

## **Apocalypse 1861**

### Chapter 1861: Cruel Start (2)

Inside the tent, more than ten pieces of equipment emitting purple light were placed.

Indeed, among the races of the universe, purple equipment was no longer the best that could be found aside from seven-colored equipment. However, aside from some major races, the other smaller races did not provide many purple-level pieces in the equipment they gave to newcomers.

Even among the races of the universe, these were not common items.

On Earth, it was no secret that Ye Zhongming could craft purple equipment. Ji Ruiguang knew that Chief Commander Mu had at least two pieces of purple equipment made by Ye Zhongming. There was even a rumor circulating in the country zone that in another year, the Female Guard would become a fully purple-equipped unit, unrivaled across the world.

Ji Ruiguang had initially scoffed at such rumors. Even if Ye Zhongming could craft purple equipment, a success rate of ten percent would be impressive. To fully equip a several-hundred-strong Female Guard, he would need to produce at least three thousand pieces—how long would that take? Moreover, the materials required would be enough to bankrupt Cloud Peak.

But now, seeing these purple pieces, he was starting to believe it.

Ye Zhongming himself, however, felt no joy.

These purple pieces were all for show.

They did indeed emit a purple glow in his hands, but in essence, these items only reached purple level in defense or attack power without any additional skills. They might have some special effects, but that could not compensate for the lack of mature skills.

Compared to the equipment made by the races of the universe, they were clearly a grade lower.

Ye Zhongming felt that after getting out, he must find a way to understand the manufacturing methods of the universe's races.

As per the prior agreement, Ye Zhongming provided Ji Ruiguang with six pieces of purple equipment and twenty other pieces of roughly golden-level equipment, along with fifty wound medicines made by He.

In return, Ji Ruiguang paid six hundred points.

Compared to market prices, this was at least two hundred points cheaper.

Carrying these items and a list, Ji Ruiguang nodded to Ye Zhongming and left.

No sooner had he left than Helsky entered.

"Captain, I found three people."

Helsky had actually returned earlier but, seeing Ji Ruiguang there, watched from a distance without approaching, waiting until he left to come back.

"Three people: one is a powerful shield warrior from the Fengkan Race, one is a shooter from the Six-Eye Race, and one is an aura warrior from the Cijin Race."

Ye Zhongming ran these three names through his mind, getting a general idea.

The Fengkan Race was renowned for producing skilled melee warriors, with ax warriors and shield warriors being the most celebrated types in terms of offense and defense. Their innate talents enabled members of this race to combine their bodies with weapons to unleash astonishing power.

The shooter from the Six-Eye Race was not as famous as the Fengkan warriors, being just one of the archery-proficient races that still used bows and arrows, now showing signs of decline.

What surprised Ye Zhongming was that Helsky managed to recruit an aura warrior from the Cijin Race—one of the most famous support races in the entire universe. Not only were they decent fighters themselves, but they also excelled at emitting various aura skills with bonus abilities, granting those affected temporary access to these powers.

Such a warrior should have chosen some powerful squad, so why come to a team with fewer than ten members?

Helsky brought the three in. Ye Zhongming saw that the Fengkan shield warrior was indeed burly. Compared to him, the Cloud Peak King was like a slender 160cm woman standing next to Shaquille O'Neal. The warrior was bald, with large eyes, clad in heavy armor, carrying a shield almost as tall and wide as himself. Simply placing it on the ground could create two dents.

The other two surprised Ye Zhongming a bit because they were both female life forms.

The woman from the Six-Eye Race did not quite fit human aesthetics, with six eyes on her head and four arms on her upper body, using two bows—one light and one heavy. Ye Zhongming took a closer look: the light bow seemed made from some beast's bones and tendons, using bone arrows, while the heavy bow was fully mechanical with metal arrows. The former was small and delicate, the latter heavy and thick. Just the arrows used were as thick as a child's arm, resulting in uneven arm thickness for the Six-Eye Race.

Ye Zhongming shook his head inwardly; it really was somewhat ugly.

The Cijin aura warrior, however, looked quite humanoid, though also very sturdy, like Brienne from Game of Thrones, with a one-handed sword, round shield, and light armor, seeming like a decent warrior.

Since they had come here with Helsky, it meant the three already knew the team's specifics. Ye Zhongming didn't say much, first giving each a fourth-turn medicine pill and explaining its effects—of course, the newcomers didn't receive any. Then he issued a full set of equipment and five wound medicines to each, all for free, again excluding the newcomers.

It had to be said that the newcomers were quite envious of these benefits.

Outside, they might not care about such things, but here, the consumption of weapons and equipment was severe. Though they were fully equipped now, it was through point repairs or repurchases, and the quality might not even match what Ye Zhongming crafted.

"Boss, everyone outside is waiting."

Jie Kui had changed his address for Ye Zhongming from Boss Ye to just Boss—a one-word difference representing genuine recognition.

Ye Zhongming glanced at He and said, "Let's begin."

Thus, a sale of medicines and equipment commenced.

Since the news had been spread earlier, those who came had a real demand. With the third cycle about to start, these were urgently needed. Additionally, Ye Zhongming and He's pricing were not high, so within minutes, everything was swept clean. There were even some who didn't manage to get anything and hurried to the store for alternatives, also making appointments with Ye Zhongming and the others to see if they could reserve some in advance after the next cycle ended.

Such scenes successively impacted the three newcomers, as can be expected. Learning the names of the other team members, they could naturally find their rankings and points on the leaderboard. Any slight doubts or reservations they had instantly vanished.

No choice—look at Ye Zhongming now: over 2,100 points, ranking seventh! He followed closely with 2,001 points, ranking eighth. Jie Kui and others had 'investments' involved, and while most others had just experienced significant point consumption drops, their rankings increased instead. Though their rankings and points weren't as exaggerated as Ye Zhongming and He's, they all entered the top 500.

Undoubtedly, the team members had laid a solid foundation for the future.

"Boss, which area are we choosing this time?" Jie Kui rubbed his hands together, eager for a big fight.

Ye Zhongming didn't answer him but looked up at the sky, where Zizikaba had risen once again.

"Alright, newcomers, quiet. I will now announce the new rules added for the third small cycle."

Chapter 1862: Cruel start (3)

"So, how are the items in the store? A bit expensive, aren't they?" Zizikaba said to the newcomers below, his signature annoying smile in place.

"It's fine, they'll get even more expensive. After this small cycle ends, the selling price will increase by another ten percent!"

The crowd below erupted in uproar.

After all, only a minority could afford to purchase items from other newcomers; most people's needs had to be met by buying from the store. This time, the price had already increased by ten percent on top

of an already exorbitant base, and now it was going up again. The points earned were just being returned to the store.

Look at how much fewer points there were at the start of these two small cycles compared to right after they ended!

"Also, many of you have made a lot of money using your jobs. Starting from the next cycle, you must purchase a fixed stall to sell items, and a 20% tax will be levied on the selling price. In other words, private transactions within the camp will no longer be allowed."

This rule brought mixed feelings—those without crafting abilities were happy that the point gap wouldn't widen too much, while those with crafting abilities worried they would have to fight even harder in the future.

"Was Zizikaba also in charge of the novice battlefield in the past?" Ye Zhongming suddenly asked Helsky and Jie Kui, who were the most well-informed.

But they didn't know about this either and could only shake their heads.

"What's up, Boss? Is there something special about it?" Jie Kui asked.

"Nothing," Ye Zhongming said softly, looking at the figure in the sky. "I just find it strange that if he was in charge of the novice battlefield before, how has he managed to stay alive until now? Are the newcomers who made it out so good-tempered?"

The others laughed silently upon hearing this. It seemed that if Boss Ye made it out of here, Zizikaba would be in trouble later.

"Additionally, members currently ranked in the top five thousand on the points leaderboard will not be allowed to go to areas one through ten."

This was another hard rule, one that would likely cost many lives.

In the view of many, the first ten areas offered the best cost-effectiveness. Although the points per life were relatively low, the strength of the creatures was not high. Coupled with their large numbers and variety, it was indeed a good place to farm.

Many people had "made their fortune" there.

Now that the top five thousand were barred from going, these people would have to venture into more dangerous areas, undoubtedly increasing the density of newcomers in other regions and raising the likelihood of conflicts.

"Oh, and this time, the elimination system for the bottom ranks will not have a fixed number. Instead, it will be ten percent of the surviving newcomers at the end of the small cycle. So, make sure to calculate your rankings carefully."

This rule had a profound impact on those at the lower end. Since the number wasn't fixed, newcomers near the elimination threshold might miscalculate their rankings and be directly eliminated.

Everyone discussed it for a few seconds, but soon fell silent—after all, they were all top-tier experts.

Seeing that Zizikaba hadn't left, everyone's hearts sank. What new trick did this guy have up his sleeve?

"How did you find the previous cycles? Feel like you've adapted? Well, good. Starting from this cycle, each area will have correspondingly added some lifeforms—stronger lifeforms worth more points. So, hunt to your heart's content, or... die faster!"

"Alright, the third cycle begins!"

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"Boss, aren't we going to the places we agreed on before?" Jie Kui followed Ye Zhongming to a completely new area, not quite understanding why they weren't going to hunt the targets they had prepared for.

"Yeah, we're not going," Ye Zhongming replied without explaining further.

"Then... aren't we going to follow Aimusi and take her out?"

Jie Kui asked again. He always felt that having an enemy like her around made everything uncomfortable. In his opinion, since they had plenty of points and weren't afraid of elimination, they should just follow Aimusi and spend a cycle taking her out!

"Did you see that woman earlier?"

Helsky's question gave Jie Kui pause. Indeed, he hadn't seen any trace of that woman in the camp.

"You mean..."

Helsky nodded. "I specifically looked for her. Not because I wanted to take her out immediately, but because knowing her whereabouts would allow us to be prepared for anything. But that woman seemed to have disappeared. She must have been in the camp, but she was nowhere to be found."

Helsky's words cast a shadow over everyone's hearts.

"Stop thinking about it. She'll come to us on her own eventually," Ye Zhongming cut off everyone's speculation and clapped his hands. "We have two days to hunt here and earn as many points as possible. My idea is this..."

Ye Zhongming took out a map—a detailed information map of this area, available in the store for a steep price of fifty points.

He divided the team into smaller groups, assigning them different routes to travel, supporting each other. If they encountered something they could handle, they would quickly pursue it; if they ran into something troublesome, they would call others over to help.

Everyone approved this method, as it avoided allocation issues and increased efficiency.

Additionally, no one asked what they would do after the two days—clearly, Boss Ye had a plan.

Just like that, two days passed in the blink of an eye.

It could be said that the period was smooth sailing. Everyone's points increased steadily, and their rankings generally rose or remained stable. Only Ye Zhongming and He's rankings didn't move.

This was normal—the higher the ranking, the fiercer the competition, and moving up even one spot was extremely difficult.

The old and new team members gradually grew familiar with each other through these two days of cooperation. The increased understanding clearly strengthened cohesion, and the atmosphere was significantly better than before.

On the last morning of this small cycle, the entire team gathered, eating while watching Ye Zhongming.

They knew the captain's undisclosed plan was about to be revealed.

"Among you, who is not a commissioned warrior but was selected from their planet?"

Everyone was unsure what he meant, but obediently raised their hands. Only Helsky, Ye Zhongming, and Jie Kui were; all the others were commissioned by their respective races.

Ye Zhongming nodded. He and Helsky were both from Earth, and he had a good relationship with Jie Kui. This would reduce resistance to the upcoming plan.

"We are all newcomers now, but after a few cycles, we won't be anymore." Ye Zhongming looked around at everyone and said slowly, "Since most of you are commissioned warriors, you should know our mission after our newcomer lives end, right?"

"So, I think we need to look further ahead to ensure we can survive in the future." Ye Zhongming paused, seeing everyone watching him quietly before continuing, "The races of the universe have failed too many times—no, they have never won. So my plan is..."

"To win because of me!"

Chapter 1863: Country plan

The goal of the plan was nothing special and a bit "rough"—simply to survive and to accomplish what the races of the universe had failed to achieve over the years.

Many people may have thought about this for a long time.

Yet no one had ever succeeded.

They weren't surprised that Ye Zhongming thought this way; deep down, they themselves thought the same. It was just that after being stated outright, it became clearer.

Knowing was one thing, thinking was another, but how to do it? What to do? These were not clear.

"First, and most importantly, is to strengthen ourselves. Only when we become so powerful that the races of the universe cannot ignore us will people listen to our opinions, will our words be considered meaningful, and will people stop saying to us, 'Newcomer, angry? There's worse to come.'"

The others almost laughed, knowing Ye Zhongming was referring to Zizikaba.

"Certainly, some have achieved this before." Ye Zhongming glanced at He, who seemed about to speak but stopped, knowing that these commissioned warriors were deeply familiar with the affairs of the races. If it were just about becoming strong, it might still not be enough to control their destiny.

"What we need to do is become truly strong, strong in every aspect."

Ye Zhongming picked up a branch and drew several areas on the ground.

"The races of the universe have many people, many strong individuals, but what is the proportion of strong individuals within their respective races?" He paused, not expecting others to answer, and continued, "Perhaps in stronger races, it's only around thirty percent. Another half are at the next level of strength, and the rest are lower-tier personnel. In some weaker races, the strong might only make up ten to twenty percent."

"With such a structure, how can they deal with the vast number of parasites under each Slave Race?" Ye Zhongming sneered.

The others were no fools and naturally understood what this meant.

Simply put, power!

Personal power! Family power! Racial power! Alliance power!

And interests!

Personal interests! Family interests! Racial interests! Alliance interests!

Even though these races had been driven from their homes by the Slave Races and could only cling to existence on seven artificial fortresses, they still had not given these up.

In their view, especially for the major races, maintaining their rule was paramount. After all, the universe was vast, and even if the Slave Races took their time consuming them, it would take who knows how long. Maintaining the status quo was also a good thing.

There was even a view among the races of the universe: send probes into the depths of space where no one had ever ventured, find habitable habitats, recuperate there for a while, and when the Slave Races eventually come, rally the restored strength to resist them. If successful, all would be well; if failed, it

wouldn't matter—they could take more people, more survivor fortresses, and continue drifting through the universe.

Perhaps finding a habitable planet would free them from dependence on Moonspan Gold. At the very least, they could continue sending people out to hunt parasites for what they needed.

If it weren't for the mysterious wheel looming over the myriad races of the universe, they might have already done this.

But Ye Zhongming could not accept this approach because his home planet was already enveloped by a Slave Race, constantly being drained of energy. It wouldn't be long before it became a dead star!

That was his home.

This plan was not originally called the "I Win" plan, but the Greater Earth Plan!

Ye Zhongming and Ji Ruiguang, who had once wielded great influence in the country zone, how could they tolerate others riding roughshod over them? Whether the races of the universe, the Slave Races, or even the super technological force behind the wheel—in the eyes of these two, they were all targets to be conquered, not entities to enslave them!

Perhaps this was just how people from the country were. They might have failed, fallen behind, been insulted, or even killed, but they would never grovel. The stronger the oppression, the fiercer the resistance—this was the most important reason why the civilization of the country had never been interrupted for thousands of years.

Character—many people in the country lacked it; knees—many people in the country softened them, they bowed and scraped.

But there were still more people who would straighten their backs and stand!

Undoubtedly, Ji Ruiguang and Ye Zhongming were such people.

Externally, they would declare this an "I want to win, I want to survive" plan, but in their hearts, it was called the Great Country Plan!

Yes, it wasn't even called the Earth Plan.

Before the apocalypse, the country had been striving to catch up with the most powerful nation, on the verge of victory when a disaster abruptly halted everything. Now, Ye Zhongming and Ji Ruiguang were taking a different path. The only difference was that they not only wanted to stand atop Earth but also atop the universe.

"My goal is to make everyone strong, to turn everyone into powerful individuals, using our quality and quantity to go against the Slave Race."

Legend had it that if all the parasites were killed, the Slave Race would die from lack of nourishment.

No one knew if it was true or false, as it had never been achieved.

But wasn't this hope?

"I think it's feasible."

Jie Kui, now Ye Zhongming's loyal subordinate, was the first to express support.

As commissioned warriors, they might seem glamorous, with resources leaning toward them, but they were lost. Were they destined for endless life-risking missions and tasks like the novice battlefield?

Following Ye Zhongming's plan would also require risking their lives, but since they had to risk their lives anyway, wasn't it better to risk them for themselves than for others?

At least these two small cycles had proven that following Ye Zhongming meant they might not get meat, but they would get soup—thick soup with bones! But what if they returned? They would just be blades in the hands of those high above, disposable at any time.

He was the second to agree. After resolving her inner conflicts, she would not refuse any proposal that could improve her and her race's situation.

After showing hesitation and doubts, the others expressed their concerns one by one. Ye Zhongming answered each in turn, and gradually everyone accepted. Only the Cijin aura warrior thought carefully and said very seriously to Ye Zhongming, "Captain, I'm sorry, but I probably cannot join you. My race has its own path, and I cannot betray it. Rather than having disputes between us later because of this, I might as well give up now. Of course, during the novice battlefield, as long as you allow me to stay in the team, I will fight wholeheartedly for you."

Ye Zhongming nodded, indicating that he understood. That only one person felt this way was already beyond his expectations. It showed that the strategies and actions of the races over the years had left many dissatisfied, or at the very least, disapproving.

"Alright, since we want to win and survive, then some people must inevitably not survive."

Ye Zhongming pointed to a spot on the purchased map, an area next to theirs.

"There is a team here with at least thirty people and a total points exceeding forty thousand. Our first target is to... eliminate them!"

Chapter 1864: Half an hour sneak attack

The less than one-hour discussion between Ji Ruiguang and Ye Zhongming, how future generations would define it, and whether it would go down in history was unknown, but one thing was sure: for Earth or the country, it was about justice, while for other races, it was far from that.

Of course, in this universe, the concept of justice was relatively narrow.

Just as the law of conservation of energy dictates, some people's rise inevitably came at the expense of others.

It couldn't be called absolute, but the reality was often frustrating and powerless.

It could only be said that survival of the fittest existed everywhere, at all times.

"This is a team composed of multiple races. To gain as many point bonuses as possible, over thirty people come from nearly twenty races."

Since the decision was made to act, Ye Zhongming began to explain the information he had obtained in detail.

"The advantage of this team is their strong individual combat power, high compatibility and coordination of abilities, decisive and fierce actions, and clear sources of information, indicating they are willing to spend money and prioritize efficiency."

"Also, they likely have a full range of jobs, especially healing jobs—more than one—and other support professions. This means the team has strong, sustained combat and recovery capabilities."

"The highest-ranked person in the team..."

Ye Zhongming relayed all the known information, very detailed, making everyone increasingly apprehensive.

Aside from the newcomers, the others had known Ye Zhongming since the first cycle or shortly after. They knew that during these two cycles, he had not only earned high points but also been pursued by

Queen Aimusi. Yet, he had not only conceived such a plan but also devised detailed steps and gathered thorough information. This was terrifying—how could he be so meticulous?

In fact, when Ye Zhongming first obtained this information, his thoughts were similar to the team members'. He was shocked and surprised that Ji Ruiguang could gather such details within six or seven days of the novice battlefield starting. Indeed, he was worthy of being the former ruler of the country; he had a method.

"That's all for the information. As for the specific action steps, I will issue commands when the time comes."

Ye Zhongming's expression turned serious, and everyone else instantly shifted into focus.

"Now, let's distribute the items. Consider this a small token of my appreciation for following me in this endeavor."

The Cloud Peak King began distributing equipment and medicines.

These were tangible points, and everyone grew excited.

Ye Zhongming naturally customized the items based on each person's situation, essentially providing full sets. Due to their late addition, Ye Zhongming hadn't prepared equipment for the newcomers but had made some small items during breaks in the hunting over the past two days.

For example, he made a pair of shoulder spikes and back spikes for the shield warrior to enhance defense against attacks from the air and rear. For the Six-Eye Race member, he crafted ten light arrows of absolutely top quality, which delighted the sharpshooter.

It was hard to imagine someone specially crafted such high-level arrows for her. With that effort and materials, they could have made better equipment instead of such semi-consumables.

"I will use them to take ten enemy lives."

Facing such a promise from the Six-Eye Race member, Ye Zhongming laughed and said, "If you really manage that, I'll make twenty more for you."

"Deal! No backing out!"

The equipment for the aura warrior required the most thought from Ye Zhongming because, seemingly, this guy lacked nothing.

Ye Zhongming made him a secondary weapon, a ranged weapon, very compact, similar to a hand crossbow but automatic. The bolts were only as long as a finger, with six pairs loaded into the crossbow stem. Pulling the trigger would send them shooting out swiftly.

Used discreetly, it could be effective. Especially for an auxiliary warrior like him, often the primary target for elimination, having an extra means of self-defense pleased the aura warrior.

"Alright, let's move out!" Ye Zhongming didn't waste words; after distributing the items, he set off immediately.

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"There's only half an hour left in this small cycle."

Someone sat on the ground stretching, in a very good mood.

The team had continued hunting methodically this cycle, not only without any deaths but also with all injured members receiving good treatment. Now, only three lacked combat capability but could still take care of themselves.

This was almost unimaginable in the nearly ten days of combat, thanks to the team's rational personnel configuration.

With healers and support, melee and ranged fighters, combat felt like being an all-capable individual, achieving effects far beyond  $1+1=2$ .

"There's still an hour and a half left, okay?"

A furry lifeform nearby laughed and corrected the first speaker.

"According to past situations, the notification appears an hour before the end. Newcomers can't attack each other then. For us, isn't that effectively half an hour left?"

"Sounds like you make a living hunting newcomers."

"He did kill several people, you know. Look, he's even red-named."

"No choice. They entered our hunting ground; they deserved to die."

Over twenty people sat gathered here, all relaxed. This cycle, their points had increased again, with the lowest member exceeding 1,400 points and the captain highest, already over 3,000 points! An extremely high ranking.

They had just completed a large hunt, so for the last hour and a half, they decided to rest. After all, there were no prey around anymore.

With sentries posted in several directions, they weren't afraid of trouble.

Their team had over thirty members; few had the qualifications to cause them trouble.

"This time back, I'm buying that Ion Gun from the store. One shot can instantly kill weaker parasites."

"I believe you can afford it, but can you use it? One shot costs about ten points!"

"Why couldn't I use it? I now have over 2,000 points. I'd definitely use it at critical moments. Captain, if I get that thing, can I get a larger share when distributing points?"

This person looked toward the captain sitting there, but got no answer. He only saw the captain suddenly stand up, looking east.

"Captain, what's wrong?"

"Everyone, attention! Be on alert!" The captain's voice was tense as he drew his weapon.

Everyone was puzzled, but immediately entered combat readiness.

"Zalegong, who should be on guard over there, didn't report back on time!"

Even during relaxation, sentry duty was never neglected. No news basically meant something had happened.

"Let's go check it out together."

Chapter 1865: Half an hour sneak attack (2)

These people were not foolish; they knew that the best way to prevent being picked off one by one was to stick together. With so many nine-star evolved gathered in one place, attacking them would not be easy.

They quickly moved to the position where the sentry should have been, searched the area, but found no trace of the two companions who were supposed to be there. However, they did discover some clues.

"Blood?"

The captain asked a member skilled in tracking. This member picked up some soil from the spot, brought it to his nose, sniffed, then nodded and shook his head.

"It's bloodstains, but..."

Seeing the member hesitate, the captain knew there was something difficult to say. But since everyone was watching, he had to let him speak directly.

"It very much resembles an instant kill caused by some ability. The wound is extremely small, and the death process is extremely short—almost instantaneous."

The captain's expression turned grim, somewhat disbelieving. "Instant kill?"

At their level, even if ambushed, the possibility of being instantly killed was minuscule. If someone could truly do this, their strength must far surpass theirs.

Undoubtedly, this statement would cause panic among the team members.

"I'm afraid so."

The captain took a deep breath, about to say something, but suddenly stopped.

"The people on the south side also didn't check in on time."

This sentence made the already tense atmosphere even more solemn.

"Let's split up to investigate the situation. The other three directions should also be checked," one person said, constantly scanning the surroundings, clearly already on alert.

"No, we should have the sentries return. If they don't come back, it means something's wrong. We shouldn't risk going to check, but should instead investigate the cause together or leave this place. After all, there's not much time left."

Someone objected. After all, no matter the species, the instinct when facing danger is to seek advantage and avoid harm.

"We can't abandon them, even if there's only a sliver of hope."

"We might have encountered troublesome parasites or the most powerful red-name newcomers. With less than half an hour until the safe period, acting rashly will only make things worse!"

"But don't forget, among the eight sentries sent out, two have special abilities. Without them, our hunting in the next few cycles will be greatly affected!"

"Enough!" the captain growled. "The situation is unclear, and you're already turning on each other?"

"We can't abandon our companions for our own safety or unwillingness to take risks. Think about it—if you were in danger and your companions chose to abandon you, how would you feel?"

Hearing this, dissenting voices faded. Even if unwilling, they couldn't show it; otherwise, they might be the ones abandoned in the future.

"Airezeiya, take half the people to the south. The rest come with me to the north. Whatever you find, return here to regroup within five minutes. If there's any trouble, signal immediately."

Airezeiya bowed and nodded, her hand resting on her long samurai sword. Her face, revealing only her eyes, showed no expression, but from her brows, one could sense a coldness.

She selected some people and headed south with them, while the rest followed the captain to the other side.

This captain, with over three thousand points, likely never imagined what this seemingly foolproof decision would bring to the team.

Not far away, Jie Kui quickly returned to Ye Zhongming's side.

"Boss, the third scenario—they split forces north and south."

Ye Zhongming and the others smiled upon hearing this.

This was what they hoped to see most.

In their anticipation, the target team would make three possible decisions when faced with silently hunted sentries.

The first was to flee far away, disregarding the lives of their companions. This was what Ye Zhongming and Ji Ruiguang least wanted to see because it would leave them with fewer options, forcing a direct assault.

That would result in many deaths, with a win rate guaranteed only at sixty to seventy percent, greatly impacting future plans.

The second was for the target team to investigate collectively. This seemed similar to the first, but was vastly different because they would enter an ambush. Although it would still end in a decisive battle between the two groups, the target team would be forced to fight back in an incomplete state, giving Ye Zhongming's side a significant advantage.

The last scenario involved them splitting their forces. Whether divided into several parts, it would weaken their strength, presenting a perfect opportunity for Ye Zhongming and Ji Ruiguang.

"Which side is their captain on?" Ye Zhongming asked quickly.

"North," Jie Kui replied swiftly.

"Then we go south."

The decision was made in a few words, and the team immediately followed Ye Zhongming south. Actually, regardless of which side they chose, they would enter the battlefield before the target team because the clues they left would lead the target team into a trap.

Quickly occupying advantageous terrain and activating some setups, only Jie Kui and Shi Kangbu remained by Ye Zhongming's side. The three of them would be responsible for the first wave of sneak attacks.

"Boss... will those people cooperating with us show up?"

Jie Kui wasn't afraid; he just didn't trust Ji Ruiguang. From Ye Zhongming's few words, he could tell the two had been adversaries on their home planet.

"Don't worry," Ye Zhongming said, then looked ahead and whispered, "They're here."

It wasn't Ji Ruiguang arriving, but the portion of the target team that had split off, appearing in everyone's sight—right where they had set up the battlefield.

There were four such battlefields, covering all possible locations the target team might appear.

Ye Zhongming and the other two narrowed their eyes, while the rest averted their gazes.

They feared being detected by these people; top experts were very sensitive in this regard.

Airezeiya muttered a string of Japanese in the lowest possible voice, venting her dissatisfaction.

Although her individual combat strength was high, arguably the second strongest in the team after the captain—thanks to her luck in retaining many abilities after coming to Earth from her home planet, giving her a natural advantage, as well as her willingness to fight fiercely at all times—she was not happy. Her temporary leadership position didn't substantially improve her situation within the team.

These people had an instinctive discrimination against Earthlings.

Just a minute ago, they had discovered traces of the missing sentries. She thought they should regroup with the captain before investigating, but the others ignored her entirely. Without waiting for her decision, they followed the clues to investigate this area.

Indeed, this area seemed to have no danger—just some low shrubs, stone pieces, moss, and plenty of fallen weeds.

Airezeiya also thought there were no major issues, but she felt indignant, brimming with rage. She didn't voice it, only listlessly following at the rear of the team.

However, the moment they stepped into that seemingly harmless area, things changed. Dozens of cold gleams shot up from the ground, instantly charging into the team.