

## **Apocalypse 1761**

### Chapter 1761: Incomplete Nine Star Evolved

Blood was dyeing the Holy City crimson.

Guang Yao and Liang Chuyin didn't know the exact number of mutated lifeforms under Cloud Peak's control assaulting the Holy City, but the rough estimate exceeded 300,000.

If quality wasn't a concern, the mutated rat horde never failed to deliver surprises.

Though individually weak, these creatures had a special craving for human flesh and blood. Once unleashed, their ferocity multiplied.

Not everyone in the Holy City was a powerhouse—some were even weaker than these oversized rats.

And let's not forget: the mutated rat army was a swarm-type lifeform. They didn't scatter but moved as one overwhelming tide. Even the strong could do little against such numbers.

Once unleashed on the streets, the rat horde became the nightmare of the Holy City within moments. Like a black storm, they surged forward in one direction, leaving nothing but bones in their wake.

Compared to the rat horde's blitzkrieg, the zombies were more disorganized.

Individually stronger, they simply charged wherever they caught the scent of humans.

This led to them spreading across most of the Holy City, dragging the flames of war with them.

Some in the Holy City still had courage. They even formed hunting squads specifically to track and kill zombies. The elite teams Ahmad had dispatched also joined the hunt.

There was no choice—among these zombies were high-level threats, even level-eight zombie kings, far beyond what ordinary Holy City evolvers could handle. To prevent these killing machines from running rampant, the city's elites had no choice but to hunt them down.

But the outcome was unpredictable. Hunter and prey could switch roles at any moment.

The genetic warrior army was the most disciplined. Once inside the city, they shed their siege tactics, moving with precision to seize strategic locations—barracks, noble estates, and more.

Initially, coordination between warrior types was clumsy, but it quickly improved. By the time Ye Zhongming issued the surrender order, they had split into countless specialized squads, maintaining mutual support distances while sweeping through districts.

Even in all of Cloud Peak, few units could match this level of coordination.

Yet casualties were still heavy. They were deliberately targeting the toughest strongholds. Just taking down one major noble's estate had cost over 200 genetic warriors in the assault.

Suhail had set his sights on the genetic army. So far, he'd led his elite strike team in two ambushes, aiming to decapitate their command.

His instincts were sharp—he'd correctly pinpointed the army's weakness and located its commander.

But that researcher-commander was one of Cloud Peak's most prized assets. He was protected not just by Li Qiang's elite sniper squad, but also over a hundred top Cloud Peak fighters, including White Crystal-enhanced genetic warriors.

And that wasn't even counting the fact that the commander was positioned deep within the genetic army's core.

Both of Suhail's raids failed, costing him over a third of his team.

That said, the fact that he'd penetrated the genetic army twice and survived spoke volumes about his team's strength.

"Status report?"

Suhail bandaged the wound on his left chest. As a level-eight evolved, it would heal within hours.

This safehouse was right next to the genetic army's sweep zone. The heavy footsteps of genetic warriors were audible even without straining—proof his team hadn't given up despite two failures.

The scout who entered glanced around, his expression darkening as he noted the missing faces. Their fates needed no explanation.

"The other gates have fallen. The slave armies attacked but were repelled. They're now retreating to defend the palace."

"Southeast, a massive rat horde is ravaging multiple districts. Nothing survives in their path. Interception forces are being organized, and remnants of the Royal Second Guard are heading there."

"Meanwhile, zombies run rampant. Waleed, Faisal, and Nayeef's teams are hunting the high-level ones."

Suhail sneered.

In his view, the real threat was this organized, disciplined genetic army. The rats and zombies? The citizens would self-mobilize—sheer numbers would eventually wipe them out.

Hell, the nobles would clean up the mess themselves to protect their interests. These invaders were temporary nuisances at best.

Did Waleed and the others not understand this? Suhail refused to believe it. They knew. Their actions were motivated by high-level magic crystals and relative safety.

"Self-serving, responsibility-dodging bastards!"

With their support, Suhail was 70% confident he could assassinate the genetic commander.

"Where did the zombies emerge from?" Suhail donned his armor, ready for a final, desperate strike.

The scout hesitated. "Near... the palace."

Suhail froze. "The palace? His Majesty didn't intervene?"

"Rumors say... a level-nine appeared there."

Silence.

"That rumor about His Majesty... is it true?" a subordinate ventured.

The question carried enormous weight—it could make or break the Holy City's will to resist.

Outside, the calls for surrender grew louder.

"It's true," Suhail confirmed. "His Majesty is indeed a level-nine evolved."

The team exhaled in relief.

If the enemy had level-nines, the Holy City needed its own—even if outnumbered. Without top-tier countermeasures, resistance was doomed.

But Suhail kept one thought to himself: His Majesty was level-nine, yet... incomplete.

"Abort the raid. We return to the palace."

With a level-nine threat there, staying here was pointless. Suhail's perspective had shifted entirely—the Holy City was doomed, even if they held out until dawn.

Now, his only goal was to save the king's life... and escape.

Chapter 1762: Anxious

The ones surrendering were merchants who had come to the Holy City for business.

West Asia was vast. Apart from the Holy City—the largest fertile land—other regions also sustained many people. Since ancient times, trade (and sometimes war) had flowed between these oases.

These merchants had come to the Holy City to make money, not to die. Ahmad's earlier restrictions had already angered them, and the subsequent war decree had cost them their goods.

Sure, Ahmad was the king of West Asia—but to these merchants, that was just a title. If the Holy City couldn't benefit the major powers elsewhere, why should they obey him?

Now, their interests had been severely violated, even their lives threatened. So why should they fight for the Holy City?!

Invaders? Yes, these Easterners fit the term—but what did that have to do with them? Rumor had it they'd had grievances with the Holy City before. Otherwise, why attack? If they just wanted to plunder, weaker factions like theirs would've been easier targets.

So why not surrender? Their homes weren't here. As long as they could leave, it didn't matter whether the Holy City or these Easterners won—they'd still profit either way.

Their numbers were substantial. In just an hour, nearly 20,000 had gathered, mostly at the eastern gate where Ye Zhongming was stationed.

Their demand was simple: Let them leave the Holy City.

Their attitude? Indifferent. Detached, as if none of this concerned them.

Ye Zhongming stroked his chin, amused as he studied their representatives. West Asians were an interesting bunch.

The entire Holy City was surrounded by Cloud Peak, the battle inside raging fiercely, the Holy City's forces at a complete disadvantage. What gave them the confidence to think they could remain neutral and walk away unscathed?

Toward factions within China, Ye Zhongming and Cloud Peak were relatively lenient—as long as they weren't hostile, coexistence was possible.

But for these outsiders—who might've even fired at Cloud Peak's forces earlier—he had no patience or goodwill.

"Two choices."

Ye Zhongming raised two fingers, then lowered one.

"Since you're not carrying goods, I'll implement a 'level-minus-one' evolution potion policy. Hand over one potion equivalent to your current evolution level minus one—or items of equal value—and you may leave."

The merchants erupted in chaos, protesting that their goods had been confiscated—how could they possibly pay?

Ye Zhongming looked baffled. "Then what makes you think you can demand anything in a war during the apocalypse?"

Their earlier confidence evaporated. Their boldness had stemmed from their numbers—over 50,000 across the Holy City. If they united against Cloud Peak, casualties would soar.

They'd bet Cloud Peak would rationally let them leave to avoid unnecessary trouble.

But this young leader was far more ruthless than expected.

"Then, respected Eastern leader, what is your second option?"

A man stepped forward, pressing for the alternative.

"Strip off all your equipment, then leave."

This caused an even bigger uproar.

While not absolute, higher-level evolvers usually had better gear. To many, equipment was second only to evolution level in importance—sometimes even surpassing skills and bloodlines. ㄟN0BĚš

The value of their gear far exceeded the evolution potions Ye Zhongming had asked for.

"I don't believe all your goods were confiscated. Think carefully. You have thirty seconds to decide."

"And if we refuse?"

The same man spoke—clearly a leader among them, with high prestige and an eight-star evolution level (concealed, but useless against Ye Zhongming's nine-star perception).

"If you were nine-star, you might qualify to negotiate as an equal. But you're merely eight-star."

The man broke into a cold sweat.

Even an idiot could read between the lines:

Ye Zhongming saw through his disguise.

Ye Zhongming was nine-star.

"I accept. The first option."

In the apocalypse, knowing when to yield was survival's golden rule.

Soon, the merchants handed over potions or equivalent items.

Truthfully, Ye Zhongming couldn't care less about their gear. Evolution potions were preferable.

Once the "ransom" was paid, they fled without hesitation.

"Boss, why not just rob them all?"

Xiao Min, watching nearby, didn't understand why Ye Zhongming hadn't seized everything for greater profit.

"After this, our main force returns to Cloud Peak. Antagonizing every faction would bring future trouble. Even if we didn't fear that, forcing them would trigger resistance, making our siege harder."

Ye Zhongming then asked, "How much longer to complete our objective?"

Xiao Min checked the real-time data on her tablet. "Roughly two more hours."

"Too slow. Deploy the air units early. Release the War Beast Battalion to support the genetic army's flanks."

Ye Zhongming relayed the order via the Battle Contribution Badge. "I want the Holy City's remaining forces concentrated around their palace within an hour."

Acknowledgements crackled through the badge. In the distance, Yangos's massive silhouette appeared first, followed by Cloud Peak's still-forming but combat-ready air units.

Simultaneously, at the southern gate, thunderous beast roars erupted. The War Beast Battalion, painstakingly nurtured by Cloud Peak, was now making its debut.

"Xia Bai, you and Red Hair move out too. Eliminate high-threat targets. Intel has already marked them, right?"

Xia Bai nodded. During the battle, Cloud Peak's intelligence network had pinpointed every dangerous counterattack point.

"Boss... you seem rushed."

Once Xia Bai and the others left, Xiao Min ventured cautiously.

Ye Zhongming gave a terse "Mn." Then, after a pause, added:

"We're running out of time."

Chapter 1763: Sudden

Some say fire and blood are the eternal themes of war.

The Holy City was no exception at this moment.

With all restraints removed, Yangos's destructive nature was given free rein.

Not just because Ye Zhongming had granted it unrestricted freedom, but also because it encountered zero resistance—after the Holy City's air force was obliterated by Li Qiang's squad, not even nuisance-level enemies remained to harass the dragon.

Thus, the evil dragon became a true demon, breathing fire here to ignite an inferno, summoning meteor showers there to create blazing pyres. Whenever it spotted beautiful architecture, it would dive down and shatter everything with its near-invincible body.

The ice birds were the opposite. Whenever they saw an ugly building, they'd spray frost mist, transforming it into an ice sculpture—much more aesthetically pleasing.

Of course, if anyone dared attack them—whether the wicked dragon Yangos or the ice birds—they showed no mercy, incinerating or freezing foes without hesitation.

The Holy City simply lacked forces capable of threatening them. Most high-level defenders were busy fighting elite zombies or the genetic army.

The rest of Cloud Peak's air units operated more chaotically, but with zero interception, they fought joyfully. Their commanders even drilled formations mid-battle, seeking weaker enemies to let both riders and mounts "taste blood."

The War Beast Battalion was different. Though still in its infancy, this deployment consisted of 7,000 of its most combat-ready beasts—half its total strength—led by Yuanyuan, granddaughter of Li Daqian. They charged into battle like an unstoppable tide.

Their mission: support the gene army by securing flanks, preventing Holy City forces from flanking.

Shouts, whistles, and strange noises directed the war beasts. Unlike cavalry, they had no individual riders—only handlers who doubled as commanders mid-battle, issuing orders the beasts obeyed absolutely.

A key measure of the battalion's maturity was commanders' control over their beasts, and Cloud Peak excelled in this regard.

This success stemmed from Beast Manor's full support—their expertise laid the foundation. Later, Cloud Peak's "technology", like Lan You and Red Hair's biological gadgets, helped forge a unique path for the battalion.

Silently, the War Beast Battalion had grown—just like many Cloud Peak units now making their battlefield debut.

Already reeling under pressure from zombies, rat hordes, and the genetic army, the Holy City's scattered defenses collapsed entirely once air forces and war beasts joined the fray.

Key resistance points were crushed by Xia Bai and Redhair, leading the Undead Dragon-fish and Nine Treasures' duo. They even eliminated a Holy City elite squad—later identified as Faisal, a high-ranking noble.

Defeat snowballed uncontrollably. Even disciplined armies faltered this way, let alone the Holy City's leaderless mob.

The entire Holy City fell before dawn. Civilians and nobles alike were herded toward the palace—the city's heart.

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Ahmad still stood at his post, though the tunnel below had stopped spewing zombies, and the cat-cradling level-nine had vanished. His gaze swept from near to far, taking in the devastation.

He saw:

The colossal dragon darkening the skies.

Stampeding war beasts sweeping through districts

Black tides of rats leaving barren wasteland

Zombies appearing everywhere

In the distance, figures stood atop the walls—Easterners now, not a single Holy City defender remaining.

Most of all, he saw panicked citizens fleeing toward the palace.

The mighty Holy City, with its impenetrable walls, had fallen in mere hours.

Ahmad never imagined this possible.

His grip on the staff trembled—barely restrained.

Behind him stood Waleed, Nayeef, Suhail, the Little Prince, and other high-ranking nobles—most bearing battle scars.

Suhail's plea still echoed: "Leave."

"Leave"? More like flee.

Just yesterday, Ahmad had relished expelling Gyanendra. Now, he was the one facing disgraceful retreat.

But did he have a choice?

How could he face four?

True, dawn approached—Sayyid would soon unleash his apocalyptic strike.

But would it be in time?

And even if it was, would he survive?

Self-preservation was Ahmad's deepest instinct, surpassing even typical evolved priorities.

"Aba..." He drew a shuddering breath, ready to flee through the palace's secret tunnels. Staying was futile. "Our arrogance doomed us. The Easterners remain as formidable as in history. Since we cannot resist, I decree—"

"SCHLICK!"

A dagger—glowing violet—pierced his back, skewering his heart.

Ahmad's eyes bulged, veins bursting across them. His body convulsed as blood seeped through his robes.

"YOUR MAJESTY!" Suhail roared, lunging forward—only for Waleed and Nayeef to instantly restrain him.

At equal evolution levels and this proximity, escape was impossible.

"You—?!"

The truth struck Suhail: Aba, Waleed, and Nayeef had conspired in treachery.

"Stay silent, and we remain allies," Waleed growled. Their families had been close for generations.

"Bullshit! This is betrayal of our faith! Your lineages will be DISGRACED!"

Waleed met his old friend's gaze, making one final appeal:

"History belongs to the victors, Suhail. This is the apocalypse. Our Lord has arrived—beyond Earth's skies. All this is HIS will. Abandon this coward. Or your entire bloodline will be purged."

Chapter 1764: Above the palace, inside the Holy City

"Ali! Babah! Mansour!"

Suhail's furious roar echoed through the opulent palace hall.

Yet none of the named nobles responded.

Despair slowly gnawed at Suhail's heart.

Had Aba bought all these men? How had that filthy black man achieved this? And why did they despise His Majesty so deeply? Why had they all turned?

"Where is your noble honor?! What of your sworn oaths?! Will you forsake your very souls for some baseborn black bastard?!"

Suhail made his final stand, hoping his fury might rekindle some shred of conscience. Just one wavering ally could turn the tide!

Though most present were merely seven-star evolvers, a handful had reached eight-star. Even with their pitiful combat experience, their assistance could create an opening.

But the frozen silence crushed his hopes. Not a man stirred. His words fell on deaf ears.

The loyal warrior's heart plunged into darkness.

Am I truly the last who remains faithful?

Then—

"PRINCE! ACT NOW!"

Suhail suddenly twisted against the daggers at his throat, heedless of the green-grade blades slicing his flesh.

The prince couldn't betray them—he was the king's own blood, the heir apparent!

Yet the face that met him wore not just indifference... but eager anticipation.

"You think too much, Suhail." The prince smirked, stepping close to pat the restrained man's cheek. "Do you know how long this old fool has clung to power? Had he surrendered the Holy City to me sooner, those Eastern dogs would never have breached our walls! I'd have annihilated them a hundred kilometers out!"

A feverish flush colored the prince's face as he shifted to reveal Ahmad's motionless back.

"The Holy City is but a gilded cage. Only recently did I learn—vast new worlds await my conquest!"

Spittle flew as the prince's voice rose. "The old man became a level-nine through our Lord's grace, yet remains incomplete! Why? Because he's weak! A coward who squandered every opportunity!"

No trace of filial piety colored his words.

"Today, Aba activates the gift our Lords left—claiming the old man's missing fragments of level-nine power! Soon he'll emerge complete, and those Eastern bastards will pay!"

Suhail's eyes widened in horror as Aba withdrew the dagger from Ahmad's back, pressing their bodies together. He roared curses, warning of Cloud Peak's three or four level-nine existences—what could one complete level-nine hope to achieve?

The prince's face darkened.

"Too noisy."

With sudden violence, he forced Waleed and Nayeef's blades deeper into Suhail's throat.

The loyalist collapsed, his fading vision filled with nobles turning away—all eyes fixed ahead where something momentous unfolded.

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Ye Zhongming arrived at Cloud Peak's position near the palace with the Female Guard.

Though fighting continued, its intensity had waned to sporadic clashes.

The rat horde and genetic warriors now formed a perimeter around two palace flanks, while six elite Cloud Peak units secured the remaining sides. Within this cordon, over 800,000 Holy City evolvers were trapped.

Even counting the rats, Cloud Peak's forces numbered barely 200,000—most remaining zombies being those still controlled by Talking Lady and Brain Child. The rest either lay destroyed or rampaged through distant districts.

Given the city's vastness, compressing all survivors toward the palace was impossible—at least another 100,000-200,000 evolvers remained scattered beyond the siege.

The math was grim: in under ten hours, the Holy City had lost six figures of lives.

Such was war in the apocalypse—especially when facing Cloud Peak's full wrath.

"Boss... there's something wrong with the energy up there."

Guang Yao stared at the towering palace, face grave.

Ye Zhongming nodded. He'd sensed it too—a bizarre, terrifying power fluctuating between unsettling calm and heart-stopping intensity.

Even he found its peaks frightening.

What could this be? Even if Ahmad became level nine with extraterrestrial help, he shouldn't surpass me...

Talking Lady appeared, her black cat purring.

"Your thoughts?"

The psychic entity—now fully sentient—studied the palace before answering:

"Something is merging." A pause. "We should have attacked earlier. Now... it's complete."

As she spoke, unearthly chanting reverberated across the Holy City—just as dawn's first light tore through the night.

Chapter 1765: Stand up

"We don't wish to kill everyone—and you certainly don't wish to be killed."

Guang Yao stood at the forefront of Cloud Peak's encirclement, his voice amplified across the Holy City.

"Our coming cannot be called justice—call it revenge, or if you prefer, conquest."

Behind him, Ye Zhongming stood ready, having already issued orders for all level-nine forces to prepare to strike at any moment.

He, Death King Tree, Talking Lady, and Mo Ye each guarded a direction, poised to counter any sudden attack from the level-nine presence atop the Holy City's palace.

"We want this city as our trophy for coming here. But—"

Guang Yao's tone sharpened, silencing even the faintest murmurs from the Holy City survivors gathered near the palace.

"We don't need you."

A glacial dread seeped into every listener's bones.

In the apocalypse, "not needed" usually meant death.

The genetic lifeforms, the mutant rats, the missile barrages—all had proven these Easterners fully capable of slaughter.

The crowd stirred. If death were inevitable, some would fight... or beg for mercy.

"But we are not bloodthirsty. You, as fellow humans, should not be butchered like livestock."

Silence returned.

"If you comply with our demands... you may leave."

These were the Holy City's people. Abandoning their home was unthinkable—yet far preferable to death.

Many wondered: The Holy City is vast. Do these Easterners truly not need citizens? Would they really pass up the chance to exploit us?

The answer came swiftly.

"Your price for leaving... is surrendering everything."

"Yes, you heard correctly. We... are here to rob you."

Chaos erupted. Some tried to break through the encirclement; others rushed toward the palace seeking refuge; still others rallied those around them to resist.

Losing everything—keeping only their evolution level—would make survival in the apocalypse far more difficult.

When the crowd's movements grew too chaotic, Cloud Peak struck.

For two full minutes, magic crystal firearms, ranged weapons, job skills, and war beasts' innate abilities carpet-bombed the front ranks of the Holy City's evolved.

Against overwhelming force—and taken by surprise—this was nothing short of a massacre.

When the barrage ceased, over ten thousand lay dead (and this was with Cloud Peak deliberately limiting the strike zone).

The survivors broke.

They came forward in waves, stripping off equipment, some even shedding clothes before stumbling out of the encirclement.

Humans were strange creatures. Given the sliver of a chance to live, most would choose it over certain death.

Within thirty minutes, over one-fifth had surrendered their possessions and departed. Under Cloud Peak's watch, they streamed out through a single gate—unarmed and broken.

As the exodus continued, Cloud Peak's forces began preparing to assault the palace.

Then—

"Heh."

A metallic, grating laugh vibrated through the air.

Cloud Peak's level-nines ascended as one:

Death King Tree resumed its monstrous form

Talking Lady perched atop a winged war beast

Mo Ye carried by ice birds

Ye Zhongming astride Yangos

All other forces—including Xia Bai, Red Hair, and the air units—retreated rapidly.

Against a level-nine that even Ye Zhongming treated with caution, only fellow pinnacle existences could intervene.

"How impressive. Four... no, five."

The voice scraped like rusted metal, making listeners wince.

"Almost frightening~"

As the words faded, the palace began to glow—like a firework preparing to launch. An invisible force shoved evolved away from its base, triggering defensive strikes from some Cloud Peak units.

Death King Tree lashed out, a viridian spike shooting toward the palace walls—only to deflect harmlessly with a crystalline ping.

Ye Zhongming's eyes narrowed.

That attack, though probing, could pierce seven-star evolved. Yet the ordinary-looking brickwork remained unscathed.

Without warning, Ye Zhongming drew his blade and struck.

Enemies lurked within—no need for restraint.

Though not a full-power blow, the job skill + purple-grade weapon combo made Holy City onlookers pale.

Terrifying—the only word that fit.

Dawn's light dimmed as necrotic energy saturated the air, making sub-eight-star evolved tremble uncontrollably. The recently awakened Undead Dragon-fish stretched luxuriously, reveling in the aura.

A pale-gray arc struck the palace.

Silence.

Then—

**BOOM!**

A thunderous crack split the palace from top to bottom as a gaping fissure appeared in its facade.

Even Cloud Peak's veterans gaped.

This was beyond human capability.

The strange voice did not return—but all five of Cloud Peak's level-nines retreated abruptly.

The ground trembled—so subtly that none noticed until their superiors withdrew. Even Nine Treasures and its mate grew visibly agitated.

Then—

CRAAAAAAAAAACK!

The entire palace ripped free from its foundations—

No.

It stood up.