

Apocalypse 1816

Chapter 1816: Catching up

Ye Zhongming felt no resentment.

He had been ambushed before, but rarely had he failed to detect an attacker until the moment they struck.

This time, he had sensed nothing.

Since entering the Novice Battlefield, Ye Zhongming had maintained extreme vigilance, as had Jie Kui. Yet despite their caution, their enemies had still slipped behind them undetected. That wasn't bad luck—it was a skill gap.

No shame in admitting it.

But while he wasn't bitter, the realization hit him: They had been set up.

By the very pursuers they'd wanted to identify.

The pain from the blow didn't bother him. It was minor—the Star-Eye Clan armor and hastily summoned Black Earth Armor had absorbed most of the impact. His dodge had further reduced the damage. The blood he coughed up made it seem worse than it was.

As his body twisted midair, the King of Cloud Peak finally got a clear look at his attackers.

Two hunched figures with grotesquely elongated arms. They moved barefoot, their bizarre physiology allowing them to leap without a sound.

Their exposed limbs were even more unsettling—pores dilated like black holes, swallowing all traces of sound and scent around them.

No wonder they'd gotten so close.

At two meters above ground, Ye Zhongming kicked off the tree trunk, reversing his fall into an upward lunge. His weapon flashed toward one attacker while two shadow clones materialized, blades aimed at the other.

Jie Kui was in worse shape—his straight-line plummet betrayed severe injury. Ye Zhongming needed to buy him some breathing room.

SCHLICK.

His Mimic Blade sank into an enemy's palm—but brought no satisfaction. The creature had let itself be impaled.

First impressions: Preternaturally fast. Alarmingly agile.

Now add: Terrifying regeneration.

Though the blade had cleaved the hand, it went no deeper. Muscles contracted like vises, trapping the energy edge. Bloodflow ceased within seconds—had the weapon not been lodged, the wound might've sealed completely.

Ye Zhongming immediately released the Mimic Blade. Keeping it meant being slammed into the ground along with it.

Another shadow clone appeared behind the creature, dagger plunging toward its neck.

The attacker jerked its head aside. The blade grazed its cheek, drawing blood. An elbow shot back—the clone exploded, its psychic backlash briefly staggering the creature. Yet it charged forward regardless, tackling Ye Zhongming mid-descent.

They were close to the ground, so they both hit the earth together.

What followed was a blur of close-quarters carnage.

At Nine-Star level, melee combat was lethally efficient. One misstep meant death.

The creature was outmatched in pure skill. It relied on inhuman reflexes and obscene regeneration to keep pace.

Given time, Ye Zhongming would win.

But time was a luxury he didn't have.

These stealth specialists weren't here to kill him. They were stalling.

Buying time for the real threat—the seven rapidly approaching hunters.

"Ye, RUN!"

Jie Kui's shout came just as his opponent overwhelmed him. He had probably guessed the goal of the two lifeforms.

But the moment he shouted, the enemy pounced onto him, and a flurry of fists pinned him down—escape was impossible.

A beat later, his follow-up was admirably pragmatic: "Ye, HELP."

Ye Zhongming's eyes darkened with fury.

These bastards had hounded them for an entire day, forsaking precious points just to hunt them down. Why? The first elimination was in three days—didn't they care about survival?

Gravity Field activated. Shadow clones reappeared. His right fist charged with stored energy.

Since obtaining the Mountain King Crown, his synergy with elemental spirits had reached new heights. The Power Feedback ability let him unleash strikes far beyond his normal limits.

Even among Nine-Stars, Ye Zhongming's strength was peerless. With the crown's amplification, his next punch could shatter mountains.

His opponent—a tenacious, regenerating nightmare—somehow sensed the danger. Just as Ye Zhongming's fist drew back, it disengaged mid-grapple, leaping away.

Ye Zhongming smirked.

"Shrinking Stride."

The crown's short-cooldown ability teleported him point-blank. His powered strike caved in the creature's skull.

Even a level-nine Spirit Fire Rhino King couldn't withstand this. Neither could it.

The head snapped sideways, organs rupturing in a gory spray. The body cartwheeled through the air before crashing down.

No time to confirm the kill. Ye Zhongming was already moving, launching collected monster fangs as projectiles while his second Mimic Blade morphed into a spear.

The remaining attacker snarled but retreated under the onslaught.

Jie Kui, though battered, was a master ambusher. He exploited the opening perfectly.

"GO!"

Ye Zhongming grabbed his ally's shoulder, ready to flee—

WHOOOOOSH!

A blade's edge frosted his eyelashes as it halted millimeters from his throat.

"You're not leaving."

A child's voice, dripping with mockery, preceded the thunderous approach of the dwarf girl and her oversized cleaver.

Chapter 1817: Catching up (2)

The cold glint flashed before Ye Zhongming and Jie Kui's eyes. Had they not simultaneously leaped backward, it would have struck them.

Behind them, an ancient tree thicker than two meters in diameter was sheared clean through.

Both men felt their hearts tighten.

These weren't Earth's ordinary trees—their trunks were monstrously dense, requiring tremendous force to fell. Even for a Nine-Star evolved, such a feat shouldn't be effortless.

Ye Zhongming's sharp eyes noted something unsettling—the tree hadn't been cut. It had been smashed apart by sheer kinetic force.

A quick mental calculation left him grim. While he could replicate this with his fists, tossing something out with such force? Nearly impossible.

His wariness toward their pursuers spiked.

The taunting voice heralded a new attacker—a fist wreathed in thunderous wind, laced with a pungent, metallic tang.

This meant that even if it wasn't poisonous, it had a certain effect.

Jie Kui nearly cursed aloud. Of course, they'd target the injured one.

Instead of retreating, the embattled Nine-Star lunged toward the punch.

The first to catch up was the bulging-eyed little girl. The cold glint earlier had been the long-handled blade in her hand.

As a Lü Zhu person, she had inherited her race's warlike genes while also awakening a legendary top-tier ability that compensated for her people's lack of skills beyond brute strength.

Now chosen by her race to participate in the Novice Battlefield, she was determined to achieve an outstanding result.

However, due to certain special circumstances, she had no choice but to cooperate with those two Earthlings for revenge. But as someone whose ambition was to claim first place in the Novice Battlefield, she wouldn't pass up any opportunity to earn points.

Yes, this Lü Zhu girl, named Ya Ka, intended to kill Jie Kui.

She had promised the Earthling she wouldn't kill Ye Zhongming, but slaying this one would still earn her points.

Her strongest attack was naturally with her long-handled blade, but this punch was nothing to scoff at either—it was an ability unlocked when she evolved to level nine, part of her top-tier awakening.

Wind and thunder attributes, combined with Illusory Breath!

Few could survive a punch that first induced hallucinations before delivering the killing blow.

Jie Kui's vision blurred into a white haze, the scene eerily familiar, accompanied by strange sounds—like... the first time he'd been intimate with a woman.

His heart raced, excitement surging as his mind began filling in more details from that moment.

A dazed person was easy to spot.

Right now, Jie Kui was clearly under some kind of influence.

Ye Zhongming's shock and concern, the little girl's vicious grin and triumph—together, they painted a picture of impending murder.

Jie Kui's sudden counterattack left Ye Zhongming helpless. Had he stayed close, Ye Zhongming could've intervened at any moment. But now, the guy had actively closed the distance with the little girl, instantly putting himself out of Ye Zhongming's reach.

The Cloud Peak King couldn't help even if he wanted to.

The creature Ye Zhongming had sent flying earlier—its fate unknown—was nowhere to be seen, but the one that had been fighting Jie Kui charged again, clearly intending to tie Ye Zhongming down. At the very least, it would prevent him from aiding Jie Kui.

Their plan worked—Ye Zhongming truly had no way to help Jie Kui at this moment.

Even Ye Zhongming himself thought Jie Kui was done for.

But in reality, not only was Jie Kui not finished, he even sent the once-dazzling little girl flying.

Watching this, Ye Zhongming recalled one of the Star-Eye Clan's abilities—Arc Shadow Shift.

Originally an escape skill, it was designed for the Star-Eye Clan's unique traits. When an assassination or ambush failed—or when preparing for a second strike—they needed to create distance. This ability allowed the user to disengage in a short time quickly.

Ye Zhongming, with the Mountain King Crown's Body Swap and Earth's teleportation equipment, naturally looked down on such an ability.

But he never expected Jie Kui to have learned it—and even modified it into an offensive skill.

The defining features of Arc Shadow Shift were its speed and unpredictable arcing movement. To achieve this, users had to forgo all other abilities, dedicating all their energy and physical functions purely to speed and distance.

Yet Jie Kui had altered it—minimizing the arc just enough to evade the little girl's fist while turning his body into a weapon instead of fleeing.

Ye Zhongming was impressed. The modification seemed simple, but it required exceptional control over one's energy and body to pull off. After all, much like Twin Poison Shadows, the original purpose of this ability was entirely different from its modified form.

The little girl's hallucinatory punch did take effect—but by then, Jie Kui had already executed his move. Essentially, even though he was affected, it didn't matter. The illusion vanished the moment the two collided.

Ye Zhongming threw a punch and a kick, forcing the hunched, long-armed creature back before grabbing Jie Kui and bolting in a chosen direction.

He could no longer afford to hesitate—all pursuers had arrived on the battlefield. If they didn't leave now, they'd be facing eight level-nine beings at once.

No matter how confident Ye Zhongming was, he never believed he could take on eight alone!

Jie Kui was half-crippled—for now, he didn't count.

Three blindingly white bolts of lightning shot from behind. Ye Zhongming, dragging Jie Kui along, continuously shifted directions, barely avoiding them.

The floating energy-being sighed. Without any visible movement, an earthen wall suddenly erupted in front of Ye Zhongming.

The hunched, long-armed creature and the little girl rejoined the chase, speeding up at the sight of the wall.

The tracking Tearhound Ghost tribesman, however, simply sat cross-legged on the ground. He placed five bone-like objects in front of him, then traced lines between them with his withered fingers. The viscous fluid coating his body seeped into the ground, filling the grooves between the bones.

Muttering incantations, his face flushed red before he suddenly shouted, raising his hands. The bones and fluid lines lifted from the ground, hovering above his head. With a push of his hands, they shot toward Ye Zhongming, expanding as they closed in.

By the time they reached their target, they had transformed into a massive hollow structure, enveloping a hundred-meter radius around Ye Zhongming.

The viscous fluid spread rapidly, forming a membranous layer that wove into a solid cage—completely trapping the Cloud Peak King and Jie Kui inside!

Chapter 1818: Catching up (3)

Ye Zhongming, dragging Jie Kui with him, crashed through the earthen wall, then attempted to break through the enlarged yet somewhat translucent mucous membrane—only to be unexpectedly rebounded.

The two simply stopped running and came to a halt.

Even if they could find another way to break free, they wouldn't be able to shake off the pursuers closing in on them.

Since that was the case, they might as well stop and assess the situation. It would also give them a brief moment to rest before the life-or-death battle ahead.

These people had gone through "great pains" to hunt them down—there was no chance of a peaceful resolution.

"Ye Zhongming, King of Cloud Peak."

A man stepped forward outside the mucous prison, staring at Ye Zhongming with a hate-filled sneer.

Hearing that voice, the Cloud Peak King immediately understood what was happening.

He had never seen this man before, but he recognized his voice—it was the same one that had spoken when he killed that deranged, inhuman minor, Little Adam, during the battle for the Mountain King Crown.

Back then, in that mysterious space-time communication skill, this man had introduced himself as one of the Hawkins couple from Lake Superior. When making his vow, he had also referred to himself as the King of Naka.

Later, after returning to Cloud Peak, Ye Zhongming had specifically sent people to investigate. The unverified information he received suggested that there was indeed a place called the Naka Training Camp near Lake Superior—though whether Hawkins came from there remained unknown.

Ye Zhongming's gaze then shifted to a woman he couldn't possibly ignore, clad in beautiful purple armor, her eyes filled with such venom it could melt a person alive.

He recognized her—this was undoubtedly the so-called Queen Aimusi, the mother of that rotten seed, Adam.

As for the whole "Hawkins couple" and "Queen Aimusi" situation, Ye Zhongming was momentarily confused. But he guessed that "Queen Aimusi" was likely her title or a name representing a special status.

Then, he noticed what she was holding in her arms.

That... could indeed only be called a thing.

A corpse. A corpse he was very familiar with. A corpse that... had gone from living to dead by his own hand.

Adam.

Though the little devil had already dehydrated, shriveled, and shrunk into a twisted lump, the faint traces of his former self could still be seen in the ghastly, bluish face.

Back then, when this vile creature had suddenly vanished from the Mountain King Crown's space, Ye Zhongming had assumed some kind of resurrection ability was at play. But now, it seemed the most they could do was keep a memento.

To have the ability to retrieve something from a sealed high-level space—and to waste it on a corpse instead of something useful? What a shame.

As these thoughts crossed his mind, Ye Zhongming grew even more certain: from this day onward, his feud with the Hawkins couple would be one of life and death.

Just look at how much effort they'd expended, how many sacrifices they must have made, just to keep this corpse with them. Their love for Little Adam had reached a twisted, obsessive level. In the face of such warped psychology, there were only two possible outcomes: either they died, or Ye Zhongming did.

Sure enough, before Hawkins could say anything more, Queen Aimusi began shrieking at Ye Zhongming in a voice sharp enough to pierce eardrums.

"Didn't expect this, did you?! When you ignored our pleas, did you think you ruled over everything?!"

"When your blade severed the head of my only son, did you imagine retribution would come so quickly?!"

"After reaching level nine, did you believe no one could rival you? That you stood at the pinnacle of the world, beyond all danger and opposition?!"

"Are you proud? Proud that you made it here? Your name is Ye Zhongming, right? Are you ready to die?!"

By the end, her voice had grown so shrill it cracked, blood seeping from her throat and filling her mouth, staining her teeth crimson.

The sheer hatred in her words sent chills down even her companions' spines.

If there were anything in this universe capable of destroying everything—aside from the Slave Race—it would be hatred of this magnitude.

"Don't worry, Ye Zhongming. You'll die in agony—just like how you killed my son!"

"Scared, aren't you? Well, it doesn't matter! Soon, you'll be drowning in torment! Did you think our earlier words were just threats? No—they were all true! Soon, you'll be trapped in the King of Naka's curse, drowning in fear, every second feeling like an eternity!"

"That's right—I won't kill you today. I'll capture you, take you with me, and torture you bit by bit. Only when I'm satisfied—when my son is satisfied—will I cut off that damned head of yours! How's that for terror?!"

"Oh, and one more thing. I heard your Cloud Peak is massive—the top faction in the Chinese region, right? Don't worry. If we ever get the chance to return to Earth, I'll slaughter every last person there, every warbeast, burn every blade of grass to the ground—so they can join you in hell!"

"You filthy—%¥#%@@—" Aimusi's emotions spiraled completely out of control, her words devolving into incoherent curses.

"Terrified now, aren't you?! HAHAAAA! Prepare to die, Ye Zhongming!"

When a woman descends into madness, there's nothing anyone can do. For over a minute, no one interrupted her tirade. Everyone knew—during this moment, she had lost her mind. Stopping her would only make her curses even more vicious.

Finally, Aimusi yanked away the golden silk quilt covering Adam's corpse, revealing the horrifically shriveled remains.

Her hand gently stroked Adam's head as she muttered something under her breath. Then, her fingers trailed down to the stitched seam connecting his head to his body. She glanced at her husband.

Hawkins immediately bit off one of his own fingers, then used his remaining hand to slowly pull out a black, key-like object from the severed digit.

Dripping with blood, he brought it close to Adam's neck, using it to cut the sutures one by one. As the neck reopened, blood seeped in—and black light began to spill out, gradually coalescing into a humanoid figure in the air.

It was a monstrous shadow, eerily similar to the corpse.

The next moment, the shadow let out a ghastly laugh—then shot straight through the mucous prison.

Despite Ye Zhongming dodging multiple times and employing several blocking methods, it plunged directly into his body!

The Cloud Peak King's face instantly paled.

"This is the King of Naka's curse! Savor its taste!" Aimusi screamed, her voice brimming with excitement and satisfaction.

Ye Zhongming closed his eyes, steadying his breathing—then suddenly raised two fingers toward Aimusi.

"Crazy bitch, two things for you."

"First—you have ZERO fucking manners!"

"Second—I'm scared of your MOM!"

Chapter 1819: Naka's curse

Ye Zhongming appeared furious—both outwardly and inwardly—but he knew his inner rage wasn't as intense as it seemed.

Since his rebirth, the area where he felt the most improvement, aside from his combat prowess, was his mental fortitude.

To any observer, he was currently facing a hopeless dead end.

Nine level-nine beings had surrounded him. Though one lay severely injured on the ground, he wasn't dead—his companions had fed him healing medicine, and there was no telling when he might rise again.

On his side? Only two people. One had a broken arm and, after colliding with the little girl earlier, his breathing remained erratic—a clear sign of internal injuries.

Trapped in this mucous prison, afflicted by an unknown but undoubtedly severe curse, burdened with an injured comrade...

Every single factor was stacked against him.

Yet, having lived two lives, Ye Zhongming found himself eerily calm beneath the anger.

He was analyzing—how to kill.

That's right. Ye Zhongming wasn't thinking about fleeing immediately. He wanted to kill.

Could he slaughter all nine enemies here at once? Obviously not.

But he still wanted to kill.

His reasoning was simple.

Since their hatred was irreconcilable, a life-or-death struggle was inevitable. Even if he escaped now, it would only be temporary. The only solution was for one side to be completely wiped out.

Ye Zhongming didn't want to die. So, he had to find a way to make them die instead.

"Seize!"

Aimusi, standing to the side, seemed to share Ye Zhongming's mindset. Amid her stream of curses, she suddenly spat out a single word.

Ye Zhongming's head suddenly felt heavy—and then, the world fell into absolute silence.

Not just quiet. A soundless void, as if all noise had been erased from existence.

Ye Zhongming immediately understood: his hearing was gone.

"Hahaha! Ye Zhongming, how does it feel? The King of Naka's curse will strip away your five senses, one by one. Each day, I can erase another. Which one did you lose today? Let me guess, let me guess—you're still looking at me, so it's not sight. What a shame, that would've been the most useful!"

Aimusi cradled Adam's corpse, her once-beautiful eyes now alight with a twisted mix of excitement and hatred.

"You're still gripping your weapon, no strange movements—so it's probably not touch either. Otherwise, you'd be checking your gear or body."

"Then which is it? Smell? Taste? Or... hearing?"

Among the five senses, vision was the most critical in combat, followed by hearing and touch. Taste and smell were far less essential.

Ye Zhongming moved.

He had to. If these people realized he'd lost his hearing, they'd have countless ways to exploit it.

A massive shadow descended from above, forcing the surrounding enemies to look up. The colossal silhouette of a mountain loomed over them, its range encompassing them all.

Mountain's Crushing Shadow!

One of the Mountain King Crown's abilities!

A trickle of blood seeped from the corner of Ye Zhongming's mouth.

The Mountain King Crown, Sea King Crown, and other ruler-grade equipment were unique. Once obtained, they fused directly with their wielder, and their cooldowns could be forcibly reset—but at a steep cost, draining both mental and physical energy.

Using Mountain's Crushing Shadow twice in one day was pushing even Ye Zhongming's Beautiful Heavenly Body to its limits.

Especially since he'd been fighting nonstop all day.

The Netherworld Starbeing floated in the air, his robes billowing as strands of white energy surged from his body. Within seconds, they wove into a dense net, intercepting the descending mountain shadow.

Meanwhile, the Tearhound Ghost tribesman controlling the mucous prison made his "creation" pulsate rapidly. The membrane vibrated at high frequency as the bone framework stretched it outward like countless loaded slingshots ready to fire.

"Ye, if you don't think of something fast, we're really done for."

Ye Zhongming couldn't hear, of course—but he could see. He knew the enemy's attack was imminent.

This was their assault... but also his opportunity.

He'd hoped to use the mountain shadow to shatter the prison. But now, it seemed the prison's own attack mechanism might break it open preemptively.

Ye Zhongming decided to gamble. His already-moving body veered toward one side—where the mucous membrane's "surface" was thinnest due to the irregular shape of the cage.

Stretched to its limit, the membrane rebounded with a series of booms, sending vibrations shooting toward Ye Zhongming and Jie Kui from all directions.

"Save yourself!" Ye Zhongming shouted (though he couldn't hear his own words) as his Black Earth Armor materialized. Simultaneously, seeds he'd planted earlier sprouted wildly, forming barriers in front of and behind them.

He'd said to let Jie Kui fend for himself—but the Cloud Peak King wouldn't let a comrade die so easily.

The membrane fired shockwaves of compressed air—and as Ye Zhongming predicted, it shattered upon release.

The prison's purpose had been to trap Ye Zhongming and Jie Kui, preventing their escape. That goal was achieved. Whether it remained intact now hardly mattered.

To these enemies, the two were already trapped prey with no way out.

The plants Ye Zhongming had grown provided meager defense against the shockwaves, crumbling almost instantly—but they bought just enough time for both men to dodge. They split, each lunging in opposite directions.

Seeing the mucous prison break, Jie Kui didn't hesitate. He activated Arc Shadow Shift again.

One advantage of skills learned in the celestial realm was their lack of cooldowns—as long as the user's body could endure the strain.

This time, Jie Kui wasn't targeting the little girl. He was fleeing for his life.

His body traced a wide arc, flashing through the broken cage toward a gap in the enemy formation—and bolted outward.

"I'll handle him." This was an easy job—chasing down a severely injured man with minimal risk and a chance to earn points. Compared to staying here, where they could only attack but not kill Ye Zhongming, it was far more appealing. Both the hunched long-armed creature and the little girl spoke simultaneously.

Hawkins nodded at the long-armed being, signaling him to go, and motioned for the tracking-specialist Tearhound Ghost tribesman to join.

The two of them were more than enough to handle one wounded man. The rest would stay to ensure Ye Zhongming didn't escape.

"Give me ten extra points."

The little girl seized the chance to negotiate.

"If you can beat me when this is over, I'll give you twenty."

Ye Zhongming had moved at the same time as Jie Kui, charging toward the two humanoid enemies. As Aimusi shut down the little girl's demand, she rewrapped Adam's corpse, slung it over her back, and followed her husband into the fray.

Chapter 1820: 8 more

Jie Kui clutched his shoulder; even after intense movement, the severed arm still throbbed with sharp pain.

He was worried. The medicine prepared by the Star-Eye Clan was useless for this kind of injury, and he didn't dare let the broken bones heal on their own—even a millimeter of misalignment would cripple his arm permanently.

It would be two more days before he could return to camp for treatment. The thought made Jie Kui's nose sting with frustration. It meant that to prevent his body's natural healing from fusing the broken bones incorrectly within those two days, he had to jolt his shoulder to keep the bones separated periodically. It was tantamount to self-torture.

Several dozen meters away, the sound of rapid movement approached. He knew the two pursuers were closing in again. With the Tearhound Ghost tribesman among them, no matter how far he fled, they would find him.

He glanced in the direction Ye Zhongming had run, thinking, Hang in there, Ye. This is all I can do. Then, Jie Kui plunged into the dense forest's darkness. A fight broke out a dozen seconds later, ended quickly, and was followed by another chase...

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Two companions stood before Ye Zhongming, giving him a fleeting illusion of being back on Earth.

He hadn't been in the celestial realm for long, but facing so many lifeforms with bizarre forms different from humans had given him aesthetic fatigue.

Just now, the three of them had exchanged blows—Ye Zhongming's fists against the two's right hands. Each side was forced back two steps.

Ye Zhongming wanted to use a short-range teleport to break free from the encirclement, but the two used a special ability to prevent it.

Looking at the faint halo connecting the three of them, Ye Zhongming felt a headache coming on.

Whether it was an ability they retained from Earth or a skill learned here, these "pale, monochromatic rainbow-like" energies had linked them together. Because of this, Ye Zhongming couldn't use teleportation abilities, and even his movement speed was significantly reduced.

"Three-Phase Link. How does it feel, Cloud Peak King?"

The burlier of the two Earthlings chuckled, a smug expression on his face.

Between his teeth, shreds of meat remained, so disgusting that Ye Zhongming averted his gaze after just one glance.

The others closed in, their faces twisted with ferocity.

Ye Zhongming didn't respond... because he couldn't hear.

Over thirty shadowy figures suddenly appeared around him, separating him from the others.

"A dying struggle!" Hawkins sneered, a pair of twin blades appearing in his hands. He began advancing inward, slashing as he moved.

They were all top-tier experts; they could tell these shadows were mere illusions. The others reacted similarly, with the little girl, Ya Ka, being the most aggressive—charging in at full force.

But what Hawkins and the others didn't expect was that while these shadows were indeed fragile, each one, upon being destroyed, released a burst of toxin and mental hit, causing everyone to freeze momentarily.

It wasn't that it posed a real threat—each shadow's nuisance was minor—but it was incredibly annoying.

Black mist spread as the shadows shattered one by one. Suddenly, a grunt came from within the mist, startling Hawkins and the others.

It was Hofukafu's voice.

A golden light suddenly shone from Aimusi's body, instantly dispersing the surrounding black mist. Everyone saw that Hofkaf, who had just been sneering at Ye Zhongming, was now clutching his ribs. Though no wound was visible, blood was seeping out.

The injury wasn't severe, but it proved Ye Zhongming had the ability to harm them even while surrounded.

Hofkaf's face twisted in rage. His mouth suddenly gaped open, and his head enlarged along with it—transforming into a monster with a head at least one and a half meters long!

From the enormous mouth, he began spewing grayish-brown, foul-smelling mucus.

Seeing this ability, the little girl, who had been ready to attack, immediately leaped away.

It wasn't that she didn't want to fight—it was just too fucking disgusting.

Even the Hawkins couple, consumed by hatred, halted their advance.

Ye Zhongming's body flickered, avoiding the direct spray. Simultaneously, several more shadows appeared, blocking the limited mucus from the sides.

True, his movement was slowed by the two humans' ability—but only relatively.

While dodging, Ye Zhongming flung several projectiles from his hands toward the little girl and the Hawkins couple.

They were teeth and claws from prey he had collected and processed—decent throwing weapons.

Even the simplest items, in his hands, became as powerful as bullets fired from a gun.

Each person responded differently. The little girl directly slashed them away with her blade. Hawkins swatted them aside with a palm strike. Aimusi was even more direct—she didn't move at all, the light emanating from her body blocking and deflecting the projectiles.

"Ye Zhongming, have you run out of tricks?" Aimusi meant to taunt, but she suddenly realized something and fell silent, looking up at the sky.

The massive mountain shadow Ye Zhongming had summoned earlier had been intercepted by the Netherworld Starbeing's white energy net.

Although it couldn't make the shadow disappear entirely, the net was under immense pressure and slowly descending. It would still take several minutes to pose a threat to everyone—more than enough time for them to surround and kill Ye Zhongming.

The situation was highly unfavorable for Ye Zhongming, especially since he was affected by Hofkaf and the Wade brothers' abilities, almost eliminating any chance of escape. So, whether it was the little girl or the Hawkins couple, they all felt somewhat "relaxed."

Coupled with Hofkaf's disgusting attack, everyone was a bit careless, feeling victory was assured.

That said, none of them stopped pressuring Ye Zhongming, ready to strike at any moment.

In their view, even if Ye Zhongming wasn't struggling to deal with Hofkaf's ability, he still had to guard against their attacks.

They didn't expect—or rather, couldn't believe—that in such a short time, Ye Zhongming still had the capacity to attack a lifeform that currently posed no immediate threat to him.

But, Ye Zhongming did attack—and with significant force.

Two shadows, indistinguishable from physical bodies, appeared beside the Netherworld Starbeing. They didn't launch physical attacks but instead detonated.

After Jie Kui had named this lifeform, Ye Zhongming knew it had very poor resistance to mental attacks.

So, his shadows were packed with dense mental energy.

The exploding smoke acted like a shockwave, causing the energy being to let out a sharp scream before frantically fleeing to one side.

The white energy net naturally collapsed without support.

The mountain shadow descended like a mountain peak, enveloping everyone beneath it.

"First one."

Ye Zhongming suddenly spoke three words. The others had no time to process them. The little girl shouted, slashing at the giant shadow with her blade. Aimusi also raised a hand, firing a white energy beam toward the sky.

Hawkins and Wade seized the moment when Hofukafu's ability had already hit Ye Zhongming, both charging forward to rout the Cloud Peak King.

But the Cloud Peak King smiled—a genuine smile.

"Eight left."

As he spoke, the Cloud Peak King's eyes suddenly turned pitch black.