

Apocalypse 1481

Chapter 1481: Colorful Catapults and Tossed Shaking Cannon

Everything has its limits, and these limits can be multifaceted.

Take the Crystal Cannon as an example. Le Dayuan wanted to increase the power of this weapon, and there were three methods he could use.

The first was to improve the efficiency of the energy circuit, allowing more energy extracted from the demon crystals to be converted into the weapon's power rather than being wasted. The second was to use higher-grade demon crystals. It has been proven that the higher the grade of the magic crystal, the more energy it outputs and the greater the power per unit of energy. When applied to the weapon, its power naturally increases.

The third method was to increase the number of demon crystals used. By modifying the energy circuit, the Crystal Cannon could consume more energy with each shot, increasing its striking power.

Theoretically, the Crystal Cannon had infinite potential from these three points.

But in reality, this was not the case.

Although Le Dayuan's research had made groundbreaking progress in improving the efficiency of the energy circuit, achieving perfect energy conversion without any loss was impossible and contradicted fundamental theories.

Crystal weapons were incredibly powerful, but they also consumed many resources. Even an organization as large and resource-rich as Cloud Peak has strict regulations on using such weapons during peacetime. The saying "a single cannon shot costs ten thousand taels of gold" held true even in the apocalypse, especially for crystal weapons. After a large-scale battle, Cloud Peak's demon crystal reserves would be significantly depleted, a loss that would make anyone's heart race.

Moreover, high-grade demon crystals were primarily used for human evolution and cannot be endlessly consumed in crystal weapons. Especially for crystals above grade seven, even Cloud Peak couldn't afford to use them as expendable items.

With the highest-grade crystals limited to grade six, the only way to increase the power of magic crystal weapons was to use more of them.

But this was not a simple math problem. If ten crystals weren't enough, you can't just use twenty; if twenty aren't enough, you can't just use fifty.

This involved complex related issues. For example, using more demon crystals would require increasing the weapon's size, and a larger weapon would need more complex energy circuits.

This led to a paradoxical problem of energy circuit consumption...

After countless simulations and experiments, Le Dayuan and his assistants finally found an optimal value. This value represented the perfect balance between the size of the Crystal Cannon, the area of the energy circuit, and the number of demon crystals used—essentially, the limit.

Thus, the ultimate model of Annihilation was born.

Of course, as Le Dayuan put it, this was the ultimate model when using level-six demon crystals. It will be a completely different story when level seven crystals were used.

These ultimate models, powered by level six crystals, were each the size of a small villa. They were on the ground and occupied over 200 square meters, with the highest point reaching nearly five meters. The relatively short barrel allowed a burly man to crawl in and out.

Each massive cannon was firmly embedded into the mountain, resembling a giant beast. On both sides of the cannon were fifteen neatly arranged indentations where the demon crystals were placed. Firing one of these ultimate Annihilation required thirty level six demon crystals, equivalent to a six-star evolution potion. And these crystals could only support six shots from this ultimate model!

Since this massive cannon was designed to maximize lethality, it didn't have the energy output adjustment buttons found in previous models. This means every shot fired was at maximum power. However, the firing mode can be adjusted. When facing a single target, it could be set to fire a concentrated beam. It could be set to a wide-area attack mode when facing multiple targets.

Following Le Dayuan's command, over a hundred ultimate Annihilations selected the wide-area attack mode. A hundred massive energy orbs instantly flew over the Cloud Peak battle formation, across the gravel ground, and landed on the swamp.

Then, the orbs exploded, transforming into countless writhing energy serpents that wreaked havoc in the Secret Realm.

Since the targets had been pre-selected, the attack range of the Crystal Cannons was nearly maximized.

The ambush site chosen by Cloud Peak was shaped like a trumpet, with the swamp area being the largest. However, the length and width were disproportionate—the length was long, but the width was relatively narrow, especially near the Cloud Peak formation.

These hundred Crystal Cannons could almost cover the border between the swamp and the gravel ground.

However, the first attack round targeted the swamp's middle section, covering only about half of its width.

After the energy attack, the entire battlefield fell into a momentary silence.

Within the attack range of the ultimate Annihilations, there were only dismembered limbs and corpses—no signs of life.

Upon seeing this scene, the frenzied swarm of monsters instinctively stopped, emitting various incomprehensible cries.

Despite their ferocious nature, the sight of tens of thousands of their kind dying in an instant terrified them to the core.

But they were only the first wave. The monsters behind them, still charging forward, had no idea what had happened ahead and crashed into their fallen comrades, trampling over their bodies.

Death affected these monsters, but it didn't stop their charge.

Soon, large swathes of monsters surged over the scattered corpses, with some of the more ferocious ones even picking up chunks of flesh to devour.

The humans were perhaps intimidated by the monsters' behavior, so they delayed their next attack. Thirty seconds later, the second round of cannon fire fell.

The ultimate Annihilations had a firing interval of thirty seconds, which was the limit of what Le Dayuan could achieve.

Once again, the monsters standing on their comrades' corpses met the same fate.

Among them were high-level demon monsters!

It's worth noting that the monsters following the Nine-Winged Crow were at least level five, with an average level of around six. Even the vanguard included some level seven monsters, but they couldn't withstand the Annihilations' attack. Even if they weren't instantly killed, they were severely injured and trampled to death by their charging comrades.

After two rounds of attacks, the vanguard of over seventy thousand monsters had lost nearly a third of their numbers.

"Gunners, ready!"

Chapter 1481.5- Colorful Catapults and Tossed Shaking Cannon

A voice rang out from the battle formation, followed by similar commands like "Archers, ready!" and "Crossbowmen, ready!"

Then, Ye Zhongming gave the order to begin.

There were ten rows of various weapons in front of the entire battle formation. The front two rows were giant crossbows from the Posthumous People's Saint City, slightly raised, with their bolts gleaming coldly. Behind them were four rows of Crystal Cannons, not as massive as the ultimate models but still the mainstay of the city's defense. Further back were two rows of mortars, similar to those from the pre-apocalypse era but larger and more futuristic in appearance.

These were Battle Contribution weapons, exchanged by Ye Zhongming at great cost, called "Tossed Shaking Cannons." Each was equipped with twenty specially designed shells.

The last two rows consisted of giant vertical bows, already loaded with ten arrows each, and fully mechanized catapults, with colorful stones piled beside them. Their purposes were unknown.

Due to the terrain, each row was slightly higher than the one in front. After being adjusted by Cloud Peak's engineers, they formed a staggered attack formation.

Following Ye Zhongming's command, the catapults with the longest range began to hum. Then, five hundred colorful stone balls flew into the sky.

Yes, each of these ten rows of weapons had at least five hundred units! Due to their size, the vertical bows and Tossed Shaking Cannons had even more, with over seven hundred in each row.

Five hundred massive stones traced parabolic arcs through the air before landing in the monster horde.

Different effects began to manifest.

The red stones crushed monsters into pulp before exploding into fierce flames, igniting everything around them like hellfire.

The green stones splashed corrosive poison upon impact, eating away at the monsters' bodies. The yellow stones released toxic fumes that, when inhaled, caused the monsters' internal organs to rot. The white stones released swarms of insects that burrowed into the monsters' bodies, driving them into a frenzy and attacking any living thing in sight.

The most annoying were the purple stones. After crushing their targets, they shattered, releasing a sticky purple liquid. Any monster touched by this liquid became stuck, able to move only within a two-meter radius. They would be pulled back after a struggle if they tried to charge forward.

Sharp-eyed evolved noticed that only level seven monsters could break free from this glue-like substance with great effort. Level six monsters were completely trapped unless they were strength-based or had sharp body parts to cut through the adhesive. Some monsters, trying to help their comrades by biting or pulling, also got stuck.

"Great stuff!"

Seeing the effects of these "functional" catapults, many people couldn't help but think this.

Traditional catapults were used to attack cities, targeting walls, gates, and buildings. These catapults, however, were entirely different.

They were called "Colorful Catapults."

Not battle contribution weapons, but blueprint-based, created by a smith who had come to Ying City to make a living. He had since joined Cloud Peak's production department, managed by the logistics division.

Ye Zhongming provided him with ample materials, already processed, so his main task was assembly. With the help of potions to replenish his mental energy, he produced a large number of these catapults in just a few months.

The Colorful Catapults didn't fire randomly. Each type of stone had its designated area, preventing situations like their own fire burning away their poison gas.

Compared to the ultimate Annihilations, these catapults had lower individual lethality, but their numbers made up for it. With no firing interval, once all the prepared colorful stones were launched, the total damage they caused far exceeded that of the Annihilation cannons.

The death toll wasn't comparable, but the number of injured and incapacitated monsters was much higher.

Next, the city-defense Crystal Cannons went into action, emitting the characteristic sizzling sound of crystal weapons as they harvested the lives of monsters in their designated areas.

As the monsters continued to charge closer, the ten rows of weapons opened fire, each dominating within its range. Notably, with their rapid-fire and low trajectories, the Tossed Shaking Cannons allowed their shells to land quickly in the enemy ranks.

Their attack method was unique. They didn't cause traditional shrapnel damage upon explosion but relied entirely on "shock."

The explosions created powerful shockwaves that, while ineffective against the monsters' tough skin, caused massive damage to softer parts like eyes, eardrums, and brains. Monsters hit by these cannons were often left deaf, blind, or brain-damaged, rendering them combat-ineffective.

Behind the ten rows of weapon emplacements was a special group of people led by Li Qiang.

Around him were about a thousand individuals.

These were all sharpshooters.

Their weapons were varied—bows, crossbows, guns, cannons—but they were all sharpshooting specialists or had sharpshooting skills. Most carried firearms, with snipers making up the majority.

These individuals were equipped with Cloud Peak's newly mass-produced micro-engraved bullets.

"Team A, target level six! Team B, target level five and below! Team leaders, target level seven! Free fire!"

After crossing the swamp and gravel ground, the faster, flying monsters threatened Cloud Peak's battle formation. Li Qiang's team then began their performance.

Despite their small numbers, which prevented them from forming their own combat unit, their terror was undeniable. Especially with the mass production of micro-engraved bullets, core members had

highly sought after them. Since they couldn't form an independent unit, they were distributed among various combat teams.

These individuals usually belonged to the core members' units.

They were Cloud Peak's sniper unit.

In combat, they had the highest degree of freedom. Apart from following orders on when to start attacking, they decided their own timing, frequency, hiding spots, and even targets.

Now, armed with ranged weapons, these individuals seemed to fire randomly. But as they attacked, the fiercely charging flying monsters fell from the sky like dumplings. The once densely packed formation quickly developed large gaps.

The snipers hit their targets with almost every shot, no matter how the monsters tried to evade.

These individuals, aided by their job or skills, practiced shooting fast-moving targets' vital points as part of their training.

After each sniper fired about five or six shots, the flying monsters, already battered by the catapults and crossbows, were completely wiped out.

At this point, everyone realized that the battle had temporarily stopped. The vanguard of over seventy thousand monsters hadn't even reached the edge of Cloud Peak's battle formation but had already been completely annihilated!

Chapter 1482: How?

Ye Zhongming's furrowed brows relaxed slightly.

Five hundred and seventy thousand—such a large-scale war was something he had only heard about a few times in his previous life, and two of those instances didn't even occur in China.

Even though Ye Zhongming had reached the pinnacle of humanity in less than five years in this life, facing a seven-digit number of monsters without the high walls and strong fortifications of Cloud Peak still left him feeling uneasy.

However, the recent round of attacks from Cloud Peak had eased his mind. It proved that the technology he now possessed, whether Earth's native technology or the technology from the wheel, was sufficient to handle this battle.

At the very least, there shouldn't be any major surprises.

Unaware of their leader's inner turmoil, the Cloud Peak warriors were simply excited.

They would only consider the battle's outcome after it was decided. Until then, they would cheer for their own advantages.

Over a hundred thousand evolved here, all powerful, so the seventy thousand monsters couldn't do much to them.

But wiping out these ugly creatures should have taken much longer than the less than ten minutes it had just taken.

This efficiency even stunned Cloud Peak itself.

At that moment, a loud boom came from the other side of the mountain, causing the entire secret realm to tremble. Everyone instinctively looked up and saw the dark clouds in the sky churning violently, as if the world was ending.

Then, continuous minor tremors followed.

Although the tremors were small in amplitude, their clarity at such a distance indicated their immense power.

Clearly, the two level-nine lifeforms had already started fighting over there.

Many of Cloud Peak's core members showed expressions of joy on their faces. At this point, all the prerequisites of the plan had been met. What remained was to see the outcome of the battles in their respective theaters.

"Shadow, is he ready?"

Ye Zhongming looked at the churning dark clouds; his heart filled with concern. Only he knew that a crucial part of the plan still hadn't been executed yet. It depended on the battle between the Armor King and the Nine-Winged Crow. If the situation he feared arose or Shadow's actions failed, then this plan...

The loud report from the intelligence officer interrupted Ye Zhongming's thoughts. He heard that the main force of the monsters was approaching. Like the vanguard, they were drawn by the severed path ahead and the thick scent of blood, charging madly toward the Cloud Peak battle formation.

"Here are the photos." Xia Lei handed over a computer, holding it before Ye Zhongming. The screen displayed intelligence just transmitted by the Exquisite Floating Ball. The monster army was densely packed, rushing towards them.

The photos were marked with many numbers, and estimates of the monster count were calculated scientifically using the Exquisite Floating Ball. At this distance, even though this golden-modified equipment was floating above the Cloud Peak battle formation, it could still complete such tasks without fear of being shot down by large groups of flying monsters.

"The monster groups are mostly connected, but there are a few relatively weak points." Xia Lei pointed at the photos, continuously swiping to show Ye Zhongming several areas.

"Here is the first weak point with sparse monsters. The specific reason is unknown. The monster count is around 850,000 right before this region."

Hearing this number, Ye Zhongming frowned.

"The sparse area is about a kilometer long, with only a little over 800 monsters in this region. Behind them is the largest group in this monster horde, numbering three million."

Even though he already knew the specific numbers, hearing such figures still made Ye Zhongming's heart skip a beat.

"Next is this," Xia Lei tapped on a spot. The photo was taken from high above, with the monsters appearing as small dots. But here, the outline of a large creature, clearly a massive beast, could be seen.

"Comparing it with the database, this is a level-eight 'Mountain Fierce,' a renowned existence in the Blue Secret Realm. Several kings and Saintess know of its existence. Aside from the Nine-Winged Crow, it should be one of the beings closest to level nine."

Xia Lei paused before continuing, "Based on their descriptions, its strength should... surpass that of Yangos, Big Yellow, and the Death King Tree."

Hearing this, Big Yellow, who was lying nearby, lifted his head and let out a dissatisfied snort.

Ye Zhongming wasn't surprised by this. After all, no matter how powerful Yangos, Death King Tree, and Yellow Ball were, they hadn't been level-eight for long. They couldn't compare to these ancient monsters that had lived for who knows how many years.

Just as he was about to hear more from Xia Lei, he noticed she had fallen silent. Turning to look, he saw that his woman's expression had turned grim.

"What's wrong?"

Xia Lei sighed softly, "Behind the Mountain Fierce, there's a group of... very special existences."

As she spoke, she continuously swiped through the photos. Ye Zhongming noticed that the monster density in this area was still sparse. Behind the Mountain Fierce, small groups of monsters appeared at intervals along the central axis. Their numbers weren't large, ranging from a few hundred to over a hundred thousand, according to the numbers displayed in the photos.

"Are they..."

"Yes." Xia Lei nodded, "Level eight. Those level-eight monsters that have their own tribes or loyal followers."

"How many?"

"The photos show over twenty." Xia Lei smiled, "These are the 'nobles' among the level-eight monsters, always surrounded by entourages. The other level-eight monsters are hidden within the massive monster horde. The exact number can't be estimated, but it should be no less than a hundred."

So, adding these twenty-plus nobles, the total would be close to a hundred and thirty level eights?!

How many level eights did Cloud Peak even have?

Many core members were surprised, followed by an unprecedented sense of gravity.

This didn't match the information they had received earlier. According to previous intelligence, there were only about a hundred level-eight lifeforms. Now, there were twenty more. According to Xia Lei's

expression, these additional ones were likely the twenty 'nobles.' Not only were there more, but they were also the stronger ones.

The inflated confidence from seeing Cloud Peak's various weapons earlier instantly deflated. Everyone knew that things had just gotten more complicated.

Ye Zhongming glanced at everyone and suddenly laughed.

"What's our purpose here? For those level five and six demon crystals? Of course not. It's for the level seven and eight ones. Since there are now over twenty additional level eight lifeforms, that means over twenty more level eight demon crystals. With a bit of luck, that's another eight-star evolution potion. They're practically delivering money to us. Why the long faces?"

With that, Ye Zhongming drew the Undead Sand Moon Blade and walked toward the battlefield's front lines.

Chapter 1483: Sea of traps

Ye Zhongming stood before the ten rows of weapons, continuously carving massive blade marks into the ground. Each slash was delivered with full force.

There was no other way. Only by doing this could he summon more powerful undead creatures, who, at least in terms of level, would only be slightly inferior to the horde of monsters.

After a short while, Ye Zhongming retreated, leaving behind over a hundred massive gashes that glowed faintly. Various undead creatures began to emerge.

Most of the people were seeing their leader's ability for the first time, and their jaws dropped in astonishment.

After consuming a stamina recovery potion, Ye Zhongming sat on the ground.

Even for a monster like him, delivering over a hundred full-force slashes in succession was exhausting. To maintain peak condition for the upcoming battle, he needed to rest.

"Three minutes until contact!"

A voice echoed across the battlefield. The monster horde had already appeared in the vision of the Cloud Peak warriors, stepping into the green swamp.

Various preparation sounds rose and fell.

By this time, all the core members had returned to their respective teams, communicating through their battle contribution badges.

"Two minutes until contact!"

As the voice rang out, the ultimate Annihilation Crystal Cannons behind the formation began a new firing round. The monsters within range were once again met with the most intense bombardment.

The undead creatures summoned by Ye Zhongming knew no fear. By now, hundreds had emerged, and under Ye Zhongming's command, they moved forward, stopping at the border between the grassland and the gravel ground.

Behind them, Ye Zhongming stood up and carved another two hundred gashes on each side of the Cloud Peak's battle formation. He then had to rest again.

He noticed that while this ability was manageable at first, the more he used it, the more stamina each slash consumed. After two hundred slashes, his mental energy also began to decline—not just in terms of depletion but overall capacity.

This startled Ye Zhongming. If summoning these undead creatures caused his mental energy capacity to shrink, it would be a huge loss. Mental energy was the foundation of his strength.

But after careful consideration, he stopped worrying. He realized that the capacity wasn't shrinking; it was being "occupied" by these gashes. Once the gashes lost their effect, his mental energy would return to its original level. Of course, while the upper limit would recover, the consumed energy was still gone and needed replenishment.

During Ye Zhongming's recovery period, the command was handed over to Xia Lei. The ten rows of weapons had already opened fire, continuously reaping the lives of the monsters. Li Qiang and his shooters were also clearing the monsters in the sky.

However, this time, the number of monsters wasn't seventy thousand from the vanguard but over eight hundred thousand. The monsters' levels were significantly higher, and their ferocity was even more intense. The massive casualties didn't frighten them; instead, they enraged them, driving them to charge even more frantically. By now, they had crossed the swamp and entered the gravel ground.

Cloud Peak's long-range attack strategy this time was not to adjust the firing targets. The monsters charging forward would be left to the Cloud Peak evolved at the rear.

The gravel ground was a unique terrain, covered with stones of various sizes and shapes. Some were as small as sand grains or fingernails, while others were as large as multi-story buildings piled up like small hills.

When the monsters charged in, they were met with an attack they could never have imagined—traps!

These traps weren't traditional, like digging a pit and placing sharp wooden stakes or setting up a tripwire that would trigger a few arrows.

The traps here were all high-quality products from Le Dayuan's laboratory and some professional traps set by hunters and assassins.

For example, when the monsters stepped on Crystal Mines, weapons initially designed to defend Cloud Peak, the explosions were devastating. Even if they weren't as powerful as standard city-defense Crystal Cannons, they were close. Upon detonation, monsters within a ten-meter radius were almost shredded to pieces. Another example was the Spike Bed Trap. The activation switch was a sensor device. Once a moving object exceeding a certain speed triggered it, the trap would activate. The spike bed, disguised as the ground, would flip over, revealing a pit beneath. Driven by a machine, the spike bed would rotate, continuously striking any lifeforms that fell into the pit. The cycle would repeat as long as the machine was operational. If the spike bed got stuck or the machine broke down for any reason, a self-destruct mechanism would activate, causing the entire spike bed to explode and dealing with indiscriminate damage to the surroundings.

There was also a trap covering over a thousand square meters. Its activation device was at the far end. Once triggered, it would open over a hundred shooting holes within its coverage area, firing Arc Slicing Discs. To maximize the trap's effectiveness, Ye Zhongming crafted these discs, each at the silver level. Upon firing, they would perform wave-like attacks at a height of no more than five meters until their energy was depleted.

Each shooting hole could fire over a hundred of these cutting discs. Powered by demon crystals, the discs were highly lethal. Combined with their sharpness, they could continuously inflict damage on the surroundings. Monsters with lower levels or weaker defenses would be sliced apart.

In the most concentrated area of the gravel ground, hidden among the massive rocks, was a formation of Cannibal Flowers. Almost every rock, even on top of them, had an Earth-Gilded Cannibal Flower. They formed a sea of man-eating flowers connected through decomposing soil. Ye Zhongming had invested heavily, planting over ten thousand in that area, consuming a vast amount of Fertile Soil.

Within the sea of man-eating flowers, other types of offensive plants and various small traps were also there. Though seemingly insignificant, they made it extremely difficult for the monsters to advance, constantly under attack by the cannibal flowers.

It's worth noting that such a massive number of man-eating flowers shared defenses and digestion. If one flower swallowed prey, all ten thousand would digest it together through the rotting soil. Lower-level monsters would be turned into nutrients within the rotting soil in less than a second, enhancing the flowers' abilities or repairing damaged ones.

This sea of man-eating flowers became an almost insurmountable barrier for the monsters.

In addition, there was a deadly poison zone. This area contained almost every poison Cloud Peak could find—substances that rotted flesh, coagulated blood, numbed limbs, and dulled senses. Even Liu Zhenghong contributed her creation to this zone—Gene Disruptor!

Once monsters came into contact with this potion, their genes would be disrupted quickly, causing various physical symptoms like infections, high fevers, tumors, and rot, directly affecting their combat effectiveness or even rendering them incapacitated.

There was also a field of Dazzling Flash Grenades. When stepped on, they wouldn't immediately explode but turn into powder, sticking to the monsters' bodies. However, upon contact with liquids like bodily fluids or blood, they would emit an intensely blinding light, damaging the monsters' visual systems. Those farther away would be temporarily blinded, while those closer would be permanently blinded.

The monsters that managed to break through Cloud Peak's long-range weapon strikes were trapped in a sea of traps they could never comprehend.

Chapter 1484: Shadow

Deacon Water, Li Daqian, and the others were now cursing Ye Zhongming in their hearts.

Not only had he brought them here without a clear explanation, but he had also placed them so close to the battlefield of two level-nine lifeforms. Wasn't this just setting them up for disaster?

In truth, Ye Zhongming hadn't intended this. Guang Yao's Battle Squad was with them; even if he wanted to set them up, he wouldn't drag his people into it.

The real issue was that he had underestimated the battle between two level-nine beings.

He had based his expectations on the standards of the Saint Father.

However, it was clear that the only level-nine lifeform in the Blue Secret Realm wouldn't have the same reservations as the Saint Father when faced with a level-nine being from another world. All it knew was that killing this foreign being would allow it to enter the new world. It had already caught the scent of its own clone from the space gate.

Thus, in response to the Armor King's provocation, the Nine-Winged Crow retaliated with its full power.

The might of a level-nine lifeform could alter the heavens and the earth. Even though Deacon Water and the others were far away, they were still overwhelmed by the force. They could handle it as eight-star evolved, but the other evolved, and battle beasts were not so fortunate.

However, like a stubborn rock, Guang Yao refused to retreat, insisting that this was the best ambush point and that they couldn't leave.

This infuriated the three leaders, but there was nothing they could do.

It's hard to get off once you're on a pirate ship. They couldn't leave this place and had no choice but to endure.

On the distant battlefield, the two level-nine beings unleashed some skill. With a deafening roar, a massive wave of energy, mixed with dirt, rocks, and debris, surged toward them. In an instant, it swept over the four teams. Even though they had used various methods to defend themselves, many of the lower-level or poorly equipped warriors couldn't withstand the onslaught and suffered serious injuries.

"Guang Yao, if you insist on your previous stance, we won't accompany you anymore."

Commander Mu had known Guang Yao for a long time, but they had never interacted much since they belonged to different war zones. However, their statuses differed, giving Commander Mu a psychological advantage over Guang Yao. Unlike Deacon Water and Li Daqian, who saw Guang Yao as Ye Zhongming's representative, Commander Mu didn't hold him in the same regard.

Before he could finish speaking, another shockwave hit, causing chaos in the ranks. It wasn't enough to knock everyone over, but it disrupted their formation.

Guang Yao thought momentarily, then pulled out a piece of equipment, planted it in front of the team, and installed a shimmering light blue gem into it.

"Staff of Nature?!"

Deacon Water, who was very familiar with Ye Zhongming, immediately recognized this blue-grade defensive equipment. The Staff of Nature had ranked quite high in the national equipment rankings. If not for its level limitations, it could have ranked even higher.

"A Nature Gem?" Commander Mu's focus was clearly different. He noticed the gem, and his heart stirred.

This wasn't an ordinary Nature Gem but a top-tier Super Gem. A single one of these was incredibly precious, if not priceless.

Guang Yao activated the Staff of Nature, and the Water Bottle Protection appeared, enveloping all the teams within it.

Unlike other water-type gems, the Super Water Gem's Water Bottle Protection was almost completely transparent. The beautiful illusion it created flickered in and out, and despite its wide coverage, it gave off a fragile feeling.

"Earlier, I used a concealment item to weaken our presence, making the two level-nine lifeforms ignore us even if they noticed us. But this is different." Guang Yao pointed at the Water Bottle Protection, which had already blocked the incoming debris. "The protection it provides can even withstand a full-force attack from a level-nine lifeform. Even if it shatters, it will still save our lives. But... it might draw the attention of the Nine-Winged Crow and the Armor King."

"You!" Mu Xinfei glared at Guang Yao, furious that he hadn't mentioned such a critical detail earlier. Compared to drawing the attention—or even attacks—from level-nine lifeforms, enduring some debris and energy waves was nothing.

"I'm just stating a possibility so you can be prepared. Most likely, they won't be interested even if they notice us."

Sure enough, when the Water Bottle Protection was activated, everyone felt the Nine-Winged Crow and the Armor King pause momentarily, but they quickly resumed their battle.

This eased the tension among the leaders.

"It seems we can hold out until they decide the outcome," Guang Yao thought to himself, feeling somewhat relieved. He had been worried that things wouldn't go as the boss had predicted.

But before Guang Yao could fully relax, he suddenly became alert, looking toward the smoke-filled battlefield ahead.

Just a few seconds later, a black light slammed into the Water Bottle Protection. The previously indestructible barrier shook violently, its glow intensifying from near-transparency to a bright, luminous sphere.

This was the reaction of the Super Water Bottle Protection when it suffered an attack that rapidly depleted its energy.

Deacon Water, Li Daqian, and Commander Mu had also sensed something wrong almost simultaneously with Guang Yao. Seeing the Water Bottle Protection react like this, their expressions turned grim.

"What's going on?" an elder from the Thousand Beast Villa asked nervously.

Guang Yao's face darkened as he stared at the shadow that had flashed by earlier. He spat out two words: "Clone."

He had seen the true form of that shadow—it was strikingly similar to the clone the Nine-Winged Crow had sent to Earth. In other words, the boss's judgment hadn't been entirely accurate. The Nine-Winged Crow had indeed taken an interest in them and sent an avatar to attack.

Guang Yao quickly reconsidered. Did this mean that the Nine-Winged Crow still had strength to spare while fighting the Armor King?

And if so, the boss had predicted this correctly!

Guang Yao stood behind the Water Bottle Protection, unmoving. He knew the boss hadn't sent anyone else to accompany Commander Mu and the others because he needed Guang Yao's excellent judgment to determine the right moment for someone to strike.

Only now did Guang Yao realize the weight of his responsibility.

So, the Nine-Winged Crow was as overwhelmingly powerful as the boss had feared, holding an absolute advantage over the Armor King. Without human intervention, the Armor King truly stood no chance against the Nine-Winged Crow, incapable of inflicting serious damage.

Then...

Guang Yao suddenly sensed something. Without hesitation, he pressed a small device on his body.

It felt as if he had just endured an intense battle. A sense of detachment filled his entire being. Guang Yao knew he had done all he could, but he wasn't sure if the timing was right. He just hoped everything would turn out well.

Earlier, he had felt the Armor King being suppressed, teetering on the edge of defeat.

Deacon Water and the others looked at Guang Yao, who now seemed somewhat listless, and thought to themselves that this person was very strange.

In the chaotic battlefield, a black shadow suddenly appeared within the still-open space gate, blending seamlessly with the Nine-Winged Crow's dark clouds.

This shadow didn't hesitate. As soon as it appeared, it transformed into a dark halo and floated toward the massive shadow in the sky—the Nine-Winged Crow's true form.

The Nine-Winged Crow immediately noticed but didn't act immediately, only casting a suspicious glance.

The shadow rushed to the side in that brief moment, revealing a human form. It then tore open its clothes, exposing a peculiar device on its chest.

It resembled Iron Man's arc reactor but was much larger. The bright crystal suddenly lit up, followed by an explosion.

Chapter 1484.5- Shadow

A violent, unidirectional explosion.

The target was the Nine-Winged Crow.

After the explosion, the shadow disappeared without a trace. In the sky, the Nine-Winged Crow uttered its most piercing cry since the battle began and ascended higher into the sky.

On the ground, the Armor King, which had been fighting for some time, had already been completely suppressed. The veteran level-nine lifeform of the secret realm was far more powerful. Additionally, since the Armor King wasn't a flying creature, it was disadvantaged against the Blue Secret Realm's strongest mutated lifeform.

It was already injured, but its fierce fighting spirit and bloodlust kept it from retreating.

However, this didn't mean it thought it was stronger than its opponent.

When the shadow appeared, the Armor King almost attacked, as it smelled the scent of the Nine-Winged Crow on the shadow. But it also detected the scent of an evolved from Earth, one it particularly disliked.

In that instant, it instinctively realized that the shadow's target wasn't itself but the Nine-Winged Crow.

The Armor King was known for its recklessness, ferocity, aggression, and bloodlust, but that didn't mean it lacked intelligence. On the contrary, as a level-nine lifeform, it possessed all the necessary traits of a high-level being.

It could assess situations and make decisions, not relying solely on instinct.

It didn't act, and neither did the Nine-Winged Crow. Although it smelled the scent of humans, it also detected the scent of "itself."

Yes, it was the scent of its six-winged clone that had entered the other world.

At that moment, the Nine-Winged Crow thought its clone had returned, carrying the scent of other lifeforms, perhaps from consuming different prey over time.

Upon detecting the shadow, the Nine-Winged Crow and the Armor King initially believed it was to their advantage. As it turned out, the Armor King was right, and the Nine-Winged Crow was wrong.

Of course, if the Nine-Winged Crow had been given even a second or two more, it could have discerned the true nature of the shadow. But it was amid a battle with a being of equal strength, and its attention couldn't be fully diverted. Thus, the shadow—referred to as "Shadow" by Ye Zhongming—succeeded in its sneak attack.

It was a self-destruction.

Shadow had originally been a warrior of Cloud Peak. After being severely injured in battle, he lost his limbs and his eyes.

His evolved constitution allowed him to survive, but he became a cripple.

He believed Cloud Peak and Boss Ye would continue to support him. There was a dedicated area within the mountain villa for people like him to recuperate. But he couldn't accept living as a cripple, needing help even to use the bathroom.

So he requested to see the boss and Sister Hong. When they arrived, he volunteered to become an experimental subject.

In Cloud Peak, this wasn't unusual. Many severely disabled individuals chose this path to either extend or end their lives.

He had no attachments left in this world. His only wish was to live normally, even for a day, rather than lying in bed every day.

He didn't know what experiments Liu Zhenghong performed on him. At first, he gained legs—though they didn't feel human, they allowed him to walk. Later, he received arms, which were also non-human but functional. Finally, he regained his sight with a pair of yellowish-brown eyes.

He saw Liu Zhenghong, who greeted him with respect. He also saw Guancheng Chun with his four legs, and the many researchers who served him.

When the boss appeared and presented him with an optional mission, he agreed without hesitation.

He chose the latter: a dim, uneventful life versus a glorious moment.

So he studied a strange card the boss provided, which allowed him to transform into a shadow with incredible speed. However, it could only be used once, after which all abilities would vanish. He also became a living bomb, with Liu Zhenghong and Le Dayuan implanting a bomb in his body that combined demon crystals and nuclear energy and was also powered by life force.

This was said to be Cloud Peak's pinnacle of technology.

Soon, his mission was assigned.

The boss brought him into Cloud Peak's legendary dark organization, Chameleon, and made him the first head of a highly specialized department composed entirely of suicide operatives. The department was small but terrifying.

This department was called Shadow, and its head was also called Shadow. He was the first-generation Shadow.

The boss said that each generation of Shadow could only execute one mission—a mission that guaranteed death.

He wasn't afraid. Instead, he felt honored.

His name might rank in the top five on the Monument of Heroes.

Helping Cloud Peak and the boss kill a level-nine lifeform—what an incredible feat.

When he detonated himself, Shadow completed the most glorious sacrifice of his life.

This self-destructing bomb, carrying the scent of the Nine-Winged Crow's clone, naturally couldn't kill the Nine-Winged Crow. Ye Zhongming's goal was simply to injure it, bringing its strength down to a level the Armor King could handle.

This was achieved through Shadow, who was fanatically loyal to Cloud Peak and the boss.

The Nine-Winged Crow was injured, and the Armor King shot into the sky like a cannonball, using some ability to briefly hover and engage the Nine-Winged Crow, preventing it from retreating to recover.

The two god-like beings fought fiercely, turning the sky and earth upside down.

At this point, Cloud Peak had done all it could and succeeded. The rest depended on the battle's outcome between the two level-nine lifeforms.

While the battle here climaxed, Cloud Peak's main forces faced their greatest crisis since the war began.

The demon monster's Sky Cavaliers broke through to Cloud Peak's airspace.

Composed of flying monsters carrying land-based monsters on their backs, they flew over the Cloud Peak formation and dropped their riders.

At the same time, some of the unique species among the monsters began to unleash their power. The first to act were the Earth-Walking Monsters, which burrowed underground to the Cloud Peak formation, frantically expanding tunnels to create new attack routes for their comrades!

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The Unique Species—this was the name Earth's evolved gave to monsters with special abilities, such as those that moved underground, within ice, or even in magma, including those on the Undead Hill.

These types of lifeforms had been continuously discovered over nearly a year of exploring the secret realm.

How could they afford to let their guard down against these Unique Species?

Progress was initially smooth and rapid when they began frantically digging tunnels beneath the Cloud Peak battle formation. However, they soon noticed liquid seeping out from the front. The "digging beasts" were puzzled and alarmed. The liquid then began flowing faster and faster. When one section of the tunnel was breached, even more of this substance gushed out.

Next, for some reason, the liquid started to burn.

Fire was something most monsters feared, and the flames here were unusually hot, though no one knew why. Once the liquid touched the monsters, it ignited them, causing chaos throughout the underground tunnels.

Many monsters, forgetting their initial goal of expanding the tunnels for their comrades, began frantically digging toward the surface. However, after breaking through the thick layer of soil, they encountered hard, bluish-gray boulders and the stone pillars supporting them. No matter how hard they attacked, they could only leave faint scratches on the surface.

These Unique Species had a variety of abilities, but when it came to offense and defense, they were far inferior to ordinary monsters.

They couldn't break through to the surface.

The flames spread through the tunnels, burning to the distant exit points, where they erupted into the open air. The monsters waiting to enter the tunnels were caught in the inferno, and many were burned to death.

The combination of fuel and the combustion accelerant crafted by Candy, the alchemist, had achieved significant results.

With the Magical Workbench, her exclusive weapon, and the numerous formulas and materials collected by Cloud Peak, Candy had now advanced to the rank of Advanced Alchemist. She could produce over twenty different types of potions and items. If not for the lack of job advancement scrolls, she could have already reached the highest level of her job, just like Ye Zhongming.

This combustion accelerant was a talent skill she awakened when she became an Intermediate Alchemist. Originally intended to aid her in alchemy, it was now being used for underground defense, with remarkable effectiveness.

Of course, there wasn't just one tunnel. There were others, but they too were met with attacks—this time from Jiu Bao and Ye Zhongming's battle rat army.

On the surface, Jiu Bao seemed more like a support battle pet, but it was a terror underground. Its skills were perfectly suited for subterranean combat. For example, its Soil Transformation ability allowed it to secrete a fluid that turned the surrounding soil into a sticky, gel-like substance. This substance had two effects: it could repair Jiu Bao's body when injured, and it could slow down and mildly poison nearby creatures, reducing their combat effectiveness.

Another ability, Soil Swallowing, allowed Jiu Bao to move rapidly underground. Its massive mouth acted like a digging machine. The soil it consumed was converted into a liquid that could be sprayed out when needed. This liquid was highly corrosive, far more potent than strong acids.

Additionally, Jiu Bao's massive, elastic body was incredibly strong and highly durable, capable of reflecting damage. Its head and tail could connect, making it a terrifying combat machine underground.

As for Ye Zhongming's Battle Rat Army, which he had invested significant resources into building, they couldn't move freely underground like Jiu Bao. Their ability to dig tunnels had degraded over time, and they couldn't compare to the level-eight behemoth.

However, they could attack through the tunnels the mutated lifeforms dug.

Thanks to breakthroughs in Liu Zhenghong's lab and the Rats' reproductive capabilities, their numbers had now reached nearly 50,000.

However, Liu Zhengong discovered that this number seemed to be a limit. The offspring produced either lacked certain abilities or were extremely resistant to following commands.

Liu Zhengong attributed this to her own technical limitations, but many researchers believed it was due to inherent biological constraints.

After all, these War Rats were essentially a type of genetic lifeform, albeit created through a gentler process that retained most of their species' characteristics. If they could reproduce indefinitely, there would be no need for genetic lifeform production lines—rats would simply dominate the post-apocalyptic world.

On this point, Ye Zhongming agreed with the researchers.

Still, 50,000 was a terrifying number. These War Rats could evolve; even with their limits, they were all above level five. Currently, the highest-level War Rat leader reached level seven, with several thousand at level six, over 20,000 at level five, and the remaining 10,000 or so at level four.

While mutated rats were generally weaker than other monsters of the same level, the War Rat Legion surpassed the average strength of their peers. Combined with their bizarre abilities and their swarm-like combat tactics, these little creatures were terrifying in battle.

They surged out of the tunnels, swiftly overwhelming the mutated lifeforms and killing far more monsters in a short time than Jiu Bao could.

One level-eight lifeform, 50,000 War Rats, and specially crafted Taining Bricks ensured the safety of the ground beneath the Cloud Peak battle formation.

As for the monsters dropped by the Sky Cavaliers, Cloud Peak had its own methods to deal with them.

The first was the grenade launchers exchanged through the Battle Contribution Badge. Two models were available, each with over 5,000 units, and ammunition was plentiful.

These weapons weren't expensive, and their power wasn't particularly impressive, especially the initial V1 model.

However, when anything is used in large quantities, it can produce unexpected effects. The same was true for these rocket launchers.

When 10,000 rockets were fired simultaneously, covering a section of the sky, the combined explosions and shockwaves blasted the monsters back into the air.

Moreover, these portable weapons had a fast reload time and a short attack interval. Even if some high-defense monsters survived the first wave, they would face a second, third, and fourth wave of attacks before landing.

After four waves of attacks, only the mangled remains of monsters fell into the Cloud Peak battle formation.

If these rockets had been capable of targeting the high-flying flying monsters, they might have completely dominated the airspace.

The results were impressive, but the cost was staggering.

Ye Zhongming and the members with Battle Contribution Badges had saved up for so long, only to spend almost all their points on the cannons and these rocket launchers. The ammunition was cheap per unit, but the sheer quantity required made the cost astronomical.

Just now, the monsters dropped by the flying creatures had been blown to pieces, ensuring the safety of the Cloud Peak warriors overhead. But four rounds of firing meant 40,000 rockets...

40,000!

With so many battle contribution points, Ye Zhongming had only prepared 20 rounds per V1 launcher and 10 rounds per V2 launcher, totaling 150,000 rounds.

In that one wave, over a quarter of the ammunition was gone.

This was also why Ye Zhongming felt uneasy. The cost of this war was too high. Only a complete victory would yield sufficient returns; otherwise, they would suffer a loss.

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The second method was Cloud Peak's air force.

Originally, this unit was far from being a proper formation. Ye Zhongming had spent a great deal of effort and resources on them, but flying lifeforms were simply too rare. Taming and training them required a lot of time. With support from the Posthumous People and Saint Light Hall, they had begun to take shape and could be considered initially combat-ready.

However, their numbers were small, and their training was insufficient. Compared to Saint Light Hall's massive air force, they were far behind.

Thus, Ye Zhongming only deployed them for reconnaissance or guaranteed-victory missions around Ying City, occasionally letting them "play around."

But this time, with Cloud Peak's fate on the line, the fledgling air force was brought out. They were joined by a powerful ally—Yangos.

With Yangos leading the charge, the battle would be easier.

Additionally, the Exquisite Floating Ball and a War Fortress were also integrated into the air force, providing further protection for these novice Cloud Peak Sky Knights.

Finally, there were the ground-based anti-air equipment and units.

Within the Cloud Peak battle formation stood numerous tall structures—Violent Thunder Towers.

Ye Zhongming hadn't clustered these weapons with the ten rows of long-range weapons. Instead, he dispersed them near each battle squad to guard against potential aerial attacks.

Over a thousand towers were spread out, one every few dozen meters, covering the entire battle formation within their firing range.

Facing the flying monsters that didn't have to traverse the gravel ground, Yangos became the second level-eight being from Cloud Peak to join the fight after Jiu Bao.

The evil dragon patiently guarded the roughly 2,000-strong Cloud Peak air force as they ascended into the sky to engage the flying monsters.

Once given the order to attack freely, Yangos immediately became ferocious. Like a king of the skies, it bit, clawed, breathed fire, and spewed mist, single-handedly scattering the flying monsters.

The Cloud Peak air force and the War Fortress, which provided aerial fire support, merely played a supporting role.

However, if you knew Yangos, you'd notice that its gaze kept drifting toward the distant black clouds where the Nine-Winged Crow resided during the battle. In its eyes were greed, desire, fear, and... vigilance.

The evil dragon had already decided: if things went south, it would immediately flee with Ye Zhongming.

If anyone in Cloud Peak disagreed with this battle, it was Yangos.

Its philosophy was simple: bully the weak and fear the strong—and it was unapologetic about it.

In Yangos' view, challenging a level-nine lifeform now was completely unnecessary, even if it was part of a plan to pit two level-nine beings against each other.

Were level-nine lifeforms so easy to deal with? Ultimately, they'd still have to face one, even if it was injured. It was still a level-nine being!

Yangos believed it would be much safer to wait until it evolved to level nine before taking them on.

However, despite its plans to flee at the first sign of trouble, Yangos fought fiercely in battle. Its dragon bloodline allowed it to compete with many powerful lifeforms of the same level shortly after evolving to level eight. It had grown even stronger nearly a year into being level eight. Yellow Ball, who had once been its equal, struggled to keep up.

Liu Zhenghong had said that among Cloud Peak's forces, three had the highest potential to reach level nine: Death King Tree, Jiu Bao, and Yangos.

Death King Tree was a given. As a veteran eight-level lifeform and a mutated plant, it possessed a Life Brain and was very close to level nine.

Jiu Bao, on the other hand, had its unique ability to absorb vast amounts of energy directly from the soil.

Both the Death King Tree and Jiu Bao had innate abilities that allowed them to evolve rapidly.

Only Yangos relied entirely on its bloodline, which naturally granted it rapid evolution.

Once all three reached level nine, Liu Zhengong believed that Yangos would inherently be stronger than other newly ascended level-nine beings.

The number of flying monsters wasn't particularly high among the over five million monsters, but there were still nearly a million, given the base number.

They continuously assaulted Cloud Peak's airspace, and their numbers were growing. Even Yangos, initially fierce, began to take damage. Its roars of anger and pain frequently echoed through the sky.

Reluctantly, Ye Zhongming ordered all combat machines with anti-air capabilities to assist in attacking the flying monsters.

The sky was soon filled with beautiful trails of energy.

This significantly reduced the pressure on Yangos and the Cloud Peak air force.

However, increasing anti-air firepower meant reducing ground firepower.

The traps in the gravel ground and the sea of man-eating flowers were terrifying, inflicting massive casualties. But the sheer number of monsters was overwhelming. After paying a heavy price, they finally broke through the gravel ground and entered the small grassland where Cloud Peak was stationed.

There, they clashed with the undead creatures.

During this time, hundreds of gashes had produced many undead creatures. Concentrated at the border, their numbers had surpassed 10,000. Under Ye Zhongming's command, they didn't spread out to block all paths to the Cloud Peak battle formation. Doing so would have made their formation too thin, easily scattered by the monster onslaught.

Instead, Ye Zhongming had them form a dense battle formation to withstand the charging monsters.

The effectiveness... was naturally good. They held out for a full minute!

But again, the sheer number of monsters was overwhelming. Like a tidal wave, they crashed through the undead creatures, even at the cost of several times their own numbers.

Thus, only a small, nearly unobstructed grassland remained between the Cloud Peak battle formation and the monster horde.

The two sides finally faced each other directly.