

Apocalypse 1766

Chapter 1766: Giant battle

The Holy City's palace was rebuilt upon the foundations of an ancient structure, though its appearance had been completely transformed.

In the intelligence gathered by Cloud Peak, this building warranted only a brief description—perhaps less than a hundred words. After all, architectural value held little significance in the apocalypse.

Who could have imagined it would now rise from the earth like a colossal giant?

Post-apocalyptic evolved had witnessed countless bizarre phenomena, but never before had they seen a structure come alive, radiating overwhelming pressure.

"Rock-Strike!"

The grating voice had altered slightly but remained recognizable. As it spoke, the "palace giant" swung a side hall—previously connected to the main structure by just a single section—toward Ye Zhongming with thunderous momentum.

Though merely an annex, its massive scale meant the attack reached Ye Zhongming almost instantly.

Yangos instinctively wanted to meet the blow head-on, but Ye Zhongming stomped the dragon down midair.

Despite its enormous eight-level physique, Yangos stood no chance against its nine-star master. Beating its wings frantically, it was still forced down to just meters above ground.

BOOM!

Before the dragon could stabilize itself, it looked up to see Ye Zhongming hurtling backward. With a furious roar, it unleashed a torrent of dragon breath at the palace giant.

"Stinking lizard, scram. You're outmatched."

A vine from the Death King Tree suddenly wrapped around Yangos and flung it backward.

Just like Ye Zhongming, after reaching level-nine and undergoing Liu Zhenhong's modifications, Death King Tree far surpassed the eight-level dragon.

Yangos caught its master midair—already knowing he was unharmed from his controlled trajectory—but figured sucking up might expedite its own evolution.

"All of you, fall back. I'll handle this."

Perhaps still smarting from her earlier failure to breach the gates, Death King Tree seized this chance to prove herself.

Her roots had already silently carpeted the ground around the palace, while her branches extended toward the enemy.

As the palace giant attacked Ye Zhongming, she struck simultaneously.

Roots arched upward like scorpion tails before stabbing forward en masse.

The Holy City's palace wasn't just a building—it was essentially a small mountain. That Death King Tree could encircle it with roots in moments demonstrated her terrifying power. RaNOBES

Simultaneously, her branches hardened into jade-like spears, lashing down violently.

"Jade Transformation!"

Mimicking the stone giant's earlier attack, Death King Tree's human face spat these words as she unleashed her assault.

Her entire body now resembled carved imperial jade, gleaming lethally in dawn's light. In peacetime, such a tree would be a priceless national treasure.

Now? Just another combat form.

BAM! BAM! BAM!

Her jade branches hammered the palace giant mercilessly.

Her face twisted with fury—Think you're hot stuff deflecting my leaves and turning into a giant? Today I'll smash you to gravel or swear off mating with Little Leaf forever!

Everyone kept their distance, Ye Zhongming included.

When two level-nines brawled, bystanders risked annihilation.

The palace giant fought back fiercely, using annexes and rooftops as makeshift limbs to trade blows.

Scaled down to human size, their brawl would resemble a catfight.

At their actual scale? A clash of titans.

Each collision made the entire city tremble.

Evolved below five-star fled en masse—though Cloud Peak enforced its "no loot, no exit" policy. Ironically, the apocalyptic duel streamlined the robbery—soon even six-stars retreated beyond the walls.

Ye Zhongming, Mo Ye, and Talking Lady regrouped. With most Holy City forces evacuating, containment became unnecessary.

Some saw opportunity in the chaos, sparking scattered rebellions—all swiftly crushed by Cloud Peak.

The palace giant strained forward, seeking closer combat—but Death King Tree's roots anchored it firmly.

Enraged, it uttered another guttural command:

"Stone·Strike."

Three swinging annexes suddenly retracted—then exploded into stone shrapnel barraging Death King Tree point-blank.

Trapped by her own roots, she couldn't dodge.

Countless fractures spiderwebbed across her jade body as the salvo connected.

Chapter 1767: Giant Battle (2)

Ye Zhongming's figure abruptly vanished, reappearing atop the palace in an instant.

His weapon had switched to Wind and Thunder. Raising it high, his body pivoted slightly before unleashing a sword beam so brilliant it illuminated the dim morning sky as it cleaved downward toward the palace giant.

Many might assume that upon reaching the planet's pinnacle evolution level, one should possess a certain... demeanor. A sense of propriety.

That ganging up on an enemy—especially after Death King Tree had claimed the fight—would be beneath them.

If not showing the enemy respect, shouldn't they at least honor their ally's pride?

Yet Ye Zhongming attacked without hesitation the moment the Death King Tree appeared disadvantaged (though technically she wasn't truly losing).

To most observers, his strike seemed instantaneous—the sword light's appearance coincided with its impact on the palace giant.

An entire section of the colossal structure sheared away, crashing to the ground beneath stunned gazes.

Witnessing Death King Tree's earlier brawl, many had thought: So this was how level-nines fight?

Now, Ye Zhongming's single stroke revised that to: So THIS is how level-nines fight!

The injury disrupted the palace giant's rhythm. Its mountainous frame shuddered, dislodging all of Death King Tree's embedded roots.

"Little Ye, I've got this!"

Though distorted in her true form, Death King Tree's irritation was unmistakable. While her mastery of human emotions remained questionable, she'd perfected competitiveness.

"Let's end this quickly."

Ye Zhongming's reply was calm. Even at eight stars, the Cloud Peak King had feared no level-nine. Now at the pinnacle?

Mo Ye raised her hand, summoning a blue talisman—ice-attribute. Only Talking Lady remained inactive; against an enemy of this size and combat style, she and her cat were near useless.

As Cloud Peak's level-nines prepared their assault, the palace giant's convulsions shed not just roots but masonry—like a snake molting its skin.

Death King Tree retracted her roots; getting pelted by debris hurt.

Distant evolved suddenly felt parched, as if ambient moisture was being sucked away. The sensation intensified until massive ice spears—each the size of train cars—began raining from Mo Ye's talisman.

Ye Zhongming raised his blades for another strike.

Grumbling internally, Death King Tree canceled her crystallization. Most leaves retracted into branches, leaving sparse foliage that rapidly expanded to washbasin size.

These giant leaves arranged themselves with military precision before spinning up like circular saws, descending upon the enemy in a whirling storm.

Cloud Peak's apex fighters seemed poised to dismantle the palace.

"Look out!"

Talking Lady's warning came as shed masonry pieces suddenly levitated, swirling around the palace giant into a defensive "brick tornado."

Ye Zhongming's second slash, Death King Tree's spinning leaves, and Mo Ye's ice spears struck simultaneously.

The collision's energy wave flattened buildings like dominoes across hundreds of meters—mercifully, most evolved had retreated beyond this radius.

The tornado was shredded but not broken.

Then the palace giant counterattacked, exploding masonry outward in a deadly hail.

Each level-nine defended differently:

Ye Zhongming's spinning blades became an air shield.

Mo Ye recalled her talisman as a barrier.

Death King Tree re-crystallized

Talking Lady's mount carried her beyond the main barrage.

"Earth-Strike!"

The palace giant "molted" again—this time shedding entire annexes that liquefied, solidified, and launched skyward as gargantuan stone spikes.

"You're SO annoying!"

Death King Tree roared as spikes rammed her crystalline form. Shedding the armor, her branches softened and elongated, wrapping the palace giant in a deadly embrace.

"I'll squeeze you to DEATH!"

An enraged level-nine was terrifying.

An enraged level-nine aspiring to be human was horrifying.

An enraged level-nine aspiring to be a human woman was the stuff of nightmares.

Her constricting vines tightened as spinning leaves sawed into the now-diminished palace giant.

Yet at this critical moment, Cloud Peak's leaders didn't assist—they whirled toward a new threat.

There, in empty air, an enormous banner was materializing.

Chapter 1768: Destruction

"Why is this happening?"

"Why is this happening?"

The Saintess knelt on the ground, her hands propping up her body, forcing herself not to collapse.

Above her head, one wandering soul after another howled past.

Some were mournful, some ferocious, some utterly deranged—all drifting endlessly through the gray void.

She was no longer in the room from before but trapped in this misty, desolate space.

Earlier, when she had still been somewhat lucid, she had seen dark, cloud-like masses at the top of this space, from which these souls continuously emerged.

The Saintess had not yet reached level nine, the realm once occupied by the Holy Father, but she knew she was close. Since arriving in this place, her understanding of space and power had undergone a qualitative leap. Perhaps one day, her body would finally sense and grasp that transformative force.

When Zheng Xi and Duo Yan had cornered her earlier, aside from the obvious reasons, part of her had also wanted to wait.

Once she reached level nine, not only Zheng Xi and Duo Yan but even the long-absent veteran powerhouses would return upon hearing the news. Saint Light Hall would once again become an unstoppable force—no longer oppressed by the Holy City, but even capable of standing toe-to-toe with Cloud Peak.

But why?

Why, when she was just one step away from level nine, could she do nothing against these souls? She could resist, but she couldn't break free.

Earlier, that man named Sayyid had launched a sudden, inexplicable attack. After merging with a tattered banner, every member of Saint Light Hall had been drained by these emerging souls.

Drained... of all forms of energy.

Yes—energy from equipment, soul artifacts, their own bodies, even their lifeforce.

The appetite of these souls was disgustingly voracious.

The process was hopeless. The Saintess had resisted, but her body couldn't move at all. She could only watch helplessly as her energy was siphoned away. And she had witnessed the fate of every single Saint Light Hall member in the Holy City.

She had wept, but even her tears were absorbed. After the incident began, she had been transported to this eerie space. Below her, the ground acted like a monitor, displaying the suffering of every Saint Light Hall member in the city.

One by one, they died. One by one, their images faded from the screen.

As the leader of Saint Light Hall—someone who had desperately wanted to settle her people on this new planet and let them take root—watching this unfold was unbearably cruel.

Eventually, she grew numb. Most of her people were already dead. The remaining few were only the strongest, highest-level evolved.

She would never forget how each person on that screen had slowly dissolved into nothingness. Compared to dismembered limbs and bloodshed, the sight wasn't particularly gruesome. But the silent slaughter, the way it seeped into the bones of those who witnessed it, was utterly soul-crushing.

Her loyal maid, who had followed her for years, vanished just like that. Chi Lian, her staunchest supporter, couldn't endure the torment—first her equipment disappeared, then her body.

In the end, even Zheng Xi and Duo Yan, who had just been threatening and coercing her into marrying the Holy City's ruler, couldn't escape death.

But before they perished, they had kept their eyes fixed on her. She understood the message in their gazes.

"Avenge us. Kill them all. Avenge every last one of our people!"

The Saintess descended into madness, but the suction around her kept her immobilized—unable to even scream.

Her Robe of Faith shattered.

Her Crown of Truth shattered.

Her Scepter of Glory shattered.

Even the Armory of Dawn—shattered.

She knew that without these artifacts shielding her, she wouldn't have lasted this long. But their protection was finite.

Now, it was her turn.

First, her skin—once smooth and radiant—turned dry and dull.

Her lush hair withered into straw-like strands.

Her flesh shriveled.

The Saintess, who had been in the prime of youth (or at least appeared so), was now a shriveled old woman.

Her people had placed their hopes in her. Even her adversaries had entrusted her with their dying wishes.

Yet she could do nothing.

Until—

CRACK!

The eerie space shattered.

The tattered ghost banner reappeared, but unlike before, its "tattered" appearance was now just an illusion. Countless souls writhed across its surface, their dark-gray mist making the banner itself seem worn.

At the same time, with the last dregs of her energy, the Saintess sensed a familiar yet foreign presence.

It had to be Ye Zhongming, the King of Cloud Peak—but stronger than before. As strong as the Holy Father had been.

Hope reignited in her heart.

She even felt and grasped the power she had longed for!

Energy from the surrounding space crashed into her like a tidal wave. Feeling the tremendous changes within her body, she first panicked—then laughed hysterically.

She panicked because she had finally comprehended the secret to reaching level nine. Under normal circumstances, she would have ascended right then.

But now?

Her body was broken. Aged. Ruined.

This torrent of energy would destroy her completely.

Was this fate?

The thought crossed her mind—but she refused to accept it.

She saw what Sayyid was doing.

This banner was undoubtedly an incredibly powerful artifact, but to unleash its might, it required vast amounts of energy.

And Saint Light Hall's people had become its fuel.

Now that it had stored enough energy, the banner was turning its attention to Ye Zhongming.

With just one flick, a massive ghostly head shot out from its surface, striking Talking Lady and her black cat at an unavoidable speed.

The Saintess wasn't them, but she could still sense their apex-level power.

Yet both level-nine beings plummeted from the sky, their bodies wracked by corrosive dark energy.

She saw Ye Zhongming and the other level-nines react—some preparing to defend, others charging forward, a few retreating.

"Ye Zhongming!"

Her voice was hoarse, broken, filled with grief.

"I'll help you! But you must promise me—kill the Holy City's ruler! Kill every last one of them!"

Without waiting for his answer, before the banner could launch its second attack, her body suddenly straightened.

Then—

Silver-white flames erupted from her.

Amidst manic laughter, the Saintess transformed into a blazing meteor—and slammed directly into the banner!

Chapter 1769: Earth Sacrifice

"Why has it come to this?"

Every person who leaves their homeland carries a story of hardship and sorrow.

As times progress, the tragic undertones only deepen. By the pre-apocalyptic era, such actions had transformed into symbols of struggle and perseverance, their meaning entirely altered.

The migration of Saint Light Hall could be seen as both passive and active, but ultimately, they were strangers in a strange land.

They did not belong to this blue planet.

Once, they had dreamed of putting down roots here, spreading their faith and deities to sunlit lands.

Many members of the Hall had left their camps—some victims or dissenters of internal strife, some seekers of hope, others perhaps missionaries of ideology and belief.

Little did they know, their departure made them the last survivors of their people.

The embers still glowed, but extinction had become reality.

With the Saintess' final sacrificial act, Saint Light Hall was no more.

They had survived the destruction of their ancestral home, the Blue Secret Realm, yet failed to endure in this new world.

As the Soul Banner manifested, a large section of the Holy City was revealed—previously indistinguishable from surrounding residential areas. Even when zombies or genetic warriors had entered, nothing seemed amiss. At most, it was just... empty.

In a city this vast, an uninhabited zone during war was hardly unusual.

Yet who could have guessed? This was Saint Light Hall's camp, housing many of their elites.

Ye Zhongming's expression shifted slightly. Despite not actively probing, as a level-nine evolved, his failure to detect this banner was an unforgivable oversight.

Moreover, the banner's aura was overwhelming—so much so that even Ye Zhongming, Mo Ye, and other apex existences felt a tremor.

Such instinctive dread only surfaced when life itself was threatened.

An artifact capable of killing level-nine evolved.

Death King Tree had ceased fighting.

True, when enraged, she would fight to the death—but that didn't mean she valued her life lightly. If anything, mutant flora and fauna adhered to survival instincts more purely than evolvers ever could.

They didn't even bother pretending otherwise.

"You're strong. You broke three layers of my armor. Yet I endured—and now, you'll die."

Perhaps due to its reduced size, the Palace Giant's voice was clearer now, its speech more coherent.

"Spare me your delusions. You're alive only because I was the only one truly attacking earlier."

Death King Tree reverted to human form, glancing disdainfully at the still-colossal foe.

Even she hadn't gone all out. The moment she prepared to, that ominous banner had stolen everyone's attention.

"Heh, no matter."

The Palace Giant's body began transforming—its haphazardly assembled parts fusing seamlessly, making it resemble a true stone colossus.

Cloud Peak's level-nines didn't interfere. The banner's pressure was too immense; any movement risked unpredictable consequences.

Though the Saintess' final wail still echoed, Ye Zhongming remained dispassionate.

Their original purpose here had been to settle scores with Saint Light Hall—they were never allies. Even if they had been, Cloud Peak's interests outweighed all personal bonds.

The Cloud Peak King needed time to assess the situation.

Having already failed to detect the banner earlier, he couldn't afford another mistake—especially with his departure imminent.

"Are you... the Holy City's true ruler?" Ye Zhongming asked the Palace Giant.

"You could say that. Or call me Aba. That fool Ahmad was unworthy of this city—unworthy of the Earth Archmage power bestowed upon him."

A single sentence revealed volumes.

"And your current form is...?"

"The Earth Archmage's ultimate skill—Earth's Sacrifice!"

The specifics remained unclear, but the name alone spoke volumes.

"Then what... is that?" Ye Zhongming pointed at the soul-chilling banner.

"That is... apologies, I can't tell you." Aba's tone dripped with smugness. "Also, your people won't escape. These stalling tactics are too transparent."

As he spoke, the entire Holy City quaked violently—a magnitude-8 seismic event.

Buildings crumbled instantly. The once-glorious West Asian stronghold now mirrored Saint Light Hall's fate—utter annihilation.

Mo Ye's hair billowed as she swiftly drew five colossal talismans midair. Each unleashed elemental attacks—not at the passive yet oppressive banner, but at the Palace Giant, initiating this catastrophe.

Amid such tremors, even evolved struggled to move. Cloud Peak's forces were temporarily trapped.

Knowing these warriors represented over 80% of Cloud Peak's elite, Mo Ye unleashed her full power for the first time.

Death King Tree joined the assault.

Still drained from earlier, she remained humanoid, plunging hands into the earth. Beneath the surface, roots snaked frenetically, stabilizing the convulsing terrain like a living seismic network.

She didn't understand the quakes' purpose but knew calming them was paramount.

Talking Lady, too, acted—cradling her cat and singing.

Her melody radiated tranquility, soothing the panic-stricken Cloud Peak forces.

A top-tier psychic entity could heal as well as harm. In this crisis, clear minds meant survival.

"Impressive." Aba remarked suddenly. "Sayyid... your turn."

The Soul Banner stirred.

Chapter 1770: Hell Death Banner

A ghostly head materialized in midair.

It had detached from the great banner, gradually taking form above it.

Though the process was actually swift, it felt agonizingly slow to observers.

The massive black-gray spectral head gaped its maw, emitting sounds that hovered between laughter and weeping—a cacophony that dizzied the mind.

Even top-tier beings like Ye Zhongming were briefly affected, though they quickly regained clarity. They now understood why the ghost head's formation had seemed so protracted.

The sounds emanating from its mouth had mind-disrupting properties.

Ye Zhongming stepped forward, positioning himself directly before the spectral apparition.

With Death King Tree and Mo Ye now fully engaged against the Palace Giant Aba, and Talking Lady and her black cat standing guard, the task of confronting this eerie banner fell solely to him.

He trusted that Death King Tree and Mo Ye would soon dispatch the Palace Giant.

Despite Aba's earlier show of strength—holding its own against Death King Tree and even weathering attacks from other Cloud Peak powerhouses—those had been half-hearted assaults. Once these beings fought in earnest, it wouldn't last long.

But this Soul Banner? Ye Zhongming treated it with utmost gravity.

Taking his stance to intercept any attack, he flicked his right wrist, producing an ancient yellow talisman marked with vermilion sigils of obscure meaning.

While not absolute, most evolved found Buddhist and Taoist artifacts particularly effective against spectral entities. Ye Zhongming was no exception.

This item, Bright Light Holy Talisman, had come from the Gate of Sacrifice.

Anything bearing the title "Holy" was extraordinary—this was no different.

It had no rank—just a simple slip of paper that, upon closer inspection, resembled the shoddy printed charms peddled by street charlatans.

Yet Ye Zhongming knew its power. Its description contained just three words:

"Dispels all wickedness."

What constituted wickedness?

To Ye Zhongming, this ghost head—no, the entire banner—was the very definition.

The talisman ignited with unnatural purple flames.

The spectral head had now fully formed, its ghastly noises reaching a crescendo when suddenly—it laughed viciously and lunged at the nearest target...

Yangos.

The dragon had been retreating, albeit sluggishly. In its view, Cloud Peak still held absolute superiority. Having witnessed its master's might firsthand, Yangos believed even the elders of its pureblood kin might pale in comparison—only the Elemental Dragonlords could potentially rival him. ʀÄŃOßEş

Its hesitation stemmed from greed—a chance to devour apex-level flesh and edge closer to level nine.

This opportunism made it the ghost head's first victim.

Now, Yangos was ferocious—few of Cloud Peak's war beasts could match its innate viciousness. Had fate not brought it to Cloud Peak, it would likely have become a scourge upon the land.

Yet it was also cowardly, quick to flee when outmatched.

Having already sensed the Soul Banner's extraordinary power—and doubting its ability to withstand it—the dragon turned tail without a sound when targeted.

Yangos had far more faith in its escape speed (not fleeing, mind you) than combat prowess.

But soon it realized—the ghost head was faster.

The banner's apparition moved unnaturally, not flying but teleporting through space.

Initially positioned before Ye Zhongming, it blinked to his lower flank, then again—now alarmingly close to Yangos.

Ye Zhongming's eyes narrowed. The burning talisman vanished from his hand—only to materialize perfectly upon the ghost head's gaping maw as it prepared to swallow Yangos whole.

POP!

The specter exploded into swirling black-gray mist, buying Yangos enough time to flee, its scales slick with dragon sweat.

Yet things weren't proceeding as Ye Zhongming anticipated.

He'd intended that talisman for the banner itself.

Now, a second ghost head had formed above the Soul Banner—identical to the first.

Wind and Thunder appeared in Ye Zhongming's grip. If talismans wouldn't work, he'd cleave the banner apart.

But before he could act—

The dispersed mist from the first ghost head coalesced anew, forming thousands of miniature specters!

They scattered instantly, streaking toward beings still struggling with the seismic chaos below, their shrill cries resembling delighted laughter.

Every Cloud Peak member's expression soured.

Though the ghost heads' exact lethality remained unknown, their deadly potential was undeniable. If these things made contact...

While Cloud Peak's evolved were high-level, these apparitions caused even level-nines to pause. Ordinary defenses might prove inadequate.

Core members and eight-star war beasts reacted first, their attacks intercepting the specters midair while others activated all available defenses.

Talking Lady's black cat leaped from her arms, transforming into a shadowy streak that joined Death King Tree and Mo Ye against the Palace Giant.

Killing it would stabilize the ground, giving evolved better odds against the specters.

Talking Lady herself landed, ceasing her chant. Instead, she raised both hands as if playing an invisible piano, her fingers plucking at the air.

Ten ethereal energy threads manifested, extending and undulating around her—any specter within their reach became fair game.

"Heh heh... the Hell Death Banner's specters... cannot be blocked."

A voice oozed from the Soul Banner—smug, triumphant.

As it spoke, the second ghost head surged toward Ye Zhongming while a third materialized and expanded almost instantly.

Simultaneously below—

A miniature specter phased into a gene warrior's body.

The robust fighter stiffened, his flesh graying and withering within seconds.

When the specter emerged from his back, laughing, it had grown larger—leaving behind only a desiccated husk that crumbled to dust.