

Apocalypse 1676

Chapter 1676: Successive losses

Leading the pack was Gyanendra's team.

They hadn't occupied many Bright Stars, clearly opting for a strategy of reaching the central zone as quickly as possible, likely striking the Soaring Crystal with full force each time.

Yet Ye Zhongming couldn't comprehend why Gyanendra would rush when the space explicitly stated there was no time limit.

Didn't he realize all factions would get ten more strikes after reaching the Mountain King Disk?

Or did Gyanendra suspect some hidden trap behind the "no time limit" rule?

Unable to decipher this, Ye Zhongming dismissed it and stuck to his own plan.

Trailing Gyanendra was Mechanical Genius—not only fast but also holding the second-highest number of occupied stars, even surpassing Cloud Peak by one.

Their progress impressed the Cloud Peak King.

Ye Zhongming had thought Cloud Peak's speed—self-sustaining through conquest, minimizing time spent per star—was optimal. Yet they still lagged behind Mechanical Genius. Were these guys that powerful, or was there another reason?

Though this trial phase lacked the direct bloodshed of other spaces, offering multiple choices instead, Ye Zhongming found himself disliking it precisely for that unpredictability.

It drastically reduced Cloud Peak's odds of securing the Mountain King Crown compared to initial estimates. Even allies like Cannibal Chain now seemed marginally useful at best.

Simply put, control had slipped away.

For someone accustomed to absolute dominance, this uncertainty unsettled Ye Zhongming.

Further back were other factions, with Great America dead last, still stuck on their first central-zone Bright Star. What were they doing?

Considering their alliance's nature, Ye Zhongming guessed: perhaps members, tempted by resource point rewards, refused to advance?

This made sense—the crown would undoubtedly go to Governor Spade. What would others get? His promised rewards?

Could those be compared to the value of the resource points?

With dissent brewing, prolonged exploration might be their compromise—something even Governor Spade couldn't override.

Besides them, Ye Zhongming closely monitored Cannibal Chain, but their progress was sluggish—only three central-zone stars claimed, meaning just two after obtaining the reward card.

Had they too, been lured by resource points?

Though their occupying more stars wouldn't significantly aid Cloud Peak later, Ye Zhongming stopped overanalyzing.

Cloud Peak advanced steadily, overtaking Mechanical Genius after claiming thirteen stars.

Gyanendra led by a wide margin, nearing the destination.

With limited central-zone stars, each occupation reduced available options. Landing on an occupied star meant either paying tolls or challenging for ownership.

Ye Zhongming noticed trailing factions accelerating—none wanted to exhaust resources now when the final ten strikes mattered most.

Except Cannibal Chain, all were hastening their conquests, though the Soaring Crystal's unpredictability prevented precise navigation.

Thus began the first "toll war"—between Great America and Cloud Peak.

Cloud Peak currently held the most stars; Great America, the fewest. Starting from the same point, they found most paths forward already claimed.

Forced to proceed, they landed on a Cloud Peak-occupied star.

To their credit, they chose challenge over payment.

The actual battle remained unseen—Cloud Peak only received a challenge notification.

Recalling his guardian beast selection for that star—a robust fourth-row specimen—Ye Zhongming awaited results.

Fifteen minutes later, the prompt came: Great America had succeeded. Cloud Peak lost a star.

Many wore grim expressions.

Ye Zhongming remained unfazed—this was inevitable. It also clarified Cannibal Chain's approach.

Seeing Cloud Peak's lead, Wu Xiu and Ruan Xiao had adopted a leisurely pace. They'd likely route through Cloud Peak's stars whenever possible, paying tolls to continue.

Unclaimed stars meant occupation and exploration; encountering others, they'd prefer Cloud Peak's—keeping benefits "in the family." If forced onto rival territory, they'd conquer it, indirectly aiding Cloud Peak.

Whether by misfortune or not, after Great America's takeover, Motley Crusaders also landed on a Cloud Peak star—again choosing challenge over tolls.

Another star lost minutes later.

For the unimpeded Cloud Peak, this double blow stung.

Losing two of their dozen-plus stars wasn't just about wasted resources—it weakened their position for the final phase.

"We buy and challenge our way forward, while they snatch our stars from behind—this..."

Some Youth Army members grew anxious, their composure shaken by the back-to-back losses.

Yet Ye Zhongming appeared unconcerned—a puzzling calm no one dared question.

Cloud Peak pressed on, their luck improving as both Cannibal Chain and Women Guard reached their stars. As expected, Cannibal Chain paid tolls; surprisingly, Women Guard also opted against challenging, choosing to pay passage fees.

Facing this, Ye Zhongming merely muttered "wise"—another cryptic remark.

During their advance, Cloud Peak too encountered others' territories—their Soaring Crystal landing on one of Gyanendra's stars.

Chapter 1677: Arrived

Due to the excellent harvest from the previous Bright Star, Ye Zhongming assigned Xiao Min to this challenge.

This naturally carried risks, but Ye Zhongming instructed her to submit more equivalent payment to reduce the difficulty by 70%, which should be manageable.

It was normal to let others gain experience when confidence was high—Cloud Peak couldn't rely solely on Ye Zhongming, Xia Bai, and Red Hair to conquer everything.

When Xiao Min struck the Soaring Crystal onto Gyanendra's Bright Star, she was genuinely startled. After all, others' stars couldn't have their difficulty lowered—only challenged or purchased outright.

She wasn't afraid of dying if she failed, but she dreaded jeopardizing Ye Zhongming's grand plan.

Fortunately, the space's prompt eased her tension:

Choose between a solo challenge or a team challenge. However, team challenges would increase the guardian beast's strength by one level.

Without hesitation, Xiao Min selected team battle.

The entire Cloud Peak force materialized on the Bright Star.

Ye Zhongming approved of this choice.

Gyanendra had raced far ahead, likely nearing the finish line. He hadn't occupied many stars, yet Cloud Peak had stumbled upon one—whether this was bad luck for Cloud Peak or Gyanendra remained unclear.

Ye Zhongming still couldn't fathom the West Asian Saint's strategy. Did he have a method to bypass others' stars later?

Regardless, now that they'd encountered it, Ye Zhongming saw no reason to hold back.

Facing a lone guardian beast, Cloud Peak scattered and overwhelmed it with sheer numbers.

The two-minute battle ended, leaving Ye Zhongming surprised by the guardian's weakness.

This was a bottom-tier guardian—the weakest possible—and clearly unupgraded!

This deepened Ye Zhongming's confusion. Not only had Gyanendra occupied a few stars, but he'd also left the weakest guardians on them without upgrades. What was his game?

Had Cloud Peak not chosen team battle (which boosted the guardian by one level), Ye Zhongming could've solo-killed it instantly.

He refused to believe Gyanendra was incompetent—there had to be a reason, one Ye Zhongming couldn't yet discern.

This only heightened his wariness.

As Cloud Peak advanced, so did others. Factions periodically landed on rival stars, choosing either battle or tolls.

These choices revealed their temperaments:

Mechanical Genius never bowed to others. Whenever they landed on occupied stars—mostly Cloud Peak's, occasionally Gyanendra's—they always challenged.

They won every time, snatching five stars from Cloud Peak alone, infuriating Ye Zhongming's forces.

Yet nothing could be done—rules forbade retaliatory strikes.

Ye Zhongming remained outwardly unfazed.

Women Guard earned Ye Zhongming's respect.

As an all-female faction, they'd been underestimated entering the wheel space.

Their progress here was initially attributed to luck.

Yet they advanced steadily, always paying tolls without hesitation when crossing Cloud Peak's stars.

During this phase, the wheel space announced Gyanendra's arrival at the Mountain King Wheel's location. As first-place finishers, they received an undisclosed reward.

Thereafter, all factions accelerated—even Great America and Cannibal Chain—likely fearing penalties for last-place finishes rather than chasing rewards.

However, after this surge, progress slowed, including Cloud Peak.

Occupying stars required battles; accidental landings on others' territories demanded more fights.

Evolved weren't gods. Stamina, mental energy, and injuries needed recovery time.

If Cloud Peak needed rest, others suffered even more.

By the time Ye Zhongming reached the destination, ten days had passed.

Cloud Peak had occupied 55 stars, though this number would drop as trailing factions seized some. Ye Zhongming would be satisfied retaining 50.

Subsequent arrivals trickled in, but one faction never made it:

Motley Crusaders.

This mysterious, powerful faction paid the price for arrogance.

Initially, like Mechanical Genius, they challenged every star, owned or unclaimed.

But challenges cost lives and drained strength. Pressured by leading factions' progress, they pushed hard to catch up—until realizing too late their depleted forces couldn't sustain further challenges.

Attempting to switch to purchases, they found themselves penniless.

Stranded on a star, they scavenged resource points for funds, only to find each guard required sacrifices to defeat.

By the time they scraped together enough to proceed, they'd been overtaken—even by Great America. Subsequent Soaring Crystal strikes landed them on occupied stars repeatedly.

Pay or challenge?

Challenges were impossible now. Forced to pay exorbitant tolls, they bled resources dry after five consecutive occupied landings.

When they finally broke free, they faced an unclaimed star's full-difficulty challenge—something even Cloud Peak wouldn't dare attempt.

Defeat meant annihilation. Their stars reverted to neutrality.

When all surviving factions finally gathered at the destination, the changes were stark.

"Now announcing Bright Star challenge results and distributing rewards."

The wheel space's simultaneously ominous and tantalizing voice echoed in every ear.

Chapter 1678: Don't doubt the wheel's evil

"First Place: Gyanendra's Team. Rewards: 2 Free Choice Cards, 1 Free Pass Card, 1 Occupation Card."

"Second Place: Cloud Peak Mountain Villa. Rewards: 1 Free Choice Card, 1 Free Pass Card."

"Third Place: Mechanical Genius. Reward: 1 Free Choice Card."

"Fourth Place: Women Guard. Reward: 1 70% Discount Card."

"Fifth Place: Great America. Reward: 1 80% Discount Card."

"Sixth Place: Cannibal Chain. Reward: 1 90% Discount Card."

The rewards announced by the wheel space left many feeling disappointed. Just cards? What use were they?

Judging by the names, these were clearly meant for the upcoming ten-round challenge—consumable items specific to this trial, much like the earlier discount cards.

"Rewards... Gyanendra was after the rewards all along!"

Though Cannibal Chain had arrived last—making Gyanendra wait nearly a month—Wu Xiu and Ruan Xiao had been monitoring the star map from the start. Like Ye Zhongming, they'd been puzzled by the West Asian Saint's actions.

Now, with the rewards revealed, Wu Xiu, standing beside Ye Zhongming, had an epiphany.

"That old fox rushed ahead not just for the ranking rewards but also for the exclusive bonus only he could get, plus those floating rewards between the Bright Stars on the way to the center!"

Ye Zhongming nodded.

Earlier, since the center's reward was just a discount card (useful but non-transferable and of limited value), combined with the numerous Bright Star challenges, Ye Zhongming had somewhat overlooked those rewards. Now it seemed Gyanendra's haste was indeed motivated by them.

Ye Zhongming mentally calculated—perhaps those rewards truly offset the disadvantage of occupying fewer stars.

"Next, announcing the Bright Star Occupation Rankings and corresponding rewards."

"First Place: Mechanical Genius. Occupied Stars: 49. Reward: 50% of total star earnings refunded in level-nine magic crystals."

"Second Place: Cloud Peak. Occupied Stars: 48. Reward: 40% of total star earnings refunded in level-nine magic crystals."

"Third Place: Great America. Occupied Stars: 30. Reward: 30% of total star earnings refunded in level-eight magic crystals."

"Fourth Place: Women Guard. Occupied Stars: 22. Reward: 20% of total star earnings refunded in level-eight magic crystals."

"Fifth Place: Cannibal Chain. Occupied Stars: 15. Reward: 10% of total star earnings refunded in level-seven magic crystals."

"Sixth Place: Gyanendra's Team. Occupied Stars: 10. Reward: 5% of total star earnings refunded in level-seven magic crystals."

While other factions' reactions were unknown, Cloud Peak's gaze toward Mechanical Genius was downright murderous. If combat were allowed here, they'd have slaughtered him on the spot!

This guy had persistently nibbled away at stars rightfully belonging to Cloud Peak, even overtaking them to claim first place in occupation count—earning 10% more in rewards. For Cloud Peak, accustomed to dominating every category, this was intolerable!

A small chest materialized in Ye Zhongming's hands. Opening it, he found six level-nine magic crystals inside.

He couldn't guess how many others—especially Mechanical Genius—had received, but the sheer quantity of top-grade crystals stunned him.

Though both the Ocean King Crown and Mountain King Crown were ruler equipment, the rewards accompanying the former paled in comparison.

Why would the wheel directly award level-nine crystals?

Now he understood why his past life had seen so many nine-star powerhouses (relatively few among evolved, but substantial in absolute terms).

Those individuals' level nine crystals for wheel spins likely didn't all come from slaying level-nine lifeforms—many probably originated from sources like this.

What once seemed a distant dream of reaching the pinnacle suddenly felt within grasp.

The surrealness of it left Ye Zhongming momentarily dazed—after all, this had been his ultimate ambition since rebirth.

"Boss..."

Xiao Min nudged Ye Zhongming, reminding him that Wu Xiu was speaking.

Cannibal Chain's second-in-command eyed him curiously—such absentmindedness was unbecoming of a top-tier expert.

"All 174 Bright Stars will now be rearranged," Wu Xiu repeated, then added, "I have a 90% discount card. If we land on your stars, I won't use it—I'll pay full price. On others' stars, we'll try to occupy them. If possible, we'll start first but won't rush. You focus on reaching the finish line at the right moment with your team."

Such words spoke volumes about Wu Xiu's integrity.

Yet Ye Zhongming understood the unspoken implication—this offer exceeded their original cooperation terms.

After consideration, Ye Zhongming handed Wu Xiu both his ranking rewards: 1 Free Choice Card and 1 Free Pass Card.

"After we leave, I'll fully reimburse all your expenses on our occupied stars. Additionally, I'll provide Cannibal Chain with a batch of gene warriors. As personal thanks, you'll each receive a gold-grade equipment piece."

He then passed Wu Xiu a spatial ring.

"Inside are some newly developed Cloud Peak potions—use them at critical moments. Don't worry, they're one of my secret weapons, never before deployed. No one will be prepared."

Wu Xiu and Ruan Xiao's eyes gleamed.

Their assistance to Cloud Peak stemmed not just from wanting good relations for future deals—they'd also expected compensation. After all, the coming battles (up to ten rounds) would exact heavy tolls, possibly even their lives.

Even for Ye Zhongming—a master craftsman—they'd harbored reservations.

Now, his generous terms (the two cards, post-trial reimbursements, two gold-grade equipments, plus secret potions) delighted them beyond expectation.

"Rest assured, Boss Ye—we'll give our all," Wu Xiu said, accepting the ring with a grin.

"Still in the mood to flirt after I stole so many of your stars?"

A jarring voice interrupted. Turning, they saw a mammoth-shaped combat puppet held back by Cloud Peak warriors 20 meters away.

Chapter 1679: Don't doubt the wheel's evil (2)

Wu Xiu's face turned green with anger.

Though her looks were decent, she was far from stunning, and her age showed. If not for the rejuvenating effects of evolution—slimmer figure, better skin—she might have been a middle-aged, plump auntie by now.

Both she and Cannibal Chain took their cooperation with Cloud Peak and Ye Zhongming extremely seriously. They'd made significant progress, and upon returning, even if they couldn't snatch the title of Cloud Peak's top trade partner from Five Ring Money, they'd at least achieve parity.

That meant their monthly collaborations would generate massive wealth.

Under these circumstances, Wu Xiu absolutely didn't want any complications. She knew exactly who Xia Lei was, who Liang Chuyin was, who Xia Bai was—she understood their status within Cloud Peak!

If her actions inadvertently stirred negative thoughts among Ye Zhongming's women, she'd be beyond wronged!

So when Mechanical Genius made that comment, Wu Xiu immediately feared it might reach Xia Lei or the Internet Celebrity's ears later!

If fighting were allowed now, she'd have roasted that guy into a crispy pigeon with her mage team!

Ye Zhongming, however, showed no anger. Beyond the lingering awe from obtaining level nine magic crystals, he'd sensed the approach of Mechanical Genius's combat puppet long ago.

Hearing its words, Ye Zhongming smiled faintly, his gaze sweeping over Mechanical Genius's distant forces.

"How does it feel to occupy Cloud Peak's stars?"

"How does it feel having your stars occupied by me?" Mechanical Genius instantly retorted.

"Not great," Ye Zhongming admitted calmly. "But I doubt you're faring much better. And you've confirmed one thing for me—you're broke now."

It was rare for Ye Zhongming to be this blunt. His status in the apocalypse usually meant he didn't need verbal jabs to make a point.

But against this trash-talking, meddlesome Mechanical Genius, only this approach satisfied him.

"Bullshit!"

Mechanical Genius's roar, filtered through the combat puppet's audio system, sounded distorted.

"You paid a steep price, didn't you? Cloud Peak's stars aren't easily taken."

Ye Zhongming spoke like an adult humoring a child, utterly unruffled.

"I lost some, but look—was it that much?"

After emitting a strange electronic tone, Mechanical Genius replied deliberately.

True, his forces showed damage, but observers familiar with their original composition would notice most losses were among the mechanical soldiers—the lowest-tier units. Higher-tier units remained largely intact.

Ye Zhongming nodded. "True, your core forces are mostly unharmed. But that means little. Your combat puppets have durability thresholds. Just because numbers haven't dropped doesn't mean they're in good condition."

This comment made others reevaluate Mechanical Genius's forces—the massive machines did seem more battered, their cracks more numerous.

"These marks don't prove weakened combat effectiveness! They don't mean—"

"Enough, you penniless brat. You're more annoying than that Adam guy."

Ye Zhongming waved dismissively.

While Mechanical Genius's strength commanded respect, his personality left much to be desired—arrogant, narcissistic, stubborn, and utterly lacking in subtlety, like some edgy teenager.

Ye Zhongming's confidence stemmed from one fact:

Every guardian beast on Cloud Peak's occupied stars was upgraded to level five—the maximum.

Upgrading was exorbitantly expensive. Maximizing even a bottom-tier guardian cost nearly as much as purchasing a star, while high-tier guardians demanded astronomical sums.

Yet Ye Zhongming had done it anyway.

Where did Cloud Peak's strength lie?

Absolute combat prowess

Sustained operational capacity

Military discipline and obedience

Superior logistics and repair resources

Though they'd lingered briefly on each star, the number of resource points conquered and benefits reaped was substantial!

"Fighting war with war" didn't just cover challenge difficulty reductions—it funded guardian purchases and upgrades too!

Moreover, Ye Zhongming had exclusively selected mid-to-high-tier guardians.

Even if Mechanical Genius's unique ability allowed his entire force to battle alongside him (avoiding team challenges that would boost guardians by another level), could he really overcome max-level guardians so easily? Every Cloud Peak star he'd seized meant enduring another brutal guardian trial.

This was why Ye Zhongming had called the Women Guard "wise." By paying tolls instead of challenging, they'd preserved strength despite seeming cowardly. Their final count—22 stars, fourth place—belied their true achievement: aside from Cloud Peak, they'd retained the most intact fighting force.

No one could call them the weakest now.

"You—!"

Mechanical Genius trembled with rage (presumably—no one could actually see). But someone of his temperament would undoubtedly be fuming at such dismissal.

"By trailing me to snatch my stars instead of thoroughly exploring, even if you were wealthy initially, you're nearly broke now, aren't you? How will you survive the ten rounds? Think more stars mean an easy pass? Waiting for others to fund you via tolls or die trying?" Ye Zhongming scoffed. "You're too naive, imagining the wheel plays fair."

"Never underestimate the wheel's malice—it'll only disappoint you."

Just as Mechanical Genius prepared another retort, the space's voice interrupted, seemingly validating Ye Zhongming's warnings:

"Commencing the final journey. All six factions, prepare."

"You may now purchase the following items:"

Head Start Card: Grants first strike privilege when the final journey begins. (Quantity: 1)

Summon Card: Allows summoning any faction (except during initial departure) to a designated star (within 10-star range). (Quantity: 5)

Nebula Card: Creates a nebula field to slow the Soaring Crystal's flight. (Quantity: 10)

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"4, Angel Card. The user can summon an angel to assist the team in battle. The angel can be upgraded through two methods: experience or equivalent. If it survives the battle, it gains experience based on its contribution, or the summoner can upgrade it using equivalent. The maximum upgrade limit is 10. Quantity: 5."

"5, Demon Card. Summons a demon to attack a selected team. The demon can be upgraded through two methods: experience or equivalent. The more evolvers it kills, the more experience it gains. The demon's maximum upgrade limit is 10. For each level increased, the user must pay an equivalent equal to the initial price to maintain the demon's loyalty. Quantity: 2."

"6, Shared Fate Card. Before launching an attack, the purchaser can use this card to link with another team. After the attack, regardless of the outcome or losses, the linked team will receive corresponding results or losses. Quantity: 2."

“7, Immunity Card. Purchasing this card grants the team complete immunity for the current round. No cards can be used, nor will they be affected by any other team’s cards. Quantity: 10.”

“8, Minor King Card. When a team purchases more than five of the other card types, they gain the right to buy the Minor King Card, which can be used once. Its effect is confidential.”

“9, Major King Card. When a team possesses and uses the Minor King Card, they gain the right to purchase the Major King Card, which can be used once. Its effect is confidential.”

“10, Luck Card. When a team completes five rounds without being eliminated, they can purchase the Luck Card. Using it will trigger a random event.”

The ten types of cards presented by the wheel space made everyone feel as if they were being toyed with.

Now, even the Mechanical Genius, who had been at odds with Ye Zhongming, fell silent.

Indeed, the wheel space’s malice was blatantly obvious.

What was the meaning of so many types of cards?

For example:

The wheel never specified what would happen to teams that failed to obtain the Mountain King Wheel. Based on previous scenarios, they would likely be removed from the space.

So, though no one voiced it, everyone had privately resolved that if they saw no hope of seizing the treasure, they would back down. Saving some “toll money” was better than stubbornly persisting and losing many lives.

This way, after leaving, the time to recover their strength would be shorter.

Besides, it wasn't as if they had gained nothing here. Several teams held some treasures obtained from the Bright Stars—items that would be priceless and rare outside.

Especially for teams like the Cannibal Chain, who wanted to help Ye Zhongming complete the ten rounds, they could simply clear some Bright Stars for Cloud Peak. Given their strength, though they might suffer some losses, it wouldn't be too difficult. Their forces were also well-preserved, and due to their prolonged exploration and rest on the Bright Stars, their skill cooldowns were fully reset, restoring their combat power to its peak. They were confident not only in attacking the guardian beasts on the Bright Stars but even in facing Cloud Peak in battle now.

But with these cards, the situation became chaotic.

Wanting to proceed quietly? Impossible. Wherever you land, the owner of that Bright Star might use Demon Cards, Summon Cards, etc., against you—or preemptively deploy Luck Cards or Shared Fate Cards.

These cards made even the strongest teams, initially confident in securing the Mountain King Wheel, cautious due to unexpected variables. Meanwhile, teams that had previously felt hopeless might reignite their ambitions and fight for the prize.

Fighting meant life or death.

After five rounds, everyone would want to buy the Luck Card. Before that, they'd aim for the Minor and Major King Cards! Who knew if they might summon a boss and emerge victorious in the end?

Thus, it was almost certain that casualties would multiply. Some factions would become stepping stones for others, perishing unnoticed in the roulette space while watching their rivals claim the ultimate prize, leaving behind only half-forgotten legends.

Years later, it would be as if they had never existed.

The Mechanical Genius returned to his team. He no longer had the energy to feud with Ye Zhongming; he needed to consider which cards to buy carefully.

Wu Xiu looked grave. Ye Zhongming had already given her many benefits, so complaining about the increased difficulty now would be excessive. She exchanged a few words with the Cloud Peak King and returned to her team to prepare.

Among the other factions, only Gyanendra's team appeared calm. The rest were visibly restless—some uneasy, others excited.

“The purchase phase begins. Please make your decisions within one minute. Each team may purchase no more than two of the same card type.”

“Countdown starts...”

Under the wheel’s rushing, a light screen appeared before each faction leader, displaying the various cards. Others could not see it.

Ye Zhongming studied the screen, which showed not only each card’s function and price but also real-time quantities.

The Cloud Peak King exhaled slowly...

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“Purchase phase ended. The final trial begins now. Random Bright Star arrangement initiated!”

As the wheel’s voice rang out, the Bright Stars previously occupied by the factions were extracted, spun rapidly in the air twice, vanished, and then reappeared in a straight line. At the farthest end gleamed the radiant Mountain King Wheel.

“As the Cannibal Chain purchased the ‘Head Start Card,’ they gain the first right to strike the Soaring Crystal. Other teams, please click on the five cards on the light screen to obtain a random number. Teams with higher numbers proceed first.”

Everyone looked at the Cannibal Chain—even Ye Zhongming. He hadn’t expected Wu Xiu to buy this card.

The Head Start wasn’t cheap!

Ye Zhongming clicked a card, which flipped to reveal a “3.”

Soon, other factions followed: Great America drew a “5,” Gyanendra a “4,” Cloud Peak a “3,” the Women Guard a “2,” and the Mechanical Genius a “1”—placing him last. The unseen figure inside the mechanical puppet let out a furious shout.

Wu Xiu stepped up to the newly appeared stone platform, nodded at Ye Zhongming, and picked up the peculiar hammer. After swinging it twice, she paused and called to Cloud Peak’s direction: “Hard to control.”

Then, glancing at the indistinguishable Bright Stars, she struck forcefully. The Soaring Crystal flew out and landed on the third star out of 174.

“Bright Star No. 3—owned by the Mechanical Genius!”