

Apocalypse 1801

Chapter 1801: Snatched wrongly

Just like people riding a train or airplane for the first time, Ye Zhongming felt an instinctive fascination with the vessel carrying him through space.

He stood by the viewport, gazing motionless at the dazzling cosmic scenery outside.

Aslan approached and stood beside Ye Zhongming. After glancing outside to estimate their position, she turned her attention to this year's key trainee of the Star-Eye Clan.

"Tell me honestly - how many Twin Poison Shadows can you create at maximum? Can they all wield weapons?"

Her feelings toward this trash—no, this novice—were profoundly complex.

She had taught him the Twin Poison Shadows skill, yet within days, he had surpassed her mastery, even improving and expanding the technique to become their clan's focus of cultivation. Now, Aslan wasn't even qualified to be his teacher anymore—Chief Trainer Jikesu would personally instruct him.

Assuming he survived the Novice Battlefield.

Ye Zhongming actually held some goodwill toward this female birdman. During Twin Poison Shadows training, she had been utterly dedicated, and the Cloud Peak King could feel her high expectations.

Yet...he couldn't shake the feeling she was being unreasonable. So he'd concealed some improvements to the technique—was that worth giving him the cold shoulder the entire journey with those betrayed-lover eyes? And who assigned her as their Novice Battlefield liaison officer? This was just asking for discomfort.

Unaware of Aslan's true status, Ye Zhongming didn't grasp the Star-Eye Clan's careful plans for her development.

"That's...hard to say."

Aslan rolled her eyes, clearly disbelieving him, mentally labeling the Cloud Peak King as dishonest.

Ye Zhongming genuinely wasn't being evasive—he truly didn't know his maximum shadow count.

The Twin Poison Shadows technique required energy expenditure, with mental power being most crucial—precisely where Ye Zhongming possessed unique advantages. For simple shadow projections, he could create vast numbers.

But combat wasn't about quantity alone. The technique's poison reserves were fixed—to be effective, it had to be concentrated in limited shadows. His shadows could wield weapons because they were more substantial, requiring many times more energy than standard Star-Eye Clan usage.

In battle's fluid situations, a decoy shadow might need minimal energy while primary attackers required heavy investment. Thus, the question left him truly unable to respond—for illusory decoys, the number was uncountable; for functional combat shadows, unpredictable.

Regaining composure, Aslan said, "Let me introduce your teammates."

She gestured, and three beings approached from behind.

Ye Zhongming turned to examine the figures who'd been waiting there. One he recognized from the trash trials—the other two were strangers. Were there other trial grounds?

"Jie Kui, Bu Lanuo, Shi Kangbo."

Jie Kui was Ye Zhongming's fellow trash trial survivor. Perhaps because they were the only two survivors from that batch without conflicts between them, he nodded amiably at Ye Zhongming.

The other two showed no warmth—their hostility was palpable.

"They're clan-cultivated candidates," Aslan briefly explained without elaboration.

Ye Zhongming frowned. Hadn't all Novice Battlefield participants supposedly survived trials?

"Now about your Novice Battlefield," Aslan continued, clearly their briefing officer. "Each cosmic year, the spacefaring races hold a tournament originally meant to select elite warriors against the Slave Race. Gradually, it evolved into resource competition."

All listened attentively, even the two unfriendly ones.

"You know Moonspan Gold—the foundation of everything. Projecting anything to planets requires it as energy. More Moonspan Gold means cultivating more warriors, killing more Slave Race parasites, strengthening our clan."

"The other reward is the spokesperson quotas." Aslan's solemn tone reflected the Star-Eye Clan's typical gravity regarding this matter.

"There are many spacefaring races, but we can only track seven Slave Race target planets—yes, matching the number of Survivor Fortresses. Each fortress monitors one planet, where internal order and resource limitations prevent all races from intervening simultaneously. Each planet has quotas for spokespeople—more for larger life-bearing planets, fewer for smaller ones. All are precious."

So that's how it was!

Ye Zhongming sighed inwardly. The spacefaring races truly had it rough—with unknown Slave Race numbers but only capacity to oppose seven, these civilizations seemed pushed to desperate extremes.

"Our Star-Eye Clan hasn't obtained quotas for fifteen cosmic years. We've resorted to entrusted cultivation to produce Novice Battlefield warriors, with poor results. Last cosmic year, we staked everything, spending enormously to purchase several quotas."

Understanding dawned.

Ye Zhongming and Jie Kui came through purchased Spokespeople quotas, while Bu Lanuo and Shi Kangbo were products of earlier entrusted cultivation.

"Spacefaring races inhabiting Survivor Fortresses must pay taxes. There's something you likely weren't told to avoid crushing your morale—many clansmen don't know either. If we don't achieve breakthroughs this Novice Battlefield, we'll be reduced to selling assets and mercenary work to survive...until extinction."

Aslan took a deep breath, her wings shifting slightly.

"You must place within the top fifty for our clan to barely endure. Only breaking the top twenty offers hope of revival!"

Hearing this, Ye Zhongming suddenly felt he'd stolen the wrong admission ticket...

Chapter 1802: Novice Battlefield

The aircraft flew through the sky. Under normal circumstances, such a journey would be extremely dull if one had nothing to do. Yet Ye Zhongming and the others were all swamped with work.

"Memorize the characteristics of these parasites, because you never know what you might encounter. However, don't take everything at face value—much of this information was gathered from other spacefaring races over the years, and we can't guarantee its complete accuracy."

Aslan's words left the group speechless.

They had already been taught the parasite information the Star-Eye Clan possessed. Now, they were being asked to memorize additional data collected from other sources—some of which might contain errors.

There was no helping it. In Ye Zhongming's initial perception, the spacefaring races were advanced civilizations wielding formidable technology and combat prowess—the kind of invincible UFOs that could freely traverse the cosmos.

But after spending time among them, his impression had shifted drastically. To him, they now seemed like stray dogs teetering on the brink of collapse. Some were big, some were small. The bigger ones were still relatively well-fed—even if times were tough, tightening their belts could get them by. If things got desperate, they could cull a few of the smaller ones and redistribute their resources to survive a little longer.

The smaller ones, meanwhile, had no choice but to fight tooth and nail, striving to grow fatter and stronger, hoping to rise in status—or at the very least, not be the first to starve when resources ran thin.

Given such fierce internal competition, the information they shared was often incomplete at best. At worst, it might even contain deliberate misinformation meant to send smaller factions to their deaths.

Aside from memorizing parasite types, Ye Zhongming and the others also had to familiarize themselves with each other's skills and combat habits.

Of course, at first, Ye Zhongming struggled to adapt. Back on Earth, he had never needed to coordinate with others—or have others coordinate with him. Fortunately, in his past life, he had been part of a squad, serving as ranged fire support, so he still understood the basics of teamwork.

That said, all four of them knew full well that everyone was holding back.

During this time, Ye Zhongming took advantage of a private moment with Aslan to ask about things he still didn't fully understand.

Where are we going now? Where is the Novice Battlefield being held? If the spacefaring races possess aircraft, why can they only monitor seven targets? Will top-tier evolved from Slave Race target planets still receive admission tickets in the future? If someone hasn't reached the top tier, can they still be brought over?

He also had many other questions about the spacefaring races.

Aslan didn't seem annoyed by the barrage of questions, though she told Ye Zhongming that details about the Novice Battlefield would be explained to everyone once they neared their destination. As for the aircraft, short-range flights were manageable, but long-range travel was too extravagant, consuming vast amounts of Moonspan Gold.

"You know, the universe is so vast that even we don't know its true scale. Given our current circumstances, we can't afford to search for entirely new life-bearing planets—so we have no choice but to follow the Slave Race."

As she spoke, Aslan was eating from a plate filled with colorful plant matter. Ye Zhongming eyed it and almost asked if the spacefaring races were also obsessed with dieting.

"As for whether other lifeforms on target planets can obtain admission tickets... naturally, they can—if they manage to seize one. However, they won't be retrieved. The retrieval machines in the Survivor Fortresses are set to only activate for level nine lifeforms."

Ye Zhongming nodded. Aslan's answer clarified a long-standing question of his. If he could bring his Cloud Peak subordinates here, things would be much easier—even if they weren't top-tier, they'd still be far more reliable than these three scheming teammates.

He also asked about the number of admission tickets. Aslan explained that it was tied to proxy quotas. During a Slave Race's occupation of a life-bearing planet, large-scale ticket distributions only happened twice.

The first distribution was relatively small, with fewer tickets compared to the second wave. However, this batch selected the planet's first generation of top-tier lifeforms—in other words, the elite.

The second wave was different.

There were far more tickets, but many factors came into play—longer evolution times to reach the top tier, more external assistance, greater opportunities for "cheating," and so on. As a result, the quality of warriors selected in this wave was slightly inferior to the first.

"The Novice Battlefield is where we compete for the second wave's spokesperson quotas. You must perform well."

For a moment, Aslan almost wished she could take their place. But then she remembered Color Man's evaluation of Ye Zhongming and decided this trash was probably the better choice.

"What about the quotas for the first wave...?"

Aslan rolled her eyes. "The first wave is far too important to be decided by a bunch of novices in a single battle. Those are allocated based on rankings from the Honor Roll."

Ye Zhongming recalled the two massive leaderboards in the headquarters hall and nodded in understanding.

Two days later.

"We're about to enter the dimensional tunnel. When we emerge, we'll be at our destination—this year's Novice Battlefield."

Aslan gathered the four of them for a final briefing.

"The Novice Battlefield takes place on a dead planet drained of energy by the Slave Race. The environment is harsh, the wildlife vicious, and extreme geological conditions and weather will also pose lethal threats."

"Upon arrival, you'll first enter a base camp before being deployed to certain zones. Within a set time limit, you must kill as many parasites and mutated lifeforms as possible. The recorders on your bodies will assess the level of each target you eliminate and award corresponding points. Your final rankings will determine your placement. Special events may also occur during the process, but I don't know the specifics—you'll have to adapt on the fly."

From her hand, Aslan produced four small, flesh-colored semicircular pellets and distributed one to each of them.

"These are the Star-Eye Clan's anti-interference communicators. They'll allow you to stay in contact. Insert them into your ears. Press once to initiate a call, and press again to end it."

A sharp alarm blared through the cabin—a signal that they were about to enter the dimensional tunnel. Everyone needed to don life-support helmets to endure the roughly one-hour dimensional journey.

"I've told you everything I can. When the battlefield concludes, I'll be waiting for your return at the base camp."

With that, Aslan personally saluted the four of them. The rest of the crew in the cabin followed suit.

These four were the Star-Eye Clan's hope.

One hour later, the aircraft emerged from a white hole, its form solidifying in space. Around it, thousands of other ships—large and small—hovered in dense clusters.

All of them faced the same direction.

There, suspended in the void, was a lifeless planet.

The Novice Battlefield had begun.

Chapter 1803: Blocking

The spacecraft circled in the sky for a while before slowly descending through a glowing passageway. Through the viewport, Ye Zhongming could see they were moving within a tunnel of light.

Waking up from dimensional travel was never pleasant. Initially, Ye Zhongming had assumed they were in some pocket dimension, but the surrounding scenery confirmed they were simply in another corner of the universe—though how far from Survivor Fortress No. 5 remained unclear.

Closing his eyes, he adjusted his breathing, feeling his bodily functions gradually stabilize. He was quite satisfied with his physical recovery.

"Drink this. We still have over an hour before reaching the base camp."

Aslan handed out several vials of medicine to Ye Zhongming and the others—likely some kind of restorative. The rest drank theirs immediately, but Ye Zhongming stowed his away in the spatial backpack he'd obtained from the Star-Eye Clan.

"Dimension tunnels aren't kind to living beings. You shouldn't rely too much on your body's natural recovery," Aslan advised, seeing his reluctance.

She had far more experience in this than Ye Zhongming, who knew nothing about dimensional travel.

But she didn't understand Ye Zhongming's circumstances. He merely waved her off, signaling it was fine. The female birdman could only sigh in resignation.

Right now, she had no authority over him. Among the other three, Jie Kui seemed to want to say something but held back after seeing Ye Zhongming's attitude. The remaining two—Bu Lanuo and Shi Kangbo—wore cold smirks, clearly thinking he was just being arrogant.

"Why so long? The Novice Battlefield planet shouldn't be that far, right?" Bu Lanuo frowned as he looked outside.

Both he and Shi Kangbo were tall, slender lifeforms with long tails usually coiled beneath their clothing, making them inconspicuous. Their most striking feature was their eyes—pupils that constantly shifted between vertical slits and perfect circles.

Aslan's expression tightened slightly at Bu Lanuo's words, which carried an undertone of impatience and... resentment.

"Our Star-Eye Clan has low status. We'll be among the last to enter. The planet hosts extremely powerful lifeforms—getting too close risks attacks in outer orbit that are nearly impossible to evade. The only safe approach is through the Reina people's Light-Splitting Passage."

Bu Lanuo said nothing more and simply returned to his cabin to rest. Shi Kangbo remained but sat down in silence, eyes closed.

Ye Zhongming shrugged, unsurprised by this dynamic.

At the end of the day, none of them were native Star-Eye Clan members. Maybe someday, through some arcane method, they'd be infused with the clan's bloodline or granted its legacy. But for now? Impossible.

Low sense of belonging wasn't something that could be fixed with small favors or polite requests.

Fundamentally, they were just hired muscle—the only difference being that major clans treated their mercenaries like tools, while minor clans like the Star-Eye Clan had to be more accommodating.

That said, many Star-Eye Clan members clearly didn't grasp their race's dire straits. The masked escorts casually killing "trash" trainees earlier proved they still looked down on these warriors.

So if these outsiders lacked loyalty now... well, who could blame them?

Even Ye Zhongming himself, despite Jikesu's sincere overtures, still considered himself first and foremost the King of Cloud Peak—Ye Zhongming of Earth.

Probably, even the weakest among the spacefaring races wouldn't welcome newcomers muscling in on their already scarce resources.

While waiting, Ye Zhongming remained by the viewport. Aslan stood with him for a while, pointing out which ships belonged to which races and explaining their circumstances. Eventually, Jie Kui joined them to listen—this was valuable intelligence. Even Shi Kangbo cracked an eye open, eavesdropping.

Soon, the Star-Eye Clan's ship received docking clearance. The spacecraft slowly entered the Light-Splitting Passage and began its descent toward the Novice Battlefield planet.

Upon entering the planet's atmosphere, even mentally prepared, Ye Zhongming was stunned by the sight before him.

The air was murky, like moderate smog, tinged a faint pink—who knew if it was toxic? Distant flashes of light flickered intermittently, their source unclear. As they neared the ground, a massive pentagonal city came into view—towering walls bristling with weapons, patrolled by numerous guards. In several spots, intense bursts of light suggested ongoing battles.

"This is the base camp—your headquarters for the foreseeable future."

Aslan finished speaking and told everyone to wait while she stepped out, likely to handle formalities. When she returned, her expression was grim, but she motioned for them to follow.

Exiting the spacecraft, they were immediately hit by a faint, acrid odor—not overpowering, but living here long-term would surely shave years off one's lifespan.

Aslan led them to the northern sector's encampment. After registering in a small building, Ye Zhongming and the others received a compact case.

"Three bell tolls will signal the Novice Battlefield's commencement tomorrow. You must don the equipment inside these cases, then assemble at Desolation Square with your supplies. Anyone late will lose their head."

A lion-headed being roared these instructions at them.

Though this wasn't Shadowstripe City, they still used Shadowtongue. But compared to that city's fusion of aesthetics and technology, this place was as crude and dilapidated as a medieval village.

Ye Zhongming studied the lion-man, sensing an overwhelming aura of bloodlust.

By now, Earth's apocalypse had lasted nearly seven years—plenty of time for countless evolved humans to develop palpable killing intent. Even Ye Zhongming himself, when enraged in battle, exuded a ferocity that most couldn't withstand.

But compared to this being? It was like comparing a candle to a wildfire. Just how many lives had he ended to accumulate such dense, tangible malice?

Carrying their newly acquired supplies, the Star-Eye Clan group turned to leave—only to nearly collide with another squad of twelve.

Perhaps because the base camp prioritized function over form, its architecture embodied minimalist practicality, sacrificing beauty for security.

Every structure was built like a fortress.

This room was no exception. One look, and only one word came to mind: impregnable.

The trade-off? The doorway wasn't particularly wide. With the unsealed metal doors taking up space on either side, only about three meters remained for passage.

For humans, that could fit several people abreast. But among the spacefaring races, not all were so slender.

Like the group approaching now—each member hulking like a small mountain. Just two walking side by side nearly blocked the entire exit.

The two parties met right at the doorway, forcing one side to yield. Aslan had entered first but was now at the back of their group. By the time she realized the situation, it was too late—her warning died unspoken as one of the beings outside suddenly threw a punch at the person in front!

Chapter 1804: Map Cannon

At the front were Jie Kui and another Star-Eye Clan bronze-masked warrior.

As warriors, maintaining vigilance was fundamental. But this was the base camp, and the room had been empty moments ago, so everyone was relaxed. With their business concluded and heading toward their quarters, no one expected an attack.

Even if they encountered others, yielding would have sufficed—yet their opponents struck without warning.

Jie Kui and the bronze-masked warrior reacted swiftly. The former's body blurred as he shifted backward, hands raised to deflect the force. The bronze-masked warrior met the attack head-on, his fist lashing out with a glint of cold steel between his fingers.

Behind them, Aslan watched—then shut her eyes in anguish.

She recognized the assailants instantly: the Nangmao Clan.

Among the spacefaring races, they were infamous as siege warriors—thick-skinned, monstrously strong, surpassing even many parasitic lifeforms in raw power.

Compared to them, the Star-Eye Clan's bodies were as fragile as glass.

Thud! Thud!

Jie Kui and the bronze warrior were sent flying.

Their attackers barely budged.

Ye Zhongming had been walking a meter behind Jie Kui. Seeing the man hurtling toward him, he hesitated briefly before reaching out, tapping Jie Kui's shoulder while pivoting aside. His other hand gripped the warrior's arm, guiding him in a smooth arc before releasing.

By the time Jie Kui's feet touched the ground, the momentum had been redirected—though he still staggered back several steps.

As top-tier fighters, everyone recognized Ye Zhongming's skill: absorbing the impact, then using a deft technique to prevent a crippling fall. Jie Kui shot him a grateful glance, though his flushed face betrayed lingering discomfort. His gaze toward the doorway now burned with undisguised killing intent.

The bronze-masked warrior fared worse. Behind him stood Shi Kangbo and Bu Lanuo—neither as charitable as Ye Zhongming. They sidestepped, letting the warrior sail past until a third-row comrade caught him. Both tumbled to the floor in a heap.

"Truly filthy trash."

The Nangmao giant who'd traded blows with the bronze warrior examined his knuckles—where a small cut bled—and spat the words with dull contempt.

The bronze warrior clambered up, one arm dangling uselessly—likely broken—his hand grotesquely twisted. He, too, recognized their foes, but with no room to evade, he'd had no choice. The blade between his fingers was standard Star-Eye gear, dubbed Fingerblades—tools of many assassinations.

"Warriors of the Nangmao Clan, you—" Aslan stepped forward, attempting to defuse the conflict. Though the fault was clearly theirs, the Star-Eye Clan was weak, while the Nangmao ranked among the top hundred factions. Reason wouldn't prevail here.

Before she could finish, the wounded Nangmao fighter roared and charged again—this time aiming a killing blow at the already-crippled bronze warrior. The punch carried even greater force, leaving no doubt of its lethal intent.

Rage flashed across every Star-Eye face.

This was too much. They'd been the aggressors, attacking without provocation, and now sought to murder a man with a shattered arm over a scratch?

Yet neither Aslan nor the bronze warriors resisted. The birdwoman darted to her injured comrade, yanking him backward while the others scattered from the impact zone.

Shi Kangbo and Bu Lanuo had already distanced themselves from the group, their expressions detached.

Only one figure remained unmoved.

Ye Zhongming.

He'd merely tilted his stance slightly, his gaze locked on the assailant's throat.

The bronze warrior's face was masked, but his exposed eyes brimmed with despair.

Star-Eye members were ill-suited for frontal combat—especially against melee specialists like the Nangmao. At full strength, he might've held out briefly, seeking an opening. But with a broken arm and grievous injuries in this cramped space, evasion was nearly impossible.

Even as Aslan pulled him back, he knew—this punch would land.

Then, as he braced for a desperate counterattack, his enemy froze.

Silence gripped the room.

"Huh? Little trash?"

The Nangmao fighter kept his fist raised, his entire body coiled to strike, but his head turned toward Ye Zhongming.

"Don't make this trash kill you," Ye Zhongming retorted coldly.

The Cloud Peak King was pissed.

On Earth, harming a Cloud Peak member in his presence meant the annihilation of their entire faction. Here, though their roles were reversed—with many Star-Eye members viewing him as the outsider—the principle stood. Shared interests now bound him and the clan: access to cosmic knowledge, resources, and Jikesu's goodwill.

He wouldn't tolerate this slaughter.

Moreover, that "filthy trash" comment? A blanket insult, Ye Zhongming took personally.

Back in the Survivor Fortress, Earth's gravity control had weakened. Here, it returned—stronger than ever.

Now, the lethality focused on the Nangmao's throat.

For now, that was warning enough.

"Another defiant one? Then you die first."

The Nangmao didn't even shift his stance—a shadowy afterimage split from his body, slashing toward Ye Zhongming.

At this proximity, the phantom struck instantly—then detonated, flooding the room with thick black mist.

"Trash who only know one trick," a voice sneered through the haze.

Chapter 1805: First experience

Ye Zhongming naturally employed his Twin Poison Shadows ability.

This skill had become increasingly fluid in his hands.

The Nangmao warrior was indeed formidable—among all those Ye Zhongming had encountered, this one was the strongest by far, surpassing even Aslan by a considerable margin.

The raw power displayed earlier had earned Ye Zhongming's reluctant admiration. Perhaps it was the innate male reverence for strength, but despite his current ties to the Star-Eye Clan, the Cloud Peak King couldn't help but appreciate this thunderous combat style—it was exhilarating.

Moreover, the ability to launch phantom attacks from the flank demonstrated that this opponent wasn't just about brute force; their technique was refined as well.

The clash between the phantom and Twin Poison Shadows occurred in an instant at close quarters.

While Ye Zhongming remained unfazed, the giant's contemptuous expression masked inner surprise.

This fast?

The current iteration of Twin Poison Shadows carried lethal toxicity. Since this shadow was summoned defensively, it manifested with near-tangible solidity, barely intercepting the phantom strike.

Black mist filled the room, affecting everyone inside as the Star-Eye members retreated to a corner.

With hostilities initiated, Ye Zhongming saw no reason to hold back—this opponent clearly intended to kill. Hesitation now would be fatal.

Light flashed in his palm as his Morphing Weapon appeared, while ten long daggers materialized from his spatial storage—tools for the shadows he was about to summon.

Truth be told, the Cloud Peak King felt a thrill. Challenging stronger foes to test his limits was an addictive pursuit.

The other Nangmao warriors roared in unison. One particularly massive figure shoved through his kin—his obsidian armor, distinct from the others, marking his superior status. His gaze icy, he strode into the room without hesitation.

Against other races, he might exercise restraint, but the Star-Eye Clan? A faction on the verge of elimination—what consequences would there be for slaughtering them? This could serve as a warning to others: Do not provoke the Nangmao.

A single step brought him inside. A second pair of eyes opened on his forehead, rendering the black mist meaningless to his vision.

Locking onto Ye Zhongming, his chest armor released a projectile that shot toward the Cloud Peak King.

Midway through summoning ten shadows, Ye Zhongming sensed imminent danger. Aborting his initial plan, he redirected all shadows toward this new threat—both to intercept the projectile and assail the armored giant—while retreating to regroup.

"Enough!"

The lion-faced administrator's roar shook the room as a massive palm struck the air at the chamber's center. The resulting shockwave sent combatants sprawling—Ye Zhongming staggered several steps before steadying himself, while the second Nangmao attacker was blasted clean through the doorway.

"Take your posturing elsewhere."

The shockwave not only separated the combatants but dispersed the black mist entirely, its toxins vanishing as though filtered away.

Silence gripped the room as all eyes turned to the lion-man.

"Star-Eye Clan—get out."

Aslan's briefly hopeful expression dimmed instantly. The other Star-Eye members seethed with bitter resignation.

"Nangmao Clan—get in."

This follow-up command stunned the giants. Though less cowed than the Star-Eye Clan, their faces flushed with anger—yet none dared protest.

Only as they brushed past Ye Zhongming did the initial attacker mimic cracking open a skull—an unmistakable threat to the Cloud Peak King.

Outside, the Star-Eye group walked in heavy silence. The injured bronze warrior had received treatment and could now move unaided, though his arm would require time to heal fully.

The novices' quarters were a crude encampment of tents—varied in size to accommodate different physiologies, yet clearly tiered in quality. The northwest corner reeked of latrines, while the northeast bustled with the clamor of kitchens and supply depots. Unsurprisingly, the Star-Eye Clan was assigned the northwest—nearest to the toilets.

Ye Zhongming couldn't help but wonder—while the Star-Eye Clan teetered on collapse, surely they weren't the absolute weakest?

But such questions were pointless now.

"Private combat is strictly forbidden in the novice camp—violators face execution. Remember this. Under these rules, theft runs rampant. Without evidence, you can only swallow the loss. Guard your spoils carefully—you'll return here every other day to recuperate."

Aslan, having steadied her emotions, delivered final instructions in the clan's sole malodorous tent.

"The Novice Battlefield is a marathon. Leverage daily gains—there's an organic marketplace here. Trade each day for what aids survival tomorrow. Be generous—only the living qualify for final rankings."

All listened intently, even the usually dismissive Bu Lanuo and Shi Kangbo.

"For private trades, seek reputable major clans—and go together. Not for safety, but to avoid scams or coercion."

"Additionally, official shops will operate here during the tournament. Their wares are genuine but exorbitantly priced. If you find critical supplies, don't hesitate—survival comes first."

A whistle outside signaled the impending camp lockdown. As the last arrivals, their time was already short.

"Alliances can multiply effectiveness—but beware deception. Once the battle begins, no rules bind conduct beyond survival."

"Lastly, mere survival earns clan rewards. High rankings bring unimaginable benefits. Should you place prominently—saving our race—you'll become Star-Eye heroes."

"And heroes... receive commensurate power and privilege."

A second whistle sounded. Aslan led the way out, offering a final, "Good fortune to you all."

As the third whistle heralded the camp's sealing, Aslan turned for a last look.

She wondered what fate awaited the Star-Eye Clan.