collision somewhere—was this giant machine heading over to resolve the issue? But what were those cables attached to its body?

Less than five seconds after Ye Zhongming left, squads of Cloud Peak warriors surged out of the villa like a raging flood, following their king.

The passersby were stunned, realizing something major must have happened.

They were from factions allied with Cloud Peak—Thousand Beasts Villa, Team Deacon Water, Five Ring Money, Cannibal Chain, and others—and having coincidentally witnessed this, they immediately relayed the news through various means.

Ye Zhongming paid them no mind. He was already approaching his destination. Just a second ago, that terrifying energy collision had occurred again. He was now sure that only level-nine lifeforms could engage in such combat.

One of the energies felt familiar, while the other seemed vaguely recognizable.

When Ye Zhongming reached the edge of the battlefield, stopping at a safe distance, he saw two level-nine lifeforms locked in a standoff.

It was the Death King Tree and the Talking Lady.

They had just separated, each adjusting their stance without launching another attack. Yet the ground between them and their surroundings looked as if it had been bombarded by countless shells—utterly ravaged, a clear testament to the intensity of their earlier clashes.

The appearance of a robot drew the attention of both Death King Tree and Talking Lady.

The benefit of mental control was that Ye Zhongming's aura could be projected through it, allowing Death King Tree and Talking Lady to recognize who had arrived even without seeing his actual body.

"This shell seems pretty good." Death King Tree had now taken on a human form. Her once ethereally beautiful face, which had previously been hidden within the tree, was now her real head—though her speech carried a slight Xinjiang accent.

Clad in a tight black leather outfit resembling the heroine from Underworld, her most striking feature was her vibrant green hair. The clothing covered her limbs, making it impossible for Ye Zhongming to see their condition, but her exposed wrists still bore a plant-like appearance.

Talking Lady, on the other hand, said nothing, merely giving Ye Zhongming a faint glance.

"How did you two end up fighting?"

Ye Zhongming's question was somewhat pointless. Both Death King Tree and Talking Lady had reached a level where their senses were godlike. If beings of the same tier approached within a certain distance, they would inevitably detect each other.

Thus, this conflict was unavoidable.

While both might have various ties to Ye Zhongming, to each other, they were nothing more than nourishment to solidify their realms and advance their strength.

Ye Zhongming's question was merely an attempt to find an opening to mediate.

Having two level-nine lifeforms fighting so close to Cloud Peak Villa was far from ideal—it could destroy the entire mountain.

"Hold on, I need to teach her a lesson first."

The Xinjiang-accented Death King Tree spoke again. Her two clashes with Talking Lady had ended in a stalemate, fueling her competitive spirit.

Talking Lady, after a brief glance, also ignored Ye Zhongming, instead focusing on building her momentum alongside the black cat at her feet.

"What I mean is, you two should stop fighting." Ye Zhongming took a helpless step forward, entering the battlefield.

Do not underestimate this step.

Why had Ye Zhongming stopped at the edge earlier? It was out of respect for the two level-nine lifeforms. He had come to persuade them to stand down.

Both of these beings had deep connections to Cloud Peak—losing either would be disastrous.

But now, the two apex beings seemed to have lost their tempers and were ignoring Ye Zhongming. This was something he could not tolerate. He had to make his stance clear.

Entering the battlefield meant introducing an unpredictable variable into their fight.

"Get out!"

"Get out!"

Death King Tree and Talking Lady simultaneously issued warnings to Ye Zhongming.

Ye Zhongming fell silent for a moment before responding by taking another step forward.

"This is Cloud Peak."

The deep male voice emitted from the close-combat robot's speakers drifted into the ears of Death King Tree and Talking Lady, causing them to hesitate.

"Death King Tree, you were able to fulfill your wish because of Cloud Peak's help. Even if part of your body hasn't fully transformed into a human form, you're already close. For your sake, even Sister Hong left the villa to roam the dangerous wilderness."

"You know how important Liu Zhenghong is to me—to Cloud Peak."

Death King Tree's expression flickered, but the intensity of her aura did not diminish.

"Talking Lady, as for you, I saved your life. And while you helped me at Mountain King Wheel, you should understand that was just icing on the cake, not a lifeline. We could have resolved the issue ourselves. The only reason I let you intervene was out of consideration for our long-standing partnership."

Talking Lady frowned, her gaze shifting back to him. The black cat at her feet glared at Ye Zhongming, its eyes filled with hostility.

"This is Cloud Peak."

Ye Zhongming repeated this phrase once more. He raised the robot's arm, pointing toward the distant, towering structures nestled among the mountains.

"That is my home. The home of many."

Behind him, Xia Bai and the others arrived one after another. Several combat teams formed a semicircular perimeter around the area. Dozens of core eight-star members were evenly positioned at key points, forming an intimidating defensive line.

In the distant sky, Yangos soared slowly, accompanied by the undead fish-dragon and Redhair, who rode on its back.

Other indescribable forces were converging here as well.

"I will not allow anyone to destroy that place—including you two."

Both Death King Tree and Talking Lady seemed about to speak, but the close-combat robot raised its hand to cut them off.

"What you say doesn't matter. The only reason I've spoken this much is to tell you one thing."

Ye Zhongming took several more steps forward. The members behind him followed without fear, stepping onto the battlefield.

The roar of the Cloud Peak King suddenly shook the entire space.

"Cut the fucking nonsense! If either of you dares move again, I'll tear you apart!"