

Apocalypse 1486

Chapter 1486: First time Cloud Peak boss attacked

Every Cloud Peak warrior was waiting for Ye Zhongming's command.

Due to the elevated position of the battle formation, they had a clear view of everything happening below. Seeing the monsters break through the gravel ground and enter the small grassland, everyone prepared to attack.

However, apart from the ten rows of attack weapons at the front being pulled back by specialized personnel, the attack order was delayed. In an instant, the monsters were already close to the Cloud Peak battle formation.

The towering monsters were so close that their ferocious expressions could be seen clearly.

"Boss?!"

Little Tiger, being impulsive, was the first to speak up through the Battle Contribution Badge's communication system.

"Wait."

Ye Zhongming's response was curt. Little Tiger, realizing the situation, wisely kept quiet. Pushing further would only reveal his lack of emotional intelligence.

Watching the approaching monsters, Ye Zhongming silently calculated the distance.

"One thousand meters!"

Xia Lei suddenly spoke up. At the same time, Ye Zhongming issued a command to Red Hair through their mental link. Red Hair, who had been idly stroking the Undead Dragonfish within the formation, let out a silent roar.

Then, the Cloud Peak warriors saw a special unit within the monster horde.

"Too tired, too tired. Ye Zhongming, you're using me as a laborer. I'm going to eat you."

The unique and piercing voice gave many a sense of familiarity.

"Shut up, or I'll kill you." Red Hair's voice floated lightly across the battlefield, silencing the noisy creature.

The Brain Child shrunk its head, hiding behind the shoulder of a massive Zombie Ape. It needed to rest; the ability it had just used had drained most of its energy.

The Brain Child, which had been missing for a long time, reappeared in the sight of Cloud Peak's members.

Shortly after Cloud Peak's first reorganization, the Brain Child disappeared. During this time, rumors spread—some said it had died, others claimed it had broken free from Cloud Peak's control, and some even insisted it had left with the Talking Lady. There were even "eyewitness" accounts of its death, some convincing, others not.

The silence from Cloud Peak's higher-ups and Ye Zhongming seemed to confirm these speculations.

The Brain Child was truly dead, and Cloud Peak no longer had a zombie army.

If you were to ask Deacon Water whether they had included the zombie army in Cloud Peak's strength when compiling the national power rankings, she would undoubtedly say no.

In their eyes, the zombie army no longer existed.

But did it not exist?

No, it had always been there.

The process had been fraught with difficulties. The Brain Child had secretly carried out several missions for Cloud Peak that humans couldn't openly undertake. Each time, it had narrowly escaped death. With its high intelligence, the Brain Child naturally harbored resentment toward Ye Zhongming. However, it stayed since it couldn't break free from Red Hair and had no desire to leave Cloud Peak.

Cloud Peak assigned it dangerous missions, but the rewards were substantial as long as it survived. This allowed the Brain Child, a creature with no offensive or defensive capabilities, relying solely on controlling its kind, to evolve to level eight early on.

This time, Ye Zhongming assigned the Brain Child another perilous mission—one that bordered on suicide: teleport into the monster horde and snipe them.

The Brain Child's abilities mainly included mental control, mental attacks, ability insight, and more. One ability that had significantly improved after reaching level eight was spatial teleportation.

This ability wasn't like the Secret Realm Key, which could connect two different worlds. Instead, it allowed for medium-distance teleportation within the same space, similar to a space mage, and could transport many units.

As it was now, the Brain Child and its zombie army had been hiding in the forest some distance away. When Ye Zhongming needed them, they teleported en masse into the heart of the monster horde.

The reason for this was twofold. First, Ye Zhongming wanted to catch the monsters off guard and disrupt their charge momentum.

The undead lifeforms earlier had been a good example. Ten thousand of these summoned creatures gathered together could unleash considerable combat power. Although they were destined to lose to the monsters, the monsters couldn't defeat them in just one minute without the help of flying monsters.

Even encircling so many undead creatures would take considerable time.

But the reality was that the undead creatures only held out for a minute before being overwhelmed. This was because the monsters had a speed advantage in their mass charge, making them unstoppable.

Now, with tens of thousands of zombies suddenly appearing amid the monster horde, chaos ensued. The front lines continued to charge, while the rear had to stop to deal with these unexpected enemies.

Second, no matter how loyal the Brain Child was to Red Hair or how dependent it was on Cloud Peak, it ultimately led zombies—a large number of them. In the current situation, Ye Zhongming was concerned that the monsters' or humans' blood might stimulate the zombies, leading to unforeseen consequences that could undo all their efforts.

Fortunately, the Brain Child had this spatial teleportation ability, so Ye Zhongming stationed them on the periphery.

"The positioning is just right." Seeing where the zombie army had teleported, Ye Zhongming felt relieved. After saying this, he issued another command.

A large section of the grassland ahead suddenly collapsed.

The monsters at the front immediately fell into the pit.

The distance across the pit wasn't large, only about a hundred meters, but its width was extensive. Going around it would take considerable time, making them easy targets.

The pit itself had no traps. Cloud Peak had focused on the gravel ground and hadn't bothered with this area.

However, this pit was still well thought out because it was deep.

Given that the monsters ranged from a few meters to dozens of meters in height, Cloud Peak had prepared accordingly. The pit was over a hundred meters deep. Without modern tools, only evolved could have completed such a task quickly.

When the monsters fell into the pit, the height wasn't enough to kill them, but their own kind crushed many.

Li Qiang's shooting squad arrived at the edge of the pit. Each member threw a glass bottle of unknown contents into the pit. Though each bottle only held about two liters, over two thousand bottles added significantly.

The glass bottles were fragile, shattering upon impact with the struggling monsters. The liquid inside spilled out, coating the monsters but initially causing no visible effect.

However, thick green smoke began to rise as the liquid flowed downward and touched the monsters' wounds and blood. The monsters howled in pain, their bodies corroding.

This was another of Candy's creations— Liquid Poison! This poison wasn't inherently liquid but required contact with liquids to activate.

Moreover, this poison had contagious properties. When it came into contact with a liquid, it released its toxicity, turning the liquid into a new poison.

Although the toxicity would gradually weaken, the process was slow.

The monsters in the pit already had some wounds, and the fall caused further injuries and bleeding, providing the Liquid Poison with ample opportunity to take effect. The already chaotic monsters in the pit completely broke down.

Li Qiang and his squad stood at the pit's edge, shooting the monsters below and easily reaping lives.

After eliminating the upper layer, the shooting squad shifted their focus to the monsters within range on the other side of the pit.

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This undoubtedly alleviated the pressure on the zombie army, allowing them to hold out longer.

These human evolved from Earth possessed various abilities, making them stronger than monsters of the same level.

Their combat prowess far surpassed that of the undead creatures Ye Zhongming had summoned earlier.

At some point, the dense gunfire and the sound of arrows and bolts flying through the air began to weaken. Many paying attention to the battle realized that the first wave of over 800,000 monsters had been nearly wiped out. Only those directly facing Li Qiang's squad, separated by the zombie army, were still fighting, and their numbers had dwindled to less than 50,000.

For the first time, the Cloud Peak battle formation erupted in cheers.

The results of the battle had them excited.

Without moving the main formation, they had nearly eliminated a million monsters—over one-sixth of the total force—quickly.

Cloud Peak's warriors were among the most disciplined and obedient in the post-apocalyptic world, but they still couldn't compare to peacetime soldiers. The buzz of discussion grew louder, threatening to spiral out of control.

However, the commander-level figures like Ye Zhongming and Xia Lei were less optimistic than the ordinary soldiers.

"Master Le has sent word that the Annihilation Ultimate Model can only fire five more rounds before running out of demon crystals," Xia Lei said, standing beside Ye Zhongming with a serious expression.

"Additionally, among the long-range attack weapons, the Colorful Catapults have run out of ammunition. The demon crystals for the Crystal Cannons are nearly half depleted, and the Tossing Shock Cannons are in a similar state. The Giant Crossbows and Vertical Bows can hold out a bit longer, but

they're supporting the aerial battle and are constantly depleting. Also, the V1 Grenade Launchers have run out of ammunition."

Ye Zhongming listened, checking his Battle Contribution Badge. He found that the battle contribution points gained weren't substantial. During this phase, those wearing Battle Contribution Badges hadn't participated in combat, making it impossible to replenish ammunition.

"We've also lost the swamp and gravel positions. The grassland only has one last barrier left. Once we exhaust all our ammunition, we'll likely have to face... over three million monsters."

Three million...

Ye Zhongming kept turning this number over in his mind.

Indeed, Cloud Peak's main force hadn't yet moved, and some trump cards were still left to play. But how many monsters could these trump cards kill? After that, how many monsters would the Cloud Peak warriors have to face? One and a half million? Or two million?

How many of these warriors, who had followed him through countless battles, would die?

Ye Zhongming didn't want to suffer heavy casualties.

He frowned slightly, deep in thought.

"The area behind us, where there are only a few hundred monsters within a kilometer, is next, right?" Ye Zhongming suddenly asked.

"Yes," Xia Lei replied, pulling out her computer again. "Since they're closer, the images from the Exquisite Floating Ball are much clearer. Look."

Ye Zhongming looked and saw that these few hundred monsters were quite peculiar, giving him a sense of déjà vu.

"I asked Sister Hong earlier, and she said these are likely the descendants of the Nine-Winged Crow."

Ye Zhongming was taken aback. The Nine-Winged Crow was a flying creature, so how could its descendants be... land-based?

But then he thought that, like the Evil Dragon, the Nine-Winged Crow might not care about the purity of its bloodline, making the existence of these land-based descendants possible.

"Through long-distance scanning of the demon crystal colors, we've discovered that among these descendants of the Nine-Winged Crow, there are two level-eight, and the rest are level-seven."

No wonder this area was sparsely populated. Not only were they related to a level-nine lifeform, but they also had extremely high levels.

Two level-eights and several hundred level-sevens...

Even the tens of thousands of zombies couldn't stop them.

If they charged forward, their small numbers and high levels would make them difficult to hit with long-range weapons, and the large pit wouldn't stop them either. They would inevitably charge into the Cloud Peak battle formation.

"Xia Lei, I'm handing command over to you. I'm going to check the situation."

With that, Ye Zhongming patted Yellow Ball beside him, leaped onto its back, and charged out.

The Cloud Peak warriors watched as their boss, riding the golden Yellow Ball, soared over the pit and landed on the other side.

Ye Zhongming glanced at the opposite side, casually swinging his blade and killing seven or eight foolish monsters that charged at him. His attention was focused on the descendants of the Nine-Winged Crow.

These creatures came in all shapes and sizes. Perhaps because they were descendants of flying monsters, their ground speed wasn't particularly fast. Most were covered in thick black armor, and some had wing-like appendages, though they were too small for flight. Like chickens, ducks, or geese, they could glide or hover briefly at best.

"Block them." Ye Zhongming jumped off Yellow Ball, pointing at the approaching monsters. He then left the task to his battle pet, confident it could handle it.

He pulled out a sniper rifle from his space and fired a shot.

Though seemingly casual, the first shot was precisely aimed at one of the level-eight creatures. Ye Zhongming used Space Stack and the sniper rifle's innate ability, and the bullet was a non-mass-produced gold-grade micro-engraved bullet.

The bullet reached its target almost instantly at a distance of only a few hundred meters.

The level-eight descendant of the Nine-Winged Crow, distracted by the chaotic battlefield and focusing on the massive Yellow Ball, only sensed danger when it was too late. The bullet pierced its head.

This micro-engraved bullet, imbued with fire elemental power, had consumed a significant amount of the micro-engraver's mental energy. After several failures and wasting a lot of high-level materials processed by Ye Zhongming, only four such bullets had been successfully crafted in half a year. Their power was terrifying.

A powerful bullet, combined with powerful equipment and Ye Zhongming's marksman job, was enough to kill a level-eight monster in one shot.

Ye Zhongming raised his rifle and fired a second bullet.

This bullet was a mass-produced micro-engraved bullet, processed to reach blue grade. In Ye Zhongming's hands, it was enough to kill a level-seven monster instantly.

Thus, Ye Zhongming moved across the battlefield, his sniper rifle firing rhythmically. Each shot inevitably killed a monster.

During this time, he used another gold-grade bullet, closing the distance to the remaining level-eight creature to within a hundred meters and killing it with a single shot.

When the largest group of monsters approached, only a dozen or so of the Nine-Winged Crow's descendants remained. Terrified, they hid among their comrades.

Ye Zhongming holstered his rifle, retreated, called Yellow Ball back, and leaped over the pit, returning to the battle formation. He was greeted by Cloud Peak's second round of cheers.

Chapter 1487: Limitless Aerial Mines and Royal Water Ghost Vine

Ye Zhongming symbolically waved his hand in response to his subordinates.

The results of the battle were indeed significant. In an extremely short amount of time, they had managed to kill two level-eight monsters and hundreds of level-seven ones. If this achievement were brought to the national stage, it would undoubtedly leave people stunned.

However, Ye Zhongming knew that this wasn't due to his ability to kill so many powerful enemies quickly. Instead, it was largely due to the advantage of their equipment.

Two gold-grade bullets and hundreds of blue and green-grade bullets represented a considerable fortune. Working with Ye Zhongming, the micro-engraver had spent a year and consumed countless precious materials and potions to produce just eight gold-grade bullets. If these were sold on the market, they would be exorbitantly expensive.

Thus, this battle was more a testament to the power of their equipment.

With Ye Zhongming quickly clearing out the descendants of the Nine-Winged Crow within a kilometer, the battle entered a brief lull. Apart from the tens of thousands of monsters still entangled with the zombie army, the gravel ground was now devoid of life.

The ground was littered with layers of monster corpses, occasionally interspersed with the remains of Cannibal Flowers and traces of Cloud Peak's traps.

Even though the apocalypse had been ongoing for over five years, and many of Cloud Peak's warriors had experienced brutal battles like the zombie siege and the defense of the Imperial City, the scene before them was still deeply shocking.

The thick scent of blood made the battle beasts within the Cloud Peak formation restless and stirred a bloodthirsty mood among the evolved.

This, perhaps, was the nature of war in the apocalypse. Once it became inevitable, it could only be described as brutal and relentless.

The voices of core members occasionally rang out, using their own methods to calm or motivate their subordinates, preparing for the upcoming battle.

Ye Zhongming took the opportunity to recover his stamina and mental energy. The real battle had yet to begin.

Occasionally, Ye Zhongming would glance toward the mountain. The churning black clouds told him that the battle there was still ongoing. Due to the energy fluctuations, the Battle Contribution Badge couldn't contact Guang Yao, but given the current situation, it seemed that Shadow had succeeded.

This also meant that the loyal warrior who had been severely injured and disabled for Cloud Peak, who had willingly become an experimental subject, had already sacrificed himself.

Ye Zhongming just didn't know how many more such warriors would die before this battle was over.

With the help of Li Qiang's shooting squad, the monsters entangled with the zombie army were quickly wiped out. Only about ten thousand zombies remained, all of them high-level. From what Ye Zhongming could see, they were mostly level five and above, with some level six and seven and even a level eight Zombie Ape protecting the Brain Child.

Although the Brain Child could control zombies, it wasn't abused. The number it could control was limited. If too many were lost, as was the case now, it would be unable to replenish them quickly, significantly reducing its self-protection capabilities.

Watching its subordinates die one after another, the Brain Child was heartbroken, but it had no choice. It had to obey orders because Red Hair and Ye Zhongming could kill it.

After this batch of monsters was eliminated, many people emerged from the Cloud Peak battle formation, carrying buckets of glass containers. They rushed toward the large pit and poured the contents inside.

These were strong acids crafted by Candy. Once poured in, they immediately began corroding the monster corpses, leaving the magic crystals unharmed.

The pit, which had been nearly filled with corpses, was now transformed into an acid lake several meters deep.

But that wasn't all. Ye Zhongming scattered some specially treated seeds into the acid. Upon contact, they began to grow madly, quickly turning into dense, dark green plants.

Li Qiang and the others looked over and saw that these plants had only stems and leaves covered with sharp thorns. Each stem and leaf was very long and densely packed, growing on top of the strong acid.

A pungent smell caused Li Qiang and his men to retreat. Although evolved had strong resistance to poison, this stuff looked dangerous.

"Ye Zhongming, what about me? What about me?" The Brain Child immediately understood that Ye Zhongming planned to abandon the zombie army.

"Jump over yourself or die over there," Ye Zhongming replied irritably. He knew the Brain Child was just putting on an act—many of its subordinates had exceptional jumping abilities.

"You said it!" The Brain Child issued an order, and the zombie army immediately turned and began leaping toward Cloud Peak's position. Li Qiang and Ye Zhongming retreated slightly, and in the blink of an eye, nearly ten thousand zombies had jumped over. On the other side, several thousand zombies without jumping abilities were left behind, unwillingly trying to circle around. However, that would take some time.

As they dispersed, the field of view opened up, revealing the largest group of monsters, which had already crossed the swamp and entered the gravel ground.

"Keep your subordinates in check," Ye Zhongming said as he approached the Brain Child, leaping onto the shoulder of the Zombie Ape. The level-eight monster instinctively threw a punch at him.

Ye Zhongming didn't dodge. Instead, he met the punch with one of his own.

Although Ye Zhongming was tall for a human male, his fist was still relatively small. On the other hand, the Zombie Ape's fist was the size of several Ye Zhongmings. The two fists collided like a pencil tip hitting the bottom of a soda bottle.

The result was that the Zombie Ape let out a pained grunt, its fist and arm being knocked aside, while Ye Zhongming only swayed slightly.

In terms of strength, Ye Zhongming was a human-shaped monster.

Of course, he was a monster in other aspects as well.

"Stop, stop, stop! Are you trying to kill my Big A?" the Brain Child shouted from the side, urgently commanding the Zombie Ape and its other subordinates to cease their foolish actions.

Earlier, while perched on the Zombie Ape's shoulder, the Brain Child witnessed Ye Zhongming single-handedly killing many high-level monsters. Although it didn't show it on the outside, it was astonished.

It had always known that Ye Zhongming could kill it, but it hadn't realized how easily he could do so. To be honest, with Ye Zhongming's job, high-level sniper rifle, and gold-grade bullets, it wouldn't even be able to dodge such an attack. For the Brain Child, whose main body was fragile, failing to dodge meant certain death.

Thus, its fear of Ye Zhongming had now reached unprecedented levels.

"Those tall ones will serve as our shooting platforms. The rest will block the front of the pit," Ye Zhongming ordered the Brain Child.

The Brain Child didn't dare disobey and immediately instructed its subordinates to comply. Zombies over three meters tall moved to the rear, standing about a hundred meters behind the pit, while the rest remained at the edge, ready to intercept any monsters that tried to jump over.

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Members of Li Qiang's shooting squad climbed onto the shoulders and backs of these zombies, gaining the best field of view and firing angles.

"Target level six and seven monsters. Ignore the others; that's not our job. Also, try to use single shots to conserve ammunition. Once the special bullets are used up, immediately withdraw from the front lines and return to the rear. Find your own positions and assist the combat teams. Do you all understand?"

Li Qiang shouted, relaying the orders to the shooters. With their abilities, combined with the excellent weapons and bullets provided by Ye Zhongming, using them on level five and below monsters would be a waste. They were most effective against level six and seven monsters, while level eight monsters were beyond their capabilities—those were Ye Zhongming's responsibility.

After a brief period of adjustment to the zombies nearby, the shooters responded enthusiastically. Today was their moment to shine. Just their earlier achievements were enough to earn them a high contribution score after the battle.

Next would be their final performance in this battle. After that, they would become support troops, protecting the flanks of the combat teams and safeguarding the war machines.

The largest wave of monsters, numbering three million, was approaching.

Perhaps the annihilation of their earlier comrades had made them more cautious. These monsters were now clearly more organized. Although this organization was crude and chaotic by human standards, it was no longer the blind charge of before. For example, monsters with high speed but poor defense no longer rushed to the front, only to be instantly killed.

"There's a commander among them, or perhaps the Nine-Winged Crow has issued orders," Xia Lei suggested these two possibilities.

"I lean toward the former, though the latter is also possible," Ye Zhongming said, believing that one could never be too cautious when dealing with level-nine lifeforms.

"Let's fight," he added, firing the first shot of the most grueling battle.

A level-seven monster fell instantly.

However, it soon stood back up. This shot, which only used a green-grade bullet without any additional abilities, had only severely injured the creature, failing to kill it.

"Their bodies are indeed tough," Ye Zhongming muttered, firing a second shot. At the same time, other shooters with sniper rifles or within range of the monsters also began their attacks. Gunfire filled the air, and the charging monsters immediately began to fall.

"Level six and seven! Level six and seven! The others are not your targets!"

The first wave of monsters consisted mainly of thick-skinned, low-level creatures, with only a few level six and seven among them. However, in this round of shooting, many level four and five monsters had been killed. Some of the shooters had gotten too excited and forgotten their orders. Li Qiang had to shout repeatedly to remind them.

This quickly calmed many of the shooters, who began searching for level six and seven monsters within range.

The effect was immediate. This targeted sniping of high-level monsters threw the charging ranks into chaos, though their momentum kept them moving forward.

But the monsters quickly adapted.

"Flying monsters!"

The flying species accompanying this group of monsters appeared.

The shooters immediately raised their guns toward the sky while other anti-air measures also came back into play. Even the Violent Thunder Towers began attacking in batches to alleviate the pressure from the air.

"Yangos!" Ye Zhongming shouted, and the evil dragon immediately charged over, positioning itself in front of the pit.

"Little Tiger!" Ye Zhongming issued another command through the Battle Contribution Badge.

Little Tiger snapped his fingers at his subordinates, who formed a protective circle around him. His eyes began to change, his body temperature rose, and his face contorted in pain.

Then, with a shout, he pointed his right hand, and about a thousand fist-sized energy aerial mines spread across the airspace from Ye Zhongming and Li Qiang's sniper positions to the Cloud Peak battle formation.

Upon closer inspection, the distribution was uneven. The area above Ye Zhongming and his team was densely packed with about a hundred mines, while the space between them and the Cloud Peak formation had around two hundred, sparsely but evenly distributed. The final seven hundred or so were concentrated above the Cloud Peak battle formation.

What Little Tiger had activated was the fourth borrowed soldier method of his Linglan Borrowed Soldiers ability— Limitless Aerial Mines!

These mines, once triggered, would release ice-based attacks, dealing massive damage and immobilizing targets within their range.

Since Little Tiger had gained this ability, Ye Zhongming had procured several skill upgrade scrolls for him. Now, his Linglan Borrowed Soldiers had reached the advanced grade, and all his borrowed soldier methods had been significantly enhanced. For example, the number of Limitless Aerial Mines had increased from two hundred to one thousand, and their power had also grown.

Moreover, these mines weren't stationary. They moved rapidly, dodging attacks, and only detonated when targets entered their defensive range.

The Cloud Peak anti-air units and anti-air weapons, which had been struggling under the pressure of the flying monsters, immediately regained the upper hand.

Monsters that touched the mines were instantly killed if they were low-level, while the ice mist released by the mines froze the creatures within their range, covering their bodies in thick ice. They plummeted to the ground, and even if Cloud Peak didn't kill them, they would shatter upon impact.

With the protection of the aerial mines, Ye Zhongming and Li Qiang's team could focus on attacking the ground monsters without worry.

Of course, the air battle didn't stop there. A mere thousand aerial mines couldn't hold back so many flying monsters. But with the addition of the evil dragon, Cloud Peak's air force, anti-air weapons, and the Ice Bird, Red Hair, the Undead Dragonfish, and Xia Bai, who had also taken to the skies, the flying monsters were firmly pinned down near the pit. Even if a few managed to break through the defense line, they couldn't get past the aerial mines.

On the ground, the first wave of thick-skinned monsters mostly lacked strong jumping abilities. When they reached the edge of the pit, they fell in. These were cannon fodder, and this was their fate.

However, what should have been a quick process of filling the hundred-meter-deep pit to create a charge path was thwarted. As these cannon fodder monsters fell in, they landed on the mutated plants, which immediately entangled them. The sharp thorns on the stems and leaves pierced the monsters' bodies, quickly draining them into dried corpses. The plants then tossed the corpses into the strong acid below, where they were devoured and turned into another form of nourishment for the plants.

The plants, having absorbed the monsters' energy, grew at a visible rate. As more monsters fell in, the plants grew even faster. Soon, they broke through the pit, emerging from the ground like dense hair, and began actively attacking the monsters. Even the zombie army on the other side wasn't spared. Before the Brain Child could issue a retreat order, over a thousand zombies were swept into the plants and consumed.

"Royal Water Ghost Vine!"

Looking at these mutated plants, Ye Zhongming smiled.

Chapter 1488: Third level nine?

The Royal Water Ghost Vines were indeed a treasure, and Ye Zhongming had gone to great lengths to find them. In his previous life, these vines had another name—Man-Eating Vines. The areas where they grew were essentially no-man zones, as no one dared to provoke them.

Like countless other mutated plants, the Man-Eating Vines absorbed energy for evolution in two ways: from acidic soil or solutions and from mutated lifeforms.

These vines had a unique characteristic—they absorbed energy extremely quickly. While other mutated plants absorbed energy gradually to sustain their growth, the Man-Eating Vines would absorb all the energy at once, completing their growth in an extremely short time. Once the energy was depleted, they would enter a state of stagnation.

Moreover, they weren't picky eaters. Human evolved, zombies, mutated animals—they could consume almost anything.

Because these vines had long tendrils that could actively hunt, they were difficult to distinguish when growing among other mutant plants. By the tenth year of the apocalypse, they had spread widely, with at least half reaching high levels, mostly around level eight, and a few even reaching level nine. Their demon crystals were hidden beneath their roots, buried under dense foliage, making it extremely difficult to determine their level. As a result, evolved generally avoided them.

Now, in another world, these Man-Eating Vines, which had caused so much trouble for evolved in Ye Zhongming's previous life, had become a barrier for humanity.

"They've already evolved to level seven. That's incredibly fast," Xia Lei said, looking at the color scan results transmitted by the Exquisite Floating Ball. She noticed that the Royal Water Ghost Vines had all reached level seven.

When Ye Zhongming first planted and activated them, they were only level four after absorbing the strong acid. In such a short time, they had jumped three levels, shocking Xia Lei to the point where her jaw nearly dropped.

These Royal Water Ghost Vines were also under attack. The tendrils that entangled their targets and absorbed energy were injured and broken, but once they received energy, they would quickly regrow.

Another crucial point was that the Royal Water Ghost Vines were hermaphroditic. At certain times, they would self-reproduce, producing seeds that would grow into new individuals on the parent plant before detaching, ensuring a high survival rate.

Ye Zhongming wasn't sure when they would reproduce, but many of these vines already had brown, egg-sized fruits on their tendrils. They had already begun sprouting new leaves with ample energy from the parent plant.

Both the zombie army and the sniper positions had retreated further back, giving the Royal Water Ghost Vines, which had chosen the unassaulted side as their breeding ground, enough space.

Earlier, whether in the swamp or the gravel ground, the monsters had never stopped advancing despite the intense sniper fire. But now, faced with these Royal Water Ghost Vines, the largest monster army had been halted.

These Man-Eating Vines were terrifying. They seemed like natural gluttons, frantically absorbing the monsters' energy to fuel their own evolution and reproduction. From behind the vines, Ye Zhongming and the others watched as their offspring continuously emerged from the pit, their new tendrils sprouting from the soil to form their own territory.

Their root systems were still connected to the parent plant, but their tendrils had formed new domains. Some of the monsters attempting to jump over from the air landed in these newly grown vines and were drained into dried corpses.

The ranged weapons of the Cloud Peak roared once more, taking advantage of this rare opportunity to reap the lives of the monsters.

Ye Zhongming had already given the order to expend all ammunition.

The full-force barrage of Cloud Peak's long-range weapons dealt a heavy blow to the monsters charging through the swamp and gravel ground. Their formation was even denser than before, and because they were organized, the monsters in the middle had weaker defenses, resulting in significant casualties.

"Level eight!" Xia Lei's voice came through Ye Zhongming's Battle Contribution Badge, reporting that some of the Royal Water Ghost Vines had already evolved to level eight.

Ye Zhongming's heart skipped a beat. Things seemed to be deviating from his expectations.

On the positive side, according to the original plan, Cloud Peak should have been facing the frontal assault of the monsters by now, entering the true bloodbath phase of the war—the moment that would decide their fate. But now, this moment had been delayed. The Ghost Vines still blocked the monsters, giving Cloud Peak more opportunities to inflict heavy casualties. This would undoubtedly make the subsequent battles easier.

However, there was also a downside that worried Ye Zhongming. These Ghost Vines had exceeded expectations. Their abilities were too strong, allowing them to evolve rapidly in such a short time. Now, they had even reached level eight. Were these plants really this terrifying?

As the thick tendrils of the level-eight Ghost Vine extended from the deep pit, reaching over two hundred meters above the ground, Ye Zhongming and the others had no choice but to retreat further, putting themselves out of its attack range.

The demon monster leaders at the rear had also noticed this development. A group of high-level monsters appeared, choosing not to cross the pit but to directly attack the Ghost Vines. The other monsters also pounced on them, frantically biting and tearing.

In an instant, the Ghost Vines and the monsters were locked in the most intense direct confrontation.

Among the high-level monsters, there was a level-eight creature. It had a slender body with four flexible tentacles covered in suckers. Seizing an opportunity under the cover of its companions, it grabbed the level-eight Ghost Vine, and the two began a contest.

Ye Zhongming wasn't sure how they were fighting, but he observed that the level-eight monster's body would sometimes become emaciated and sometimes recover. At the same time, the level-eight Ghost Vine's tendrils would turn gray as if withering.

Were these two same-level creatures sucking each other's energy?

Ye Zhongming didn't attack the level-eight monster, instead targeting other level-seven monsters. However, he kept a close eye on the ongoing battle.

Soon, Ye Zhongming noticed that the level-eight special-type monster was gaining the upper hand. Its body no longer fluctuated between fat and thin but grew increasingly robust. The level-eight Ghost Vine's color no longer recovered, instead turning from gray to a withered state.

Just as Ye Zhongming thought the outcome was decided and prepared to assist the Ghost Vine, another vine suddenly shot out, breaking through the protective circle around the level-eight monster. It wrapped around the monster's head, and some liquid immediately flowed out. The level-eight monster screamed as its body began to shrivel. The Ghost Vine, which had been on the verge of defeat, started to regain its green color.

In an instant, the level-eight monster was killed.

The second Ghost Vine that had suddenly appeared was another newly evolved level-eight creature.

With the level-eight monster dead, the group of high-level monsters lost their barrier. The two level-eight Ghost Vines made quick work of them, devouring them entirely.

Chapter 1488.5- Third level nine?

At the same time, a third level-eight Ghost Vine appeared.

The speed of their evolution left Ye Zhongming feeling terrified.

With the level-eight monster dead, these chaotic Ghost Vines halted the tide of monsters. The demon monster leaders finally realized the horror of these plants. A piercing scream came from the rear of the

monster army, and several paths opened up in the ranks. Several massive or slender figures rushed past their comrades, charging toward the Ghost Vines and launching a frenzied assault.

Ye Zhongming saw that these monsters were all level eight, accompanied by others at level six or seven, all possessing abilities that were particularly effective against the Ghost Vines.

Now, the Ghost Vines were locked in a bitter struggle. Their tendrils were continuously bitten off or torn apart. Even the newly evolved level-eight Ghost Vine wasn't spared—its extra-long tendrils were bitten off, leaving only the section still in the pit. This left it unable to hunt actively, forced to wait for prey to come to it, and it was temporarily harmless.

The sheer number of monsters was overwhelming. Some with strong jumping abilities leaped over the pit under the cover of their comrades. Instead of attacking the already dwindling zombie army, they turned to attack the Ghost Vines from both sides, ignoring the attacks from Ye Zhongming and the others. They were determined to eliminate these obstacles.

Cloud Peak had provided the Ghost Vines with the maximum resources, but in the face of the massive monster army, this support seemed pale in comparison.

Soon, all the above-ground tendrils of the Ghost Vines had been torn off. As long as the monsters didn't fall into the pit, these energy-deprived Ghost Vines posed no threat.

In the distance, several massive monsters were moving toward the pit. They would use their bodies to build a path for their comrades to cross the pit. Even if they were sucked dry, after jumping into the pit, they could uproot many Ghost Vines before dying. After a few rounds of attacks, the obstacles would be completely removed, and the huge amount of monsters would fill the pit, paving the way for their charge toward the human formation.

Cloud Peak had now expended all its ammunition, inflicting massive casualties on the monsters. Combined with the Ghost Vines' exceptional performance, their achievements surpassed the total kills from earlier. The monster army now numbered only around two million.

Ye Zhongming gestured, signaling everyone to get ready. Li Qiang led the shooting squad, which had nearly exhausted its special ammunition, to begin its retreat.

Everyone knew that the direct confrontation was about to begin.

But at this moment, something unexpected happened.

The Ghost Vines in the pit, which both the monsters and Cloud Peak had deemed as good as dead, suddenly began an unbelievable act of...self-destruction.

The first Ghost Vine to reach level eight began continuously devouring its kin, not even sparing its own offspring. As it devoured them, its injuries not only healed quickly but also improved.

By the time it had devoured all its kin, its thick, long tendrils sprang out of the pit, reaching an astonishing four hundred meters in length!

At the same time, a powerful force emanated from its body, causing even the nearby monsters to show signs of fear.

The long tendrils swept around, and any lifeform they touched was instantly drained. The zombie army was reduced to only those that had been used as shooting platforms, while the rest, along with the monsters, were killed.

Among the victims were even two level-eight monsters, who also met the fate of being instantly killed.

Both Cloud Peak and the monster army fell silent at this moment. Even the two level-nine lifeforms battling fiercely on the other side of the mountain paused.

Through the Battle Contribution Badge, Liu Zhenghong's anxious voice came through.

"Little Ye, this thing is about to evolve to level nine! We must stop it! Even if the ongoing battle prevents it from completing its evolution to level nine immediately, as it accumulates energy, it will grow stronger and stronger until it finally evolves into a true level nine. We must kill it before it evolves, or we won't be able to control it. Today's battle will be for nothing!"

Ye Zhongming knew that the Ghost Vines he had created had finally gone out of control. He understood Liu Zhenghong's concerns all too well.

He raised his sniper rifle, loading a golden bullet.

They had to kill the Ghost Vine before it evolved to level nine. Otherwise, the only option for Cloud Peak would be to retreat!

Up to this point, Cloud Peak had seemingly suffered no major losses. However, the ammunition and demon crystals they had expended represented a significant fortune. Their total value could likely be exchanged for an eight-star evolution potion, with some to spare. §

Moreover, the demon crystals and materials from the over two million monsters they had killed would have to be abandoned. Among them were over a dozen level-eight demon crystals.

The total losses would likely exceed the value of three to four eight-star potions!

Cloud Peak's strength would regress rather than progress.

And this was only under the most favorable retreat scenario. The actual situation would be much more severe. With three level-nine lifeforms, would they fight each other or not? If they didn't and instead decided to clean up Ye Zhongming, the monsters, and the rest, what then? The result would be total annihilation.

Thus, only one path was left: to kill the Ghost Vine that Ye Zhongming had personally cultivated.

Despite being personally cultivated by Ye Zhongming, the Ghost Vine was clearly completely uncontrollable.

The muzzle flashed, and the bullet accurately pierced the Ghost Vine's tendril.

The fire element caused its interior to seem to burn, and the dark green tendril looked as if it were about to be ignited.

But before anyone could celebrate, the fiery red inside began to fade, clearly suppressed by the Ghost Vine's powerful energy.

Ye Zhongming gritted his teeth, already preparing to engage in close combat.

However, the monsters had also realized the problem. If the Ghost Vine evolved to level nine, they would suffer first. Its tendrils would sweep through them with unstoppable force, turning them into its nourishment.

Thus, the monster army became frenzied. The high-level monsters, seeing that the humans were also attacking the Ghost Vine and achieving results, took the opportunity to charge forward, launching a desperate assault on the Ghost Vine.

The Ghost Vine counterattacked, absorbing the energy of the monsters it killed to repair itself. Cloud Peak and the monsters continued to attack it, inflicting new injuries.

A tug-of-war-style battle ensued.

In the end, the Ghost Vine never evolved to level nine, though it came infinitely close.

Ye Zhongming exhausted his gold bullets, and the monsters sacrificed several level-eight creatures. Working together, they finally tore apart the Ghost Vine, leaving only its roots. Even if it survived, it could not resist, and its aura became faint.

Both sides breathed a sigh of relief. On the other side of the battlefield, the two level-nine lifeforms, which had moved closer during the chaos, resumed their battle.

But just as things seemed to settle, an unexpected event occurred. A shadow suddenly leaped into the pit, uprooted the Ghost Vine's roots, and swallowed them whole!

Chapter 1489: Conning Death King Tree

Ye Zhongming was still perched on the shoulder of the level-eight Zombie Ape, giving him the best vantage point. He saw that the figure rushing into the pit was none other than the fully crystallized Death King Tree.

While at Cloud Peak, she had been steadily progressing toward becoming fully human. Now, the tree-like body encasing her had thinned to a mere layer, and perhaps it wouldn't be long before she fully possessed a human form.

However, both Liu Zhenhong and Ye Zhongming understood that for her to have a body identical to a human's truly, or to fully become human, she would need to evolve to level nine. Only then could the power of evolution break through the innate limitations of her physical structure.

The Death King Tree herself was also aware of this.

But evolving to level nine was no easy feat.

The Royal Water Ghost Vines had seemingly met the conditions to easily evolve to level nine, breaking through the barriers. However, this was a special case, tied to their rapid evolution and the massive number of monsters present.

It would undoubtedly be powerful once it reached level nine—neither the monster army nor Cloud Peak's forces could handle it. However, its strength would not be exceptional among level-nine beings, as its accumulation was lacking, and its understanding of space and energy was rushed.

Yet, if any mutated lifeforms were given the choice, they would all choose to evolve to level nine as quickly as possible, even if it meant taking shortcuts.

This was exactly what the Death King Tree was doing now.

As fellow mutated plants, the Royal Water Ghost Vines and the Death King Tree shared a common origin. Although the Ghost Vines had been beaten to the brink of death, their core parts—the roots and demon crystals—remained in the pit. Absorbing them held fatal allure for the Death King Tree.

In the end, she couldn't resist. She ventured out alone and disobeyed orders. Judging by the timing, she must have made her move when the Ghost Vines began their evolution and were caught in the crossfire.

Now, the pit wasn't just occupied by the Death King Tree—it was also filled with monsters.

To secure the Ghost Vines' roots, she had already taken action upon entering, extending numerous tendrils from her crystalline body to pierce and kill the surrounding monsters.

For the monsters, who currently held the advantage, this was undoubtedly provocation.

Moreover, from the monsters' perspective, although the Ghost Vines were different from them, the roots of a lifeform on the verge of evolving to level nine—or perhaps already at level nine—were of great value. The Death King Tree's actions were no different from snatching food from a tiger's mouth.

The lifeform commanding the monster army from the shadows issued another command, and the monsters around the pit immediately attacked the Death King Tree.

Having just faced a half-step level-nine Ghost Vine without fear, they certainly weren't afraid of the Death King Tree, who was still at level eight.

"Get back here now!"

Ye Zhongming frowned, raising his gun to provide cover while ordering the Brain Child to have the remaining zombies take the initiative to distract the monsters around the pit. §

However, he soon lost sight of the Death King Tree. The pit was instantly filled with monsters, and even more were charging toward the Cloud Peak battle formation.

Ye Zhongming had no choice but to retreat with the Brain Child and the giant Zombie Ape. Even high-level beings could be in danger when facing a tidal wave of enemies.

But just a few seconds later, Ye Zhongming stopped, cursing under his breath. His eyes turned pitch black, and mysterious, faint patterns emerged on his skin.

He had activated his bloodline!

Those familiar with Ye Zhongming knew that when he activated his bloodline, it meant he was going all out.

The Cloud Peak forces, seeing Ye Zhongming suddenly leap off the Zombie Ape's shoulder and charge toward the monster army, were thrown into chaos. It wasn't until Ye Zhongming's voice came through the Battle Contribution Badge that the order was restored.

"Proceed according to the original plan. Follow Xia Lei's commands. I'm going to rescue the Death King Tree."

Earlier, even when he saw the Death King Tree surrounded, Ye Zhongming had confidence in her.

The Death King Tree was one of Earth's veteran level-eight beings. Within Cloud Peak, only Ye Zhongming, Red Hair, and Yangos were on the same level. Even Yellow Ball and Xia Bai were slightly inferior.

Her ability, Heaven Nature, was particularly effective against groups of enemies. Ye Zhongming estimated that the Death King Tree would account for around 200,000 kills this time.

That's why he had retreated with the Brain Child—he was confident that the Death King Tree, who dreamed of becoming human, could escape.

But then, Ye Zhongming received a message from the Death King Tree: she was about to evolve.

The Death King Tree's evolution was different from the Ghost Vines'. Hers required hibernation!

Evolving to level nine at this critical moment, surrounded by a sea of monsters—was there anything more unfortunate than this?

Yet, Ye Zhongming couldn't abandon her. Although the Death King Tree never explicitly said it and wasn't anyone's battle pet, both Cloud Peak's members and the Death King Tree herself considered her a part of Cloud Peak. She had even claimed a section of Cloud Peak's back mountain, where Ye Zhongming had built her a beautiful woodland cabin, which she called her home. When she wasn't in the lab, she was there.

Such a member was someone Ye Zhongming would never abandon.

Xia Lei pushed aside her worries and began issuing orders one by one. She knew that the more monsters Cloud Peak eliminated, the more they could alleviate the pressure on Ye Zhongming.

Over half of the evolved began repositioning, moving to the front lines. They carried ranged weapons.

These evolved weren't ranged job users—they were simply ranged troops. Around 30,000 of them held crystal firearms, while the rest carried regular firearms, crossbows, and similar weapons.

Ye Zhongming had processed each weapon and its ammunition. While the weapons averaged around silver grade, the ammunition was lower, mostly white-grade.

Their power couldn't compare to that of the shooting squad, but their mission was different. The shooting squad specialized in sniping high-level monsters, while these ranged troops would form a firepower net, inflicting wide-area damage on the monsters and halting their charge. They aimed to win through sheer volume.

The evolved wielding crystal weapons carried at least 200 backup demon crystals, while those with firearms and crossbows had ammunition measured in crates.

As Ye Zhongming boldly charged into the monster horde, causing a section of the monsters to stall and fall into chaos, the rest of the monster army quickly spread past Ye Zhongming, engulfing the King of Cloud Peak and surging toward the battle formation.

Once they entered the firing range, Cloud Peak's ranged troops opened fire!

For a time, the sounds of gunfire and the twang of bowstrings became the battlefield's main theme.

Magic crystal energy, metal bullets, and various arrows formed a massive hammer that seemed to cover the battlefield's cross-section. With a swing, it smashed down on the monster army.

The first wave of monsters, numbering over ten thousand, was shattered by this 'giant hammer.' Their bodies exploded, blood dyeing the vision of all living beings.

The direct clash between Cloud Peak and the monsters had begun in this manner.

Chapter 1490: Scram

Those who had never witnessed such a scene would never imagine that Cloud Peak's ranged forces could unleash firepower comparable to the massive attack weapons.

In fact, upon closer consideration, this wasn't too difficult to understand. The weapons Cloud Peak used were of high quality to begin with. The crystal firearms, for instance, were all the latest models, with significantly improved range and power. As for the other weapons—whether they were regular firearms, crossbows, or the bullets and arrows—they all had levels, making their power inherently formidable. Coupled with the bonus effects from their users, their strength naturally wasn't small.

The most crucial factor, however, was quantity.

Nearly half of Cloud Peak's evolved were equipped with ranged weapons. The remaining half included those specializing in defense, support, and reserve troops, as well as Little Tiger's cavalry, Xia Lei's combat team, and the female guards who hadn't yet joined the fight. Many of these individuals also possessed ranged weapons, but it wasn't their time to act.

Even so, the sheer number of 50,000 was already terrifying enough. The firepower net they wove was like a wall of death. Any monster that touched it would be torn to shreds.

Perhaps at this moment, many realized why Cloud Peak, with just 100,000 people, dared to challenge a monster army numbering in the millions.

Wave after wave of monsters fell before Cloud Peak's battle formation. The speed at which they died was enough to make one's hair stand on end.

Many had heard or even said that one must have sufficient reverence for life. But now, this was the deepest disregard for life.

At this moment, life wasn't even worth as much as grass or dirt.

Perhaps the monsters didn't respond to this situation because they were focused on surrounding Ye Zhongming. The monsters with strong defenses or speed didn't form a vanguard. Instead, they were charging purely on instinct.

The speed of death made some of the Cloud Peak warriors, who had personally caused all this, feel sorrow.

The emotions were complex.

Under such relentless attacks, the monster army struggled to advance. Ten seconds, twenty seconds, thirty seconds—every second they moved forward, but the distance they covered could only be measured in the 'steps' of a human's normal walking pace.

In thirty seconds, they hadn't even covered thirty steps. They had only moved closer to Cloud Peak by less than twenty meters.

But what about the number of deaths? In that short time, over 200,000 monsters had fallen!

Almost ten thousand deaths per meter!

The monsters finally couldn't endure such losses and began to adapt.

Large numbers of monsters leaped toward Cloud Peak's battle formation from behind. The remaining flying monsters charged downward as if they had a death wish. Some smaller monsters used their companions' bodies as cover to launch ground assaults, hoping to divide Cloud Peak's attention.

This change did have an effect. Many of Cloud Peak's ranged troops subconsciously shifted their targets. Some aimed at the sky, some at the ground, while others held positions.

Although the overall firepower didn't decrease, the pressure on the frontal assault monsters lessened.

In just a few seconds, the monsters covered the distance they hadn't been able to in half a minute.

"Don't worry about the sky!"

"Keep shooting!"

"The flying ones aren't your targets!"

Core members and captains continuously scolded the warriors who had raised their muzzles.

Even if the monsters' charge was temporarily halted, once they renewed their assault, their momentum and speed would truly shocking.

The firepower poured out again, now divided between frontal monsters and small ground monsters. However, it was no longer enough to stop these creatures.

The monsters surged forward like a tidal wave.

It wasn't the fault of the Cloud Peak warriors for attacking the small monsters. If these creatures breached the battle formation, they could cause chaos and even casualties. If the formation collapsed, then today's battle would be completely lost.

One hundred thousand isolated evolved couldn't hold back millions of monsters, even if the monster numbers were now half of what they had been at the start.

Cloud Peak had underestimated the strength of these elite monsters from the Blue Secret Realm.

At this moment, Cloud Peak made two moves that halted this momentum.

The first countermeasure was the dense crystal grenades that flew out from behind the battle formation.

The evolved' strength and accuracy were more than sufficient. These grenades weren't concentrated in one spot but were spread out across different distances within the monster horde.

There was naturally some chaos. For instance, some quick-reacting monsters knocked the grenades away or even sent them flying back toward Cloud Peak's battle formation.

But the overall effect was achieved.

The crystal grenades exploded, tearing apart the vanguard of the monster army, which was over a hundred meters thick. It was as if a clean slice had been taken from a cake.

In an instant, the monsters' vanguard was pushed back to its previous position, if not further.

Many Cloud Peak warriors cheered. The large-scale killing effect was simply too good.

However, only those who knew Cloud Peak's crystal grenade stockpile understood that this single volley had consumed over 10,000 grenades. The remaining stock was only enough for one more throw.

While ensuring other production areas continued uninterrupted, this was already Cloud Peak's limit.

Fortunately, the battle formation stabilized, allowing the ranged troops to continue unleashing their power. To some extent, the time the ranged troops could hold out was directly tied to victory or defeat—or at least to casualty rates.

The second countermeasure wasn't something the warriors did intentionally. It came from Ye Zhongming's distraction.

The Blue Secret Realm was already dim, so when a patch of night sky appeared, it wasn't as noticeable as it would have been on Earth.

Under the Starry Sky Vision, Ye Zhongming became a killing machine.

Whether it was the Cloud Peak battle formation behind him or the Death King Tree in need of assistance ahead, Ye Zhongming had no choice but to go all out.

With his bloodline activated, both elemental spirit abilities fully unleashed, Undead Sand Moon Blade on his left and Wind and Lightning on his right, any monster that entered his range was subjected to massive effects. They were slowed and afflicted with various debuffs. This allowed Ye Zhongming to charge forward rapidly, relying solely on the sharpness of his weapons.

He unleashed Cloud Slice, consuming nearly a fifth of his mental energy to clear the surrounding monsters. Before he could be engulfed again, he reached the pit.

Then, with a full-force Thousand Blade Slash, he finally caught sight of the Death King Tree, who was still fighting but clearly struggling.

Sensing Ye Zhongming's presence, the Death King Tree mustered her last reserves of strength. The branches on her body extended and retracted rapidly, taking the lives of many monsters and making it easier for Ye Zhongming to reach her side.

"Let's go!"

Ye Zhongming grabbed one of the Death King Tree's branches and pulled the immobile level-eight tree out of the pit.

"As expected, you're the man who wants to mate with me. You wouldn't abandon me. What do you humans say? 'You can't pull up your pants and pretend not to know someone,' right?"

Ye Zhongming's face turned black. He responded to the Death King Tree, who had finished speaking and fallen into a complete evolution state before passing out with a single, forceful word.

"Get lost!"