

Apocalypse 1771

Chapter 1771: Annihilation Talisman

Even though gene warriors were artificial lifeforms, the ghost heads still drained their energy. This shattered any remaining hope among Cloud Peak's fighters who had harbored suspicions but clung to wishful thinking.

The tremors beneath their feet had weakened slightly—at least enough to regain basic control of their bodies. Death King Tree's efforts weren't in vain. Earlier, Talking Lady's chant had also stabilized everyone's emotions, giving them at least a fighting chance against these smaller specters.

Ye Zhongming's mood darkened as he realized just how troublesome these ghost heads were.

His Wind and Thunder had cleaved one specter in half—yet both halves kept attacking. One portion lunged at him while the other streaked toward Mo Ye, who was bombarding the Palace Giant with five talismans unleashing metal, wood, water, fire, and lightning attacks.

Under her assault, Aba—who had been mocking them moments ago—was now forced back, his stone giant body shedding masonry like flaking skin.

An enraged nine-star Talisman Master was a terrifying force.

The ghost head's intervention clearly aimed to relieve pressure on the Palace Giant.

Seeing physical attacks prove ineffective, Ye Zhongming switched his blades to his left hand. With his right, he snapped a bracelet on his wrist, sending its black beads shooting linearly into the ghost head.

Muffled detonations followed. The previously unstoppable specter shuddered before exploding into dark mist.

These were soul artifacts—gifts from Miya who begged for them from the kings—with formidable power against mental and spiritual entities.

Ye Zhongming had no time to analyze the specters' nature, but soul weapons clearly affected them.

Yet... though the ghost head didn't fracture into smaller ones this time, the mist was reabsorbed by the Death Banner.

Now, a third ghost head came for Ye Zhongming, while a fourth already condensed above the banner!

Endless regeneration?

This realization sent chills through everyone. If true, they faced a nightmare scenario.

Ye Zhongming's thoughts raced further. The Saintess's final words echoed in his ears—were the banner's energy sources the people of Saint Light Hall and the Saintess herself?

With ghost heads multiplying endlessly, the Cloud Peak King knew this couldn't continue. Instead of engaging the new specter, he plummeted from the sky, vanishing at banner-height before reappearing directly before it.

His twin blades became a whirlwind of light, carrying him straight into the banner's fabric.

Few could track Ye Zhongming's movements now—only that he'd vanished into the luminous storm clashing with the Banner's swarming souls. Behind him, the third ghost head roared in frustration before giving chase into the chaos.

Unfurled, the Banner resembled a small mountain due to the souls writhing across its surface. Once Ye Zhongming penetrated it, the souls engulfed him completely—erasing all visible traces of his presence.

Meanwhile, Death King Tree had maximized her efforts—her roots now sprawled beneath most of the Holy City, reducing tremors to manageable levels.

Mo Ye diverted her fire talisman to intercept the ghost head attacking her while maintaining assault on Aba with the other four.

The black cat, avoiding Mo Ye's attacks, focused on the Palace Giant's lower half. Its claws moved too fast to see—only shadowy afterimages remained as it struck, rebounded, and struck again in eerie trajectories.

Aba's ultimate Earth Archmage skill—Earth's Sacrifice—was undeniably troublesome. In one-on-one combat, defeating him would be challenging. Against psychic entities like Talking Lady and her cat, he might even dominate.

Though the black cat's blinding speed had landed dozens of strikes in moments, the wounds on the Palace Giant were mere scratches—shallow grooves about four centimeters deep and the size of a 65-inch TV screen.

Against other level-nines, such attacks would have shredded them. But the Palace Giant's stony physique hard-countered the feline's style.

The real damage came from Mo Ye's talismans—the cat played only a supporting role.

"Heh... you can't kill me. You'll all die." Aba's distorted voice held confidence despite his battered form.

Mo Ye glanced toward Ye Zhongming's position. Though invisible, his presence remained palpable—single-handedly occupying the Banner's attention. While she admired this feat, her urgency to eliminate the Palace Giant intensified.

A hundred fireballs ignited the approaching ghost head, its dissipating mist noticeably reduced—fire proved the most effective countermeasure discovered so far.

Ground forces quickly adopted this tactic, with fire-attuned evolved and equipment unleashing flames against the specters.

But gene warriors, mutant rats, and zombies fared worse.

The smaller specters reaped lives relentlessly. The new Rat King eventually ordered its brood underground, but the gene warriors—already suffering thousands of casualties—had no such retreat option.

Half the remaining Holy City residents fled beyond the walls, while others hid in corners to await developments. The rest seized the chaos to counterattack Cloud Peak.

The entire city had become a boiling cauldron of chaos.

The turning point came when the Palace Giant unleashed another skill.

The giant windows forming its eyes shattered, spewing earthen pillars that smashed the black cat into the ground before burying Death King Tree under a landslide. Tremors intensified slightly—though not to previous levels, indicating Death King Tree likely survived.

This enraged Mo Ye beyond measure. As the primary attacker, not only had she failed to eliminate the target, but she'd allowed it to wound allies. Cloud Peak's second nine-star existence reached her breaking point.

With a sweep of her arms, the five talismans aligned midair before fusing into a single pure white talisman—ethereally thin and delicate.

It drifted downward with deceptive slowness, wrapping around the Palace Giant in an instant.

"DIE!" Mo Ye's scream accompanied a choking gesture. The white talisman constricted violently.

Annihilation Talisman.

For the first time since reaching nine-star, Mo Ye unleashed her ultimate technique.

Chapter 1772: Broken Flag (1)

The Palace Giant stopped speaking and began to wail in agony.

Previously, neither the black cat's scratches, Death King Tree's attacks, nor even the ice spears, fireballs, and lightning from Mo Ye's talismans had truly harmed it—at most, they had chipped away bits of its brick-and-stone body, making it slightly "slimmer."

But now, wrapped in this soft, thin white talisman, it let out uncontrollable screams.

Accompanying the screams were loud cracking sounds.

If someone had X-ray vision, they would see the Palace Giant's body collapsing and splitting apart, its structural components being crushed to pieces.

Even from the outside, the Palace Giant's distress was evident—the constricting white talisman had already distorted its form.

Mo Ye's face was slightly flushed, her hands pale from exertion. As the Palace Giant's body deformed further, her hands even began to tremble.

But everyone knew—this was Mo Ye controlling her talisman.

In Ye Zhongming's past life, one of the most widely believed rumors was that level-nine evolved possessed earth-shaking power.

While reality wasn't quite that exaggerated (after all, level-nines weren't gods), the sheer scale of their battles—the destructive force of their attacks and defenses—could easily make people mistake them for invincible monsters.

Take Mo Ye and her ultimate ability, Annihilation Talisman. If used on a mountain, it could indeed reduce it to rubble with ease.

The Palace Giant's screams echoed throughout the Holy City. By now, it could no longer control the ground tremors, freeing the city from the earthquake-like state—and freeing Death King Tree from her task.

Every evolved being had its own judgment in battle. After a quick glance at the two aerial battlefields, Death King Tree made her decision.

She didn't assist Mo Ye or Ye Zhongming. The former was on the verge of victory and didn't need help; the latter's situation was unclear, and rash intervention might do more harm than good.

Instead, she turned her fury on the Holy City residents who dared attack Cloud Peak again—and the ghost heads in the sky.

A level-nine lifeform was, after all, a top-tier existence. With a single leap, Death King Tree soared into the air, effortlessly punching and kicking the chaotic ghost heads. Each strike sent them wailing as they dispersed into black mist—some vanishing entirely, the rest returning to the Banner.

Compared to Death King Tree's brute force, Talking Lady's energy threads were far more efficient.

Like swaying seaweed in water, the threads undulated across a wide area, slicing through any ghost heads they touched.

Against these threads, the specters were as fragile as tofu.

Even if they couldn't be completely destroyed, they were severely weakened. Soon, the area was cleared of ghost heads, and Talking Lady redirected her threads elsewhere.

With Yangos, Yellow Ball, Nine Treasures, the Undead Dragon-fish, Red Hair, and other core members joining the fight—and with the ground stabilized—Cloud Peak firmly regained control. They could now attack the ghost heads while protecting the genetic warriors.

As for the Holy City residents attacking them, the War Beast Battalion, the resurfaced mutant rat horde, and the elite zombies controlled by Brain Child intercepted most, minimizing the threat.

Yet reality proved otherwise. Death King Tree had matched him, and this woman had utterly defeated him at his strongest.

"Sayyid..."

Aba tried to call to his ally within the Banner, but no sound came out—only blood.

Short of a high-level healer's intervention, nothing could stop his life from slipping away.

Perhaps sensing Aba's plight, the Banner changed tactics.

The ghost heads that had fed on "prey" now flew back into the banner, replenishing its form, which had thinned under Ye Zhongming's assault.

Meanwhile, the remaining specters grew even more frenzied, attacking all life—not just Cloud Peak's forces, but even the Holy City residents still in the city.

This sudden shift caught many off guard. Countless fell victim, their energy devoured before the satiated ghost heads returned to the banner, swelling its size further.

The sight shattered what remained of the Holy City residents' morale. Those who could still move fled toward the nearest gates in panic.

Cloud Peak's forces looked up at the Banner, wondering about their leader's condition inside. The ghost heads were clearly unkillable—the only solution was to destroy the banner itself.

Now reinforced, the Banner grew even more aggressive. After a brief pause, it unleashed a new wave of ghost heads, so numerous they formed countless dark threads connecting sky and ground.

"I'm still inside you, yet you dare focus on others?"

Ye Zhongming's voice emerged calmly from within the banner.

"You're quite bold."

As he spoke, blinding light erupted from the Banner—and with it, the ghostly visage of the Saintess, serene and beautiful.

Chapter 1773: Broken Flag (2)

Whether they were level-nine evolved or level-nine mutant lifeforms, none were omnipotent.

This held true for Ye Zhongming, and equally for the troublesome Banner that had given him so much trouble.

Ye Zhongming indeed had no perfect counter for this banner. His main constraint was time—he needed to destroy the banner quickly to protect his forces below.

Risking everything, he had leveraged his level-nine abilities to plunge directly into the banner's core, hoping to maximize efficiency.

But even after entering and transforming into a human shredder—wielding Wind and Thunder and Undead Sand Moonblade to tear through the spectral souls with relentless energy slashes—he realized that while victory was possible, it would take far longer than he could afford.

And time was precisely what he lacked.

After all, the Banner could replenish its energy indefinitely as long as life persisted below.

It was at this moment that Ye Zhongming sensed the presence of the Saintess within the banner.

Naturally, the Saintess no longer had a physical form—only a wisp of her soul remained, preserved by the banner's peculiar nature. Perhaps due to her overwhelming resentment, she had manifested upon sensing Ye Zhongming's intrusion.

This Prison Banner had been reforged by devouring countless lives of Saint Light Hall's followers. In their final moments, the fractured Hall had unanimously reaffirmed the Saintess as their leader—a state that persisted even in death.

Initially, the Saintess's remnant soul had seemed inert. Both Sayyid (who had merged with the banner) and Ye Zhongming (who had received her warning) assumed her sacrifice had failed.

This was precisely why Sayyid hadn't immediately unleashed the banner's full power earlier.

Only when Ye Zhongming became a whirling blade storm inside the banner did the Saintess's soul finally reveal itself.

The Cloud Peak King didn't know what role this remnant could play—but its emergence signaled the final act.

With his last words spoken, Ye Zhongming's body erupted in radiant light, the swirling blades around him multiplying exponentially.

Sayyid felt the change most acutely. Ye Zhongming's earlier attacks had already been devastating—any soul touched by his blades would scatter, struggling to reform.

Now, witnessing Ye Zhongming's escalation, Sayyid urgently recalled all the minor specters he had released earlier. They didn't need to feast fully—just a taste of life energy would suffice.

The sheer number of these specters had already formed a living bridge between the banner and the ground. Now, as they returned "home," the sky darkened further, completely blackened by their swarming masses.

Though individually weaker than their larger counterparts, their overwhelming numbers made them deadly. Cloud Peak's disciplined defenses held firm, but the scattered Holy City residents—leaderless and divided—fell easy prey.

The specters deliberately targeted them. A single minor ghost head would plunge into a victim, feast briefly, then rocket back to the banner to replenish its energy reserves—creating a sustained cycle that barely offset Ye Zhongming's destruction rate.

Sayyid began to relax—until the Saintess's phantom, still hovering above the banner, locked eyes with Ye Zhongming.

To everyone watching, it seemed she nodded.

Instantly, the churning sea of souls within the banner froze solid, most of the black mist and specters becoming immobile and dull-witted.

Ye Zhongming didn't waste this opening. His remaining blade energies converged into a single devastating strike—aimed directly at the briefly exposed banner fabric.

"AHHH—!"

A scream echoed across the Holy City as the Banner thrashed violently in midair, its dark mists dissipating by half. Once again, it reverted to its original tattered state—its true form revealed.

Ye Zhongming's twin blades rose and fell relentlessly, each strike drawing fresh howls from Sayyid—until, finally, a human figure tore free from the banner and crashed to the ground, mirroring Aba's fate.

Landing on Yangos's back, Ye Zhongming gazed at the Saintess's now-fading visage. For a fleeting moment, he thought he saw her smile.

"Rest assured—I'll kill every last one of them for you."

He gave a slight nod of gratitude.

He truly was thankful. Without her soul's intervention, breaching this abominable banner would have taken far longer—and cost Cloud Peak dearly.

Surveying the Holy City, Ye Zhongming noted that while the outer walls stood intact, the interior had been reduced to rubble. The city was now just an empty shell.

With a quiet command, Cloud Peak's forces accelerated toward the gates, crushing all resistance in their path.

The defenders on the walls descended, regrouping outside the city. Unused gates were barricaded shut with debris.

Ye Zhongming stowed his blades, drawing instead a pitch-black iron bow—stringless, arrowless.

As Yangos climbed to altitude, he drew the bow. From it flew fist-sized fireballs, streaking toward the fading signal flares that still drifted slowly earthward in the sunlight.

Chapter 1774: Don't need to manage, just rob

Until these flares were ignited, the people of Holy City, including many evolved from Cloud Peak, thought they were merely flares.

But when they were lit, burned, and finally turned into countless tiny sparks falling from the sky, they realized these were not just flares—they were also a weapon.

Because when the tiny sparks fell, they scattered and covered almost half of Holy City.

Drifting down, they spread evenly across the sky above Holy City. Even the already bright sun could not overshadow their glow.

At this time, the residents still in Holy City discovered the gates were blocked and began attacking.

When the war squad left, the gates had been barricaded with special materials produced by Cloud Peak. A juice from a mutated plant was poured over them, which solidified upon contact with wind, making it several times stronger than reinforced concrete.

Of course, for evolved, such sturdiness was nothing. If they couldn't break through in one strike, a few more attempts would do.

But Cloud Peak never intended to trap them in Holy City forever—just long enough.

The real killing move was the tiny sparks falling from the sky.

Among the trapped Holy City residents, there were indeed some with high combat prowess or special abilities. For example, several could leap incredibly high and far, even clearing the city walls—whether through equipment or innate skills was unclear. Unfortunately, just as they glimpsed the open world outside the city, gunfire ended their lives.

Li Qiang and his team's precise sniping was the natural enemy of any evolved being without strong bulletproof gear.

Many residents tried climbing the walls to jump down, while others had short-term flight abilities or war beasts—all were met with attacks from Cloud Peak outside.

Only a handful, using bizarre spatial or teleportation abilities, barely escaped Holy City, leaving Cloud Peak helpless.

At this moment, the tiny sparks finally landed, touching the ground of Holy City—and with a roar, a sea of flames erupted.

The color of these flames closely resembled Mo Ye's Annihilation Talisman—pure white—but their intensity was so overwhelming that even Yangos, a fire dragon, couldn't endure it, forcing it to carry Ye Zhongming higher.

Ye Zhongming gazed below. Abba and Sayid, both fatally wounded and immobilized, were the first to be engulfed by the white flames. They opened their mouths to scream, but never got the chance.

Defeated earlier, they had no defenses left. Their severe injuries stripped them of all abilities. Their former arrogance had turned into despair as they awaited death.

These flares were a one-time-use gold-grade equipment. Their primary function was to provide nearly twenty hours of illumination. The second part—the iron bow—could activate them, creating a sea of fire within a preset range, with damage increasing over time.

Within the burning duration of one hour, even a level-nine lifeform would be burned alive by the final minutes.

It seemed powerful but was actually flawed—the flames couldn't move. They only burned within the preset range marked by the flares. Even a level-one lifeform could escape before the fire started.

This heavily restricted equipment was what Ye Zhongming used here.

Yes. Even without the Saintess's plea, Ye Zhongming had never planned to spare those in Holy City.

Cruel? Inhumane? Perhaps.

Ye Zhongming never dwelled on such thoughts. He only knew that if Cloud Peak ever weakened, if he ever lost his strength, they would face treatment ten thousand times more vicious!

Outside the city, Cloud Peak's war squad slaughtered evolved beings leaping from the walls. Within minutes of the flames igniting, they realized the danger.

The fire couldn't be extinguished—no method worked. The only way to survive was to flee the city.

Earlier, Holy City's evolved had numbers, full strength, and leaders—yet they still lost to Cloud Peak. Now, scrambling to jump from high walls in scattered groups, they stood no chance. This was a massacre, consuming only ammunition and energy.

When the flames died, so did the battle. Outside the walls, corpses piled high.

As for inside the city... it had long been reduced to scorched earth.

The vast Holy City, the heart of West Asia, became history that morning. Hundreds of thousands perished, with only a handful surviving.

Perhaps even the heavens couldn't bear it—the clear sky darkened abruptly, clouds blotted out the sun, and a torrential downpour followed. The towering walls, reinforced over untold time and expense by earth archmages, cracked under the sudden temperature shift. Large sections collapsed before Cloud Peak's eyes.

Just like the city's rulers.

As victors, Cloud Peak's evolved only watched silently, bearing witness to the world's cruelty.

"Boss..."

When Ye Zhongming landed, core members like Guang Yao and Mo Ye quickly gathered around him.

"Clear the battlefield. Take anything valuable. The rest... burn it all once the rain stops."

Ye Zhongming spoke with closed eyes, his aura slightly different from usual.

Those around him found it odd but didn't dare ask.

"After this, the main force will leave West Asia as planned. Two main war squads will stay to set up a teleportation point. Establish the main base first, then branch bases. Secure key nodes within a month."

Everyone listened carefully, but the strange feeling grew—something was off about their leader.

"For those who resist, no defensive measures are needed here. Just kill them."

“Also, watch for forces from the north and Europe. Crush those you can. If you can’t, retreat to Cloud Peak and shut the teleportation point.”

Ye Zhongming took a deep breath, feeling the weakening raindrops. “In short, this is now our hunting ground. No need to govern—just plunder. Understood?”

They nodded, their stance on this land now clear.

“Wherever we are—domestic, West Asia, anywhere—remember: unite, help each other, be like brothers.”

“Boss, you...” Xiao Hu finally couldn’t hold back and tried to ask.

Ye Zhongming waved him off.

“Remember—we are Cloud Peak.”

The downpour ceased abruptly. A beam of light pierced the clouds, shining directly upon the King of Cloud Peak...

Chapter 1775: Above the skies

Ye Zhongming sat alone in a corner, quietly watching two beings fighting not far away—well, let's call them "people" for now.

Those were two creatures standing two and a half meters tall, their bodies packed with muscle, their heads draped with long white hair reaching past their shoulders. They closely resembled humans, except their hands and feet had only four digits, and their elbows and knees were covered with obvious bony armor—not something acquired later, but naturally grown.

Also, their backs weren't flat. Along both sides of their spines, two rows of bones protruded symmetrically. It was unclear why they had such a structure.

Ye Zhongming could tell that these two obviously related beings weren't actually fighting to the death—it was more of a test of strength. As for their power...

The King of Cloud Peak was inwardly shocked.

Whether it was the force of their strikes, the speed of their movements, or even the aura they exuded, Ye Zhongming detected a familiar scent.

Yes, the same scent as his own—that of a level-nine lifeform.

And it wasn't just these two restless fellows. Nearly all the beings in this mysterious space were at this level. Even the few slightly weaker ones weren't far behind.

Back when Ye Zhongming had finished his arrangements outside Holy City, a beam of light from the sky locked onto him. To outsiders, the King of Cloud Peak simply vanished into the light. But he knew—it was some kind of energy guidance, and the trigger was the admission ticket he carried.

He wasn't clear on the exact process. All he remembered was a sudden feeling of weightlessness, then losing consciousness. When he woke up, he was inside an ecological pod.

The moment he opened his eyes, the pod's door slid open. Ye Zhongming stepped out and found himself in a very narrow, elongated room. Aside from the pod and an open bathroom at the back, there was only a passageway ahead.

Walking through the passage, he arrived in this oval-shaped, light-colored space. Around him were nearly a hundred identical passageways, just like the one he had emerged from.

Here, there were also nearly a hundred beings—all kinds of existences. In Ye Zhongming's eyes, few could be called "human."

Of course, in the eyes of those other beings, he probably wasn't human either.

Was the purpose of the admission ticket just to come here? Were all these beings here because they obtained admission tickets? If on Earth, perhaps a dozen or so people had acquired them—like Ji Ruiguang and Mu Hanyi—but they weren't seen here. Did that mean there were other spaces like this one?

Ye Zhongming's gaze swept across the room again. Aside from a few spots where small groups of beings were whispering in different languages and methods, the only movement came from those two wrestling clanmates. The rest, like Ye Zhongming, sat near their respective passageways, watching coldly and maintaining vigilance.

Though these beings were all different, they shared one thing in common—each wore only a single thin garment. Nothing else.

Ye Zhongming's equipment, including his space ring, had all disappeared. He didn't know if they had been taken after being transported here.

After staying here for several hours, nearly every being had grown impatient. Some had already begun exploring this enclosed space. Strangely, there were no windows or exits—it seemed completely sealed. The ecological pods and bathrooms were at the innermost part, backed by the same white walls of unknown material.

A few had even tried attacking the walls, but to no avail. Aside from drawing attention with loud bangs, it had no effect.

Just as the crowd's mood was turning restless and irritable, the ceiling suddenly lit up. The beings looked up and saw the previously seamless space split open—like an egg standing upright, with the top third sliced off.

Seven or eight beings descended from above, landing at the center of the space.

The leader had facial features similar to a human's, but its face seemed melted, with over a dozen uneven fleshy strips hanging down, pale and sickly-looking.

It wore a red robe-like garment and clasped its hands behind its back. Only when it turned did Ye Zhongming see that its "hands" were actually two tentacles, loosely tied together.

Ye Zhongming wasn't about to laugh at it—because from this being, he sensed a long-unfelt pressure.

The pressure of something far stronger than himself.

But Ye Zhongming wasn't afraid. Since arriving here, he had also felt something different.

How to describe it? It was a purely instinctive bodily reaction. If he had to put it into words, back on Earth, after becoming a nine-star evolved and stabilizing his energy, he had felt a natural sense of fullness—a feeling that once made him believe he couldn't progress further.

Over time, through cultivation, the King of Cloud Peak realized that while the path forward wasn't completely blocked, it was extremely difficult, as if Earth itself refused to allow existences that could threaten it.

But here, that feeling was gone. In its place was a kind of hunger—his body instinctively craving energy, yearning to absorb more.

It seemed that before long, he would progress again, just like on Earth.

"A little better than I expected. But you recruits are still trash."

A mental transmission forced its way into the minds of every being in the space, conveying those words.

"Don't ask where this is. Don't ask who I am. And definitely don't ask what we're doing—because soon, others will come to claim you. Ask them if you want answers."

"All I can tell you is, most of you will never see me again. Because becoming a top-tier lifeform and receiving an invitation from the sky isn't the start of good fortune—it's a trial... one you might not return from."

"Alright then. Good luck."

With that, the being and its companions flew back up. Before anyone could digest its words, various voices began calling down from above, summoning one being after another.

Ye Zhongming didn't know the selection criteria, but the arriving beings always chose their targets instantly, without hesitation.

Had the universal races already "divided" them while they were unconscious?

As Ye Zhongming observed, puzzled, three black-robed beings wearing bronze masks suddenly entered. After a brief scan, they walked straight toward him.

"Come with us, trash."