

Ancient 85

Chapter 85 - 44 I Don't Need Teammates

Gu Jianlin walked into the conference room and quickly scanned the investigators present.

With the configuration of three members per team, there were a total of fifteen investigators seated, most of whom he had encountered during the last hunting operation. Only six unfamiliar faces stood out.

Seeing this lineup, a heavy feeling weighed on his heart.

This so-called elite group was really subpar. Last time they nearly cost him, and now he was forced to cooperate with them again.

At that moment, he suddenly sensed a hostile and scrutinizing gaze, directed squarely at him.

Gu Jianlin furrowed his brows and looked up.

Three individuals occupied the central seats—a group composed of two men and one woman.

The most prominent figure wore a white suit, his jet-black hair slicked neatly back. His stern and solemn face was accentuated by a pair of piercing double pupils, resembling the majestic and fierce gaze of a white tiger. His aura carried undeniable intimidation.

The second man bore a resemblance in appearance but showed more of a laid-back demeanor, a cigarette dangling idly from his lips without being lit.

The third was a blonde-haired girl with intricate and seductive makeup. She wore a revealing short summer dress, its hem barely covering her thighs—displaying her long, snow-white, finely toned legs. She paired the outfit with flip-flops.

The uncomfortable, appraisal-like gaze emanated from this trio.

Gu Jianlin had reviewed their profiles.

They were currently ranked as the top-performing team, each a Grade C investigator.

Yan Ye, ranked second among newcomers, was rumored to possess Second Rank strength, with the capability to break into Third Rank at any given time. Furthermore, he had strong connections with the association's upper echelons—truly a textbook example of privilege.

His two teammates held the third and fourth ranks, respectively.

Yan Feng, his younger brother, followed the Ancient Martial Path, though his rank was significantly lower in comparison.

An essential detail stood out in Yan Feng's record—something quite amusing.

When Joker defected, he had crossed paths with this man.

However, Yan Feng failed to win that fight.

The last member was the blonde-haired girl, ranked fourth among newcomers.

Mu Ziqing, following the Priest Path, a Second Order Nun.

These unpleasant stares undoubtedly originated from the loyalist faction of the Judgement Court.

Apart from the hostility and scrutiny, someone caught Gu Jianlin's attention with a genuinely surprised expression.

"Brother Lin, over here!"

Cheng Youyu stood up and waved at him.

Nie Xiangsi was seated beside him, her bright, lively eyes watching him with shy curiosity, nodding politely in greeting.

Gu Jianlin walked over and murmured softly, "Looks like you're both doing much better."

Thinking back to the situation in the cafeteria, Cheng Youyu scratched his head awkwardly. "Haha, last time, we really owe you. If it weren't for Brother Lin stepping in, we'd have been done for."

Nie Xiangsi joined in quietly, "I haven't had a chance to thank you yet. Thank you."

Beside them sat the former group leader from that operation, clearly part of their team as well.

"Thank you."

Zhang Cheng nodded slightly.

Compared to the others, these three were distinctly more amiable.

After their words of thanks, Gu Jianlin immediately heard dismissive scoffs.

"Don't mind them—they're too close to the Judgement Court."

Cheng Youyu, quick to notice the situation, understood Gu Jianlin's isolation immediately. He asked, "Brother Lin, why don't you sit next to us instead? The action leader should be coming in to speak shortly."

Zhang Cheng shifted in his seat to make some space and said politely, "Sit here."

Nie Xiangsi seemed a bit shy, keeping her head down and avoiding eye contact.

Gu Jianlin hesitated for a moment before saying, "No need, but thank you."

Clearly, most of the people present still didn't welcome him.

He wasn't about to cause trouble or drag those three into his isolated predicament.

Gu Jianlin walked over and took a seat in the furthest corner of the room.

He noticed that, out of seven groups, only five had arrived so far.

Soon, light footsteps echoed in the room.

The conference hall's doors swung open gently, and a white-haired girl carrying an enormous case stepped inside. She wore a black sunhat, an off-shoulder white pullover revealing her smooth shoulders and a delicate collarbone, paired with light blue denim jeans that accentuated her long, balanced legs. On her feet were white sneakers.

The shadow of her hat obscured her snow-white, finely sculpted face. Yet, her sharp and chilling gaze was palpable.

She couldn't have been older than twenty, her figure tall and slender yet retaining the youthful charm of a girl.

Indeed, she was beautiful, but the unmistakable aura of danger around her stood out more.

When she entered, a powerful pressure blanketed the room.

Without a doubt, this was the newcomer crowned as the top-ranked in Peak City District.

Tang Ling, following the Sword Sect Path, a Third-Order Sword Obsession.

Codename: Thunder.

Tang Ling walked in without greeting anyone and immediately seated herself in a corner opposite Gu Jianlin.

Gu Jianlin sat on the left, Tang Ling on the right.

They both turned their heads at the same time, glancing at each other—each surprised.

For they both realized they weren't the only ones without teammates!

Suddenly, the conference room lights dimmed.

On the projection screen appeared an ordinary yet imposing and cold face.

"Greetings, newcomers."

A dispassionate voice spoke: "I am the chief leader of this operation and also your instructor. My name is Chen Bojun. I believe that after today's mission, you will remember my name. Because I will make you understand how cruel the Extraordinary World is—and just how weak and naive you are."

Kicking things off with a blunt warning.

The crowd exchanged glances, none daring to speak.

"Let's proceed with the roll call now."

"First Team: Yan Ye, Yan Feng, Mu Ziqing."

"Second Team: Zhang Cheng, Cheng Youyu, Nie Xiangsi."

"Third Team: Ye Xuan, Liu Qing..."

"Sixth Team: Tang Ling."

"Seventh Team: Gu Jianlin."

On the screen, Chen Bojun raised his head and frowned slightly: "Apologies, as I've just returned from an overseas trip, I'm not entirely caught up. Tang Ling, Gu Jianlin—why don't either of you have teammates?"

At that moment, several turned their heads to look at the lone pair in the corners.

Tang Ling kept her head down, absorbed in her phone, offering no response.

Gu Jianlin noticed that many gazes had moved toward him.

That's when Yan Ye suddenly spoke up, "Instructor Chen, that's a question I'd like to ask as well. Given the standards for this Immortal Palace cleanup operation—that all participants must be Second Rank at minimum—how did a Zero-tier Divine sneak in?"

"Indeed, I'm curious as well."

Yan Feng raised an eyebrow and asked, "Is he here to mooch some merit?"

Mu Ziqing turned to scrutinize the boy in the corner.

In a moment of silence, Chen Bojun seemed uncertain, glanced down at the roster report, then raised his brow: "I see. Despite being Zero-tier, you possess experience challenging across ranks? Defeating a First Order Magician as an ordinary person, and solo killing a Second-tier Magician—one equipped with a Mythical Weapon and severely deformed—with just Zero-tier Divine abilities."

He paused, displaying some admiration. "Impressive, indeed."

Someone suddenly interjected, "That wasn't entirely his kill, was it? Our previous action team already left Joker heavily wounded before the Death Spirit Gu incapacitated him. How can that be called a solo kill?"

"Exactly."

Someone else chimed in, "The claim of a solo kill seems overstated, don't you think?"

These two debaters were both Second Rank Fate handlers from the earlier team.

"Give me a break. If you're not embarrassed, I sure am."

Cheng Youyu, face flushed with frustration, couldn't hold back his biting retort: "A classic case of claiming one shot did all the damage, huh? Why don't you claim to be the nation's richest man because you share assets with Uncle Ma, too?"

At those words, the two Fate handlers frowned, prepared to argue, but a cold voice cut them off.

"On the topic of the Joker incident, I happen to have a few observations myself."

Gu Jianlin spoke calmly, with an air of detachment. "You two are also following the Divine Path, aren't you?"

The Fate handlers raised their brows, "What of it?"

"The Death Spirit Gu is life-based, isn't it? So why couldn't you, as practitioners of the all-encompassing Divine Path, sense its Life Rhythm? How did you allow it to poison the food unnoticed?"

Gu Jianlin cast a cold glance at them. "Do you not know how to use the most basic abilities of your pathway?"

On the screen, Chen Bojun seemed to recall something and remarked indifferently, "Though the Gu Master Path isn't among the oldest, and the practitioners are incredibly rare, the available recorded data indicates that the Death Spirit Gu is indeed life-based."

The two handlers' expressions shifted between light and dark as they felt the weight of countless judgmental stares. Their embarrassment was palpable.

It went without saying why they'd failed to detect the Gu's rhythm.

Simply put—they got careless.

Or perhaps, feeling the task was too trivial, they let their guard down.

"So honestly, if anyone should be doing the criticizing, it's me critiquing you."

Gu Jianlin stated calmly, "A group of Second Rank professionals couldn't manage their responsibilities properly, yet needed a Zero-tier rookie like me to clean up the mess. If anyone plans to repeat such basic lapses during this mission, I recommend they drop out."

A sharp wave of ridicule.

Everyone involved in that previous operation felt the sting in their chest.

"My apologies."

Gu Jianlin turned to the Second Group trio. "No offense meant."

"I've got cross-rank battle experience and possess two Mythical Weapons at my disposal."

He spoke with serene authority. "My participation in this mission is perfectly warranted—I don't need teammates. I can accomplish tasks ten Second Rank professionals combined could fail at. And another thing—I heard someone here previously fought Joker and lost miserably. I'm curious why they have the audacity to question others?"

At that moment, Yan Ye raised an eyebrow, glancing toward the boy in the corner, his eyes narrowing.

Yan Feng twitched slightly, convinced that this rookie's ability to challenge above his tier was likely owed to some tool left by his fallen father who had become a member of the Fallen.

And no doubt, that tool had been obtained through betraying comrades and harming humanity.

"Calm down. Fixating on this doesn't matter. Remember the mission objective and don't tarnish our high-level rating."

Mu Ziqing whispered to them, "Winning a place in the Immortal Palace is all that truly matters."

The brothers exchanged glances and quietly returned to their seats.

Chen Bojun, briefly observing their exchange, squinted slightly: "Interesting. Now, what about Tang Ling?"

After a momentary pause, she answered.

"I'm a Third-Order Sword Obsession with cross-rank combat capability, and I carry three pieces of Alchemy Weaponry."

Still engrossed with her phone, Tang Ling replied without raising her head, "I don't need teammates; I myself am Captain Level."

An impeccable answer.

"Interesting. Two people who don't need teammates."

Chen Bojun said with amusement, "Let's hope your capabilities match your arrogance."