

Apocalypse 1691

Chapter 1691: Americas fight back

At that moment, a flicker of regret passed through the Women Guard members.

If they hadn't opposed Cloud Peak earlier, would that Eastern faction have refrained from using the Nebula Card?

But such thoughts were futile now. Even if they hadn't taken a stand, they might still have been eliminated. The immediate concern was avoiding that terrifying guardian beast's star.

Since the Women Guard had landed on their own Star No. 4 in the first round, theoretically, they could advance any number of stars this time.

However, the nebula now shrouded Stars No. 2 to No. 11. Without using any cards, their progress would be agonizingly slow.

Ella, representing her faction, struck the Soaring Crystal. Her tension was palpable.

Once the crystal left Star No. 4 (no longer theirs), it moved as if through molasses—slow, sluggish, as if it might drop at any moment.

The Women Guard watched with bated breath.

Star No. 7 was a death trap. Ye Zhongming's powerful guardian beast still lurked there, now under Gyanendra's control. Though Gyanendra was nominally their ally, landing there would force them to pay an exorbitant toll, likely bankrupting them.

Even if Gyanendra reimbursed them later per their agreement, that would take several rounds. Who knew if they'd survive that long? Could the Women Guard or even Gyanendra make it out alive?

No guarantees.

Best to avoid that star altogether.

As the Soaring Crystal descended, the Women Guard relaxed slightly. It seemed destined for Star No. 6—Great America's territory.

Confirming Star No. 6, they sighed in relief. Next round, even within the nebula, a full-strength strike would keep them clear of Star No. 7.

But Star No. 6 belonged to Great America. Per their alliance terms, they couldn't occupy it—only pay the toll.

The Women Guard paid silently. Though not ruinous, the sum stung after their earlier expenditures.

With the second round winding down, only the Mechanical Genius remained, still on Star No. 1.

His unique abilities meant his battles always involved his mechanical puppets, unaffected by team combat restrictions. He struck the crystal, landing slowly on Star No. 4—now held by the Cannibal Chain.

Without ceremony, he chose to challenge, securing victory far more easily than his earlier battle on Star No. 1.

Then he fell silent, taking no further action.

This infuriated Governor Spade.

Great America, already battered from consecutive challenges, desperately needed allies. The Mechanical Genius—with his intact forces and strength rivaling Cloud Peak's—was ideal.

Yet Spade couldn't complain. Advancing three stars within the nebula was commendable.

As the second round concluded, the hierarchy remained unchanged: the strong stayed strong, the weak stayed weak.

The Cannibal Chain struck next, landing again on Star No. 6—sharing it with the Women Guard under Great America's ownership.

After a pause, Wu Xiu opted for full-team combat this time. This meant advancing at most two stars next round, skirting the deadly Star No. 7 to reach Cloud Peak's Star No. 8, where they'd pay the toll.

Self-preservation united the Cannibal Chain, Women Guard, Mechanical Genius, and Gyanendra.

Secretly, they all hoped Cloud Peak and Great America would annihilate each other.

Next up: Great America.

They shared Star No. 11 with Cloud Peak. Though invisible to each other, Spade felt his enemy's breath on his neck.

Approaching the stone platform, he lifted the hammer—then halted abruptly.

This moment was broadcast to all.

No one knew what Spade planned.

"Ye Zhongming—that's your name, right? Eastern names are so awkward. You keep trying to kick others out, but did you think they wouldn't retaliate?"

Slowly, Spade drew a card from his spatial equipment.

"See the stars ahead? From No. 12 to No. 20, only one belongs to you! Your ally holds three. This stretch... will be a long crawl for you."

He activated the card.

"Great America uses the Nebula Card, designating coverage from Bright Star No. 12 to No. 20."

Cloud Peak wasn't the only one with a Nebula Card!

Spade's message was clear: With just one Cloud Peak star in this range, slow progress would force repeated tolls or battles, draining their resources.

"This isn't over, Ye Zhongming." Spade's voice trembled with excitement.

"Great America uses the Minor King Card—Type: Difficulty Surge. Target: Cloud Peak. For the next ten stars, Cloud Peak's challenge difficulty doubles, and required equivalent values double."

Following Cloud Peak's lead, Great America had played their Minor King Card!

After a two-second pause, the announcement continued:

"Minor King Card has priority. Conflicting card effects within its scope are nullified."

The meaning was plain:

Within those ten stars, no other cards could counter the Minor King Card's effects. Cloud Peak was locked into this brutal state.

Most critically, the Immunity Card would fail—Cloud Peak couldn't evade this onslaught.

"I'll be waiting up ahead!"

With that, Spade struck the Soaring Crystal onto Star No. 13, owned by the Cannibal Chain.

Chapter 1692: Tax Card

Even after being screwed over by Ye Zhongming, Great America still possessed enough combat strength to overcome challenges of moderate difficulty.

The Cannibal Chain's guardian beasts were low-level and barely upgraded. Once the battle began, Great America's deep reserves became evident.

After securing victory, Spade promptly replaced the guardian beast here. It didn't take a genius to guess he'd choose the most powerful option available—likely maxing out its upgrades!

This way, when Cloud Peak eventually arrived, whether through challenge or toll payment, the Difficulty Surge Card's effects would be maximized.

Following Great America, it was Gyanendra's turn.

Truth be told, no one paid much attention to him now. With the fewest stars and having rushed ahead, the West Asian Saint was essentially out of the competition, just waiting to exit safely.

But in reality, no faction that had come this far wanted or was willing to bow out.

Least of all Gyanendra, who had traveled all the way from distant West Asia.

"Since everyone's in such high spirits, I'll join in too."

Before striking, Gyanendra smiled, sending a chill down everyone's spine.

Sometimes, the person you least expect becomes the one who tips the scales.

After six years in the apocalypse, everyone had experienced this firsthand. So when Gyanendra spoke, all eyes locked onto him.

The West Asian Saint produced a card.

"Gyanendra uses the Tax Card!"

"Designated area: Bright Stars No. 10 to No. 19."

"Any faction passing through this zone must pay 20% additional equivalents, which will be transferred to the card user."

The moment this card was revealed, many gasped at the perfect synergy with Great America's Difficulty Surge Card.

Imagine Ye Zhongming struggling through the nebula, forced to pay double the tolls at others' stars—now with an extra 20% markup. It was downright brutal.

With Great America ahead, they'd spare no expense to ramp up difficulty by purchasing powerful guardian beasts. Cloud Peak would either pay astronomical sums (bankrupting any faction) or fight endlessly (and lose people).

"Old bastard, we'll kill you when this is over!"

Many in Cloud Peak—especially the Youth Army—shouted threats, regardless of whether they'd be heard. Their confidence stemmed from being part of Cloud Peak; some even believed a small team could eliminate this West Asian Saint within a year.

Initially, they hadn't thought much about the Mountain King Crown's challenge format—some even found it "fun."

But now, they felt a deep sense of crisis.

They didn't doubt their leader's wealth, yet no one understood the expenditures better than them. In their eyes, Ye Zhongming's funds were nearly depleted. Continuously paying tolls over these ten stars seemed impossible.

If they didn't pay, they'd have to fight repeatedly. And that meant casualties.

Who would die? Most likely Youth Army members or their Female Guard sisters. Neither outcome was acceptable.

Gyanendra's adding insult to injury ignited the youths' fury and hatred.

But... it changed nothing.

The reality was set. They could only watch as Gyanendra struck the Soaring Crystal onto Star No. 24— Cloud Peak's territory.

"Gyanendra likely has four unique cards; the others don't. He's used two now."

Unlike the furious youths, Cloud Peak's leadership remained composed.

In such battles, obstacles were mutual. Getting angry over this would've killed them long ago.

Xiao Min analyzed calmly based on prior events.

Ye Zhongming nodded. Gyanendra's hope for victory probably hinged on those four cards. With two still unused, they posed a concern.

This Tax Card alone could cripple any faction trapped in its zone.

Worse, it had no time limit—it would persist indefinitely, benefiting Gyanendra whenever anyone passed through.

Cloud Peak, Cannibal Chain, Women Guard, Mechanical Genius, even Great America—none could avoid it.

Star No. 24 belonged to Cloud Peak. Having spent heavily on Star No. 7, Gyanendra was nearly broke and had no choice but to challenge.

He also played an Angel Card.

Post-victory, Gyanendra was grateful for this decision. The battle on Star No. 24 was grueling—his team's diminished strength and the strong guardian beast cost him more members.

His forces, already small, had relied heavily on mechanical equipment. With each depletion, Gyanendra's faction became the weakest among the survivors.

The sole silver lining: his angel survived and leveled up.

Now it was Cloud Peak's turn.

Targeted by both Great America and Gyanendra, they were the bullseye. Every faction watched where they'd land next.

Currently on Star No. 11, Cloud Peak faced the nebula covering Stars No. 12 to No. 20.

Rules dictated they could advance at most two stars, only reaching No. 13 (Great America's territory, where Spade had prepared a "gift").

Obviously, Cloud Peak wouldn't go there.

That left one option: Star No. 12, held by ally Cannibal Chain.

Ye Zhongming chose this path.

He paid the toll—double, plus 20%.

Gyanendra chuckled upon receiving the payment, noting the Cannibal Chain had placed a decent guardian beast there.

Next, the Women Guard—still on Star No. 6—struck forcefully. The Soaring Crystal traversed the nebula, bypassing the death trap of Star No. 7, landing on Star No. 9 (their own territory).

Cheers erupted. They'd dodged Star No. 7 and reclaimed one of their stars.

But luck wasn't universal.

The Mechanical Genius?

His Soaring Crystal landed squarely on Star No. 7.

Chapter 1693: Star Swap Card

Gyanendra's eyebrows twitched as a smile crept across his lips.

In this space where factions could only hear but not see each other, the West Asian Saint had no need to conceal his emotions.

That star had once cost him dearly, so much that he'd even surrendered his personal gold-grade equipment.

Now destitute, he had no choice but to challenge whenever landing on others' stars.

For someone with so few subordinates left, this was dire.

Why had he used his hard-won Occupation Card on that star? To recoup his losses!

Yet the Women Guard and Cannibal Chain had bypassed it entirely, leaving him frustrated.

Fortunately, luck wasn't universal—the Mechanical Genius had landed right on it.

"Don't worry, I'll repay you in full afterward."

As allies, Gyanendra quickly made his stance clear.

"No need."

The Mechanical Genius chuckled darkly.

"With everyone so... enthusiastic, it'd be rude not to join in. Governor Spade, as your ally, I'm giving this my all."

His tone left allies uneasy—was this madness genuine or feigned?

Facing the space's prompt, the Mechanical Genius didn't choose. Instead, he produced a card.

His Minor King Card!

"Mechanical Genius uses Minor King Card—Attribute: Star Swap."

"Mechanical Genius selects Bright Star No. 12 as the exchange target. Stars No. 7 and No. 12 will switch positions."

"Due to the swap, factions on both stars must reconfirm their choice—challenge or payment!"

The announcements left everyone stunned, followed by wildly divergent reactions.

Great America erupted in cheers—this outcome favored them most, guaranteeing Cloud Peak would pay dearly.

Some felt both joy and dread, like the Women Guard. As allies of Great America, enemy losses benefited them. Yet having just avoided the terrifying Star No. 7, its sudden return ahead forced them to confront the danger anew. The world had gone mad.

As for Cloud Peak and the Cannibal Chain? Pure fury.

Gyanendra cared little whether Ye Zhongming or the Mechanical Genius paid Star No. 7's exorbitant toll—both were enemies.

If forced to choose, he preferred Cloud Peak.

Double the income, plus the sweet taste of vengeance against a faction that had only brought him defeat and misery.

Yet he worried—what if Cloud Peak chose to challenge? Given their strength, they'd likely win, leaving him with neither payment nor the star.

While Cloud Peak would be weakened, the real beneficiary would be the Mechanical Genius.

Frowning, Gyanendra decided it was time to shift targets.

Alliance promises? Child's play in his eyes.

"Boss..."

The Youth Army couldn't contain themselves, faces alight with anger and anticipation.

Fighting their own max-upgraded guardian beast felt wrong, but paying the toll was unthinkable.

Though new to Cloud Peak, they'd already embraced its ethos: better to die standing than live kneeling.

So what if it's a guardian beast? Bring it on.

Ye Zhongming disagreed.

Even with doubled difficulty, Cloud Peak could win—not every level nine matched the Holy Father's might.

But casualties would be severe, and that was unacceptable.

He did have a solution, but...

Using it here felt wasteful. This trump card was meant for their ultimate rival—a potential game-ender.

As he hesitated, a voice from behind made him whirl around.

"Let me handle this one."

The voice was familiar—the Talking Lady.

Her awakening had been utterly silent. Even the Youth Army only noticed when she spoke; the Female Guard had detected her mere moments earlier.

Xiao Min, Redhead, Xia Bai—all standing near Ye Zhongming—hadn't sensed her either.

"You're awake?"

Ignoring the space's prompts, Ye Zhongming hurried to Talking Lady, his eyes locking onto her forehead.

He needed confirmation—had she evolved? Reached level nine?

Disappointment flashed as he saw no crystal.

Then he noticed the black cat in her arms—its forehead bore a silver crystal.

Level nine silver.

If the cat was level nine, so was Yupo. They were symbiotic.

The legendary mutant zombie of apocalypse lore now stood before him in the flesh.

For the first time, Ye Zhongming felt true control over destiny.

"You saved me."

Talking Lady's gaze was gentle.

"In human terms, I owe you." Her pale fingers stroked the cat as she spoke solemnly: "This battle is interest. Later, you may call upon me once... when truly needed."

"Choose wisely." Her eyes then emptied, as if Ye Zhongming had become just another face in the crowd.

"Anything."

Her earlier tone had rankled Cloud Peak members.

What, did reaching level nine grant her the right to address their leader so? Cloud Peak had slain level nines before—even stood against the Holy Father!

But this promise soothed most grievances.

A single favor, but unlimited in scope—such sincerity.

It might demand her very life.

Without waiting for Ye Zhongming's response, Talking Lady turned toward another figure.

Red Hair stood there.

"Hey, I won... so you lost."

Chapter 1694: Talking Lady's strength

These two individuals, let's consider them both as humans for now, have been adversaries from the very beginning.

Even though they were essentially on the same side within Cloud Peak's faction, the clashes and conflicts between these two never truly ceased. It was only later, due to Ye Zhongming's presence, that their open confrontations turned into covert competition.

At different times, each had their moments of dominance—sometimes Red Hair was stronger, and sometimes the Talking Lady held the upper hand.

Recently, however, Red Hair undoubtedly became more powerful. With the addition of the Undead Dragon-fish, she, who was already capable of fighting two opponents alone, gained a position that, if not overwhelmingly dominant, was at least firmly advantageous.

It was easy to imagine how unwilling the Talking Lady must have felt.

But everyone knew that level nine, nine stars—this was the ultimate destination for evolved life. Whoever reached that stage would win this long-standing rivalry.

Now, the Talking Lady had achieved it first, so she declared victory.

She and the black cat—two level-nine beings—were more than enough to crush Red Hair.

Red Hair looked at her old rival with a half-smile, saying nothing.

Others might not understand such an expression, but the Talking Lady did.

After all, the one who knows you best may not be your friend, but your enemy.

"Are you talking about it?"

The Talking Lady glanced at the motionless Undead Dragon-fish lying on the ground. Red Hair and it now mirrored the Talking Lady and the black cat.

Red Hair nodded, then shook her head.

"Aren't you the one fighting? Go ahead."

Faced with Red Hair's evasiveness, the Talking Lady didn't press further. She signaled to Ye Zhongming to initiate the challenge, then stepped past the group and entered the battlefield.

Since this was an effect created by the Swap Card, there were no rules dictating who should participate.

The members of the other teams naturally had no idea who the Talking Lady was. Seeing only a woman holding a cat representing Cloud Peak to challenge the powerful Guardian Beast, they found it hard to believe.

Even without increased difficulty, this should have been a level-nine Guardian Beast. Now, with the difficulty doubled, it was undoubtedly a terrifying existence.

Against such a foe, the entire team should have fought together—a single individual would never be enough.

So what was the deal with this woman and her cat?

Was Cloud Peak being overconfident? If the challenge failed, they would have to keep trying—there was no pause option here. Wouldn't this just be a wasteful attrition strategy?

The battle began quickly, and the Cloud Peak members watched intently.

They wanted to see just how formidable a level-nine Talking Lady could be.

Her first move shocked everyone, including Ye Zhongming.

She...threw the cat in her arms forward.

Then came a meow.

Later, many in the Youth Army would often dream during their rest, waking to the sound of an eerie yet soft meow.

It wasn't a nightmare—just a kind of...aftereffect.

Many of them had advanced in evolution level, but their overall combat capabilities were lacking, whether in jobs, bloodlines, skills, or even experience. Naturally, this included their mental resilience.

The Youth Army's mental strength did not match their evolution level.

Thus, that meow left a lingering mental imprint on some of them for a long time.

After a brief daze, the spectators regained their senses, and many exclaimed in shock.

"Level nine! That's a level-nine black cat!"

They had seen the magic crystal on the black cat's forehead!

At that moment, whether it was the Mechanical Genius, Ella, Gyanendra, or even the Spade, even Wu Xiu and Ruan Xiao couldn't suppress the shock in their hearts.

Cloud Peak actually had someone with a level nine combat beast?!

Why had no one known before? Why wasn't it reflected in the national faction rankings? Was it recently acquired? And the evolved who owned this combat beast wasn't even Cloud Peak's leader, but an unfamiliar woman?

Just how powerful was Cloud Peak, then?

At the same time, the Western factions, while stunned, also felt a sense of relief at the Mountain King Wheel's challenge format. If they had faced a Cloud Peak with a level nine combat beast head-on, it would have been a life-or-death struggle.

Sure, they had the strength to challenge Guardian Beasts approaching level nine here—but that was through group combat! If they had to fight a level-nine lifeform with backup, their defeat would have been almost certain.

The black cat leaped forward, let out a meow, and then a storm of claw marks engulfed its opponent.

How big could a house cat be? Yet with a single casual swipe, it seemed as if the entire space was filled with its attack—from the spectators' perspective, there was no room to dodge.

Even through the light screen, everyone could sense the terror of the black cat's strike. The moment those claw marks appeared, they displayed a power completely different from the skills everyone was used to seeing.

Was this the strength of a level nine? Why did it feel even more formidable than the level-nine beings they had hunted before?

Upon reflection, it made sense. There were no nine-star evolved humans yet. To hunt level-nine lifeforms, they had to rely on numbers and strategy.

Naturally, they wouldn't target the strongest level-nine beings—and this black cat was clearly above average.

The Guardian Beast summoned by Ye Zhongming, now upgraded to its highest level, didn't even try to dodge. Instead, it swung its forelimb downward, and a black line instantly transformed into a black door. The Guardian Beast stepped inside.

This evasive maneuver left everyone astonished.

Just as the black cat's attack seemed about to miss, the Talking Lady made her move.

After throwing the cat, her hands rose slightly, and faint mist began to seep from between her fingers.

Then, she lightly stomped her right foot on the ground. From the spot where the Guardian Beast's black door had formed, a gleaming brown, glass-like object suddenly erupted.

With sharp edges, it struck and shattered the energy door the moment it appeared, forcing the Guardian Beast out with a surge of energy.

The black cat's claw marks descended, landing squarely on the Guardian Beast's body.

A scream and the Mutant Speaker's soft chant overlapped. The countless small gashes torn open on the Guardian Beast's body split another centimeter outward under her chant, deepening its cries of pain as blood sprayed out.

The black cat, having delivered its strike, landed lightly before leaping again. As it did, its small body spun rapidly, soon transforming into a black projectile—one with a sharp, pointed tip—streaking toward the Guardian Beast.

The Talking Lady's chant ceased after widening the Guardian Beast's wounds. As the black cat charged, her throat moved slightly, and then a sound emerged from her.

It was...a surprisingly beautiful melody!

Chapter 1695: Talking Lady's strength

Since the earlier cat's meow could penetrate the light screen, when the Youth Army and many others suddenly heard this melody, they instinctively covered their ears or tried to shut off their senses.

Even though the melody carried an indescribable elegance and beauty.

They were somewhat afraid.

The same went for the Female Guard warriors, though compared to the Youth Army covering their ears, their mental resilience was stronger—they only needed to be slightly cautious.

Only a few top-tier figures, confident in their own strength or mental fortitude, dared listen to this melody without any defenses.

Deep down, they wanted to test whether they could withstand this kind of mental attack.

As the Talking Lady hummed, the Guardian Beast showed no signs of slowing down, daze, or other negative effects. The other spectators also felt no discomfort.

Just as everyone was puzzled, the light screen changed.

The sharp, glass-like object that had erupted from the ground earlier suddenly exploded, scattering tiny crystal shards into the surrounding space.

Strangely, upon closer inspection, not a single one of these small crystals hit the Guardian Beast.

Yet this did not hinder the ability's activation. Only when it fully manifested did everyone understand why.

The Guardian Beast was strong—so strong that even Ye Zhongming himself wasn't confident he could defeat it. After all, he had bought it to trick Gyanendra, so how could it not be powerful enough to make the Western Asia Saint back down?

But faced with the Talking Lady and the black cat's unorthodox fighting style, it was at a loss.

To outsiders, it now appeared sluggish and slow.

In response to the Talking Lady's chant and the exploding ice crystals, it merely took a single step forward.

This was not the reaction expected of a top-tier lifeform.

Only the Guardian Beast itself knew why.

The black cat's initial meow had been an extremely powerful mental attack. It was only because the Guardian Beast was high-level and its strength had doubled that it didn't fall into complete chaos.

But its mind was in agony. The fact that it could tear open space to hide and evade attacks was already a display of its top-tier strength.

Any other lifeform would have been paralyzed and instantly killed by the black cat's strike.

Yet who could have predicted that the Talking Lady's attack would shatter the spatial rift, completely stripping the Guardian Beast of its initiative?

The black cat's attack landed fully, leaving wounds all over its body. As for how its opponent accurately located it and blasted it out of the spatial rift—only heaven knew. The Guardian Beast certainly couldn't figure it out.

Then came that soft chant, which instantly lengthened the wounds.

It was an excruciating pain, as if its skin were being torn apart. Despite its strength and rapid healing, it couldn't suppress the agony.

And that wasn't all. Once the wounds deepened, the Guardian Beast fell into violent convulsions. It wanted to move but found it extremely difficult; it wanted to counterattack, but its energy was in complete disarray.

As if poisoned.

This state didn't last long—the Guardian Beast's level meant it couldn't be restrained by any attack indefinitely.

But its opponents were also top-tier. Even this brief moment of confusion was enough for them to do plenty.

At a certain point, the scattered ice crystals suddenly froze midair. If not for the black cat, the Talking Lady, and the Guardian Beast still moving, the spectators might have thought time had stopped.

The next moment, the ice crystals "bloomed."

The scene resembled ice forming under a macro lens—spreading from nodes, expanding from points to surfaces.

Soon, the Guardian Beast was "frozen" within this crystalline state.

The black cat, now a projectile, slammed into the crystallized Guardian Beast. The ice shattered as the cat pierced straight through, leaving a horrific gaping hole.

Gasps rose from several bright stars—some marveling at the black cat's sheer power to penetrate the Guardian Beast's clearly formidable defenses, others stunned by the flawless coordination between the woman and the cat.

From the start of the battle, their movements had been seamless, as if everything had been prearranged. Every action, every reaction, even the Guardian Beast's responses, seemed calculated.

The Guardian Beast of Bright Star No. 7, which any team would dread facing, had been grievously wounded before it could even fight back.

But this wasn't the end.

The Talking Lady made another sound—this time not a hum or a melody, but a short, piercing scream.

The shattered ice crystals instantly reaggregated... right where the Guardian Beast's body had been pierced.

A massive ice pillar now impaled the Guardian Beast.

Just as everyone expected the Talking Lady and the black cat to press the attack, the two swiftly retreated from opposite sides.

Meanwhile, the ice pillar piercing the Guardian Beast rapidly shrank from both ends toward the center, soon matching the thickness of its body.

It looked as if the wound had been plugged with ice.

But everyone knew this was no good sign—including the Guardian Beast. Its freed forelimbs lashed out like lightning, trying to smash the crystal out of its body.

This wasn't wrong—it was instinct. Just as one would immediately pull out a splinter, the first reaction was to remove the foreign object.

But before its limbs could strike the ice, an explosion occurred.

Even through the light screen, everyone could feel the tremors.

The force was terrifying. No wonder the woman and the cat had retreated.

Purple blood and flesh filled the light screen. When the debris settled seconds later, what remained was a Guardian Beast missing half its body, its black bones exposed in multiple places.

It wasn't dead yet.

The Guardian Beast's eyes burned crimson. Despite its grievous injuries, it had protected its head. Now, on the verge of death, it prepared to unleash its strongest attack.

It was certain—if this strike landed, its enemies would die with it!

But before it could activate its ability, it saw its opponent swing her hands toward it from a distance, then pull back. The Guardian Beast felt something being ripped from its body. It didn't care—it no longer needed its body, so long as it could attack.

Yet suddenly, it felt cold and dark. It lost the last vestiges of control over its body. Before fading completely, it saw itself moving closer to its enemy, soon landing in her hands.

The beautiful human smiled at it, then clenched her fist.

The Guardian Beast knew nothing more.