

Ancient 88

Chapter 88 - 45: Forbidden Zone!_3

Zhang Shiheng, the captain of the third group, was a middle-aged man with a cold demeanor, carrying a massive iron bow on his back.

"Understood."

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A white bus sped along a transoceanic bridge, cutting through the hazy fog.

This mission involved a seventeen-member squad, all seated on the bus headed toward the Forbidden Zone on the East Coast.

Before boarding, everyone received supply boxes distributed by the association.

However, per instructions, the boxes could only be opened upon reaching the designated location.

Though Gu Jianlin believed most members of this task force were laughably incapable and unworthy of being called elites, at least their outward conduct and composure were passable.

The newcomers were all young, but none appeared to treat this mission as a mere outing; their faces bore serious expressions.

After all, this was indeed a life-threatening ordeal.

Gu Jianlin sat alone in the last row of the bus, his head bowed as he read through the mission briefings.

The artificial intelligence of the Deep Space Network was unquestionably robust. When issuing mission briefings, each version was customized to analyze the recipient's individual circumstances for better comprehension.

"The so-called Forbidden Zone refers to areas contaminated by the Super Ancient World. Hidden in the shadows of the real world, Forbidden Zones are the havens for wild Ascenders and the Fallen, and breeding grounds for rampant crime."

"They are chaotic and brimming with danger. Due to the arrival of the Qilin Immortal Palace, the number of contaminated Forbidden Zones continues to expand. We have yet to decipher their mechanisms or find ways to eliminate them."

"Remember your persona. You are a seventeen-year-old boy from the borderlands, a wild Ascender following the Divine Path, at the Zero-tier. You work for a company involved in the taboo items trade. Every year, you accompany a convoy to ensure a steady flow of taboo items into the market—a vital source of livelihood for your people."

"Your name doesn't matter, and neither does your company's. In the Forbidden Zone, no one cares about such things. They only care about your value and your capabilities. The rules there are completely different from those in your world..."

Upon reading this, Gu Jianlin still didn't fully understand the Forbidden Zone but had grasped the mission objectives.

Assume a disguised identity, infiltrate a criminally dense area, and eliminate the target.

"The Forbidden Zone... well, I'll know what it is once I get there."

Gu Jianlin pondered briefly: "But the problem is..."

He sensed this mission was fraught with danger.

The reason was simple—everyone was entering the Forbidden Zone under concealed identities.

The Ether Association's upper echelon likely intended to surprise their enemies.

But the real issue lay in the fact that the Ancient Tomb's five-member group was presumably in the Forbidden Zone too.

And the Sea Demon seemed to be a mole planted within the Ether Association.

Which meant there was a significant risk of a leak for this mission.

"Lin Xuecheng, codename Pharmacist, an Alchemist on the Fourth Rank, a Gatherer. Seventy-four years old, formerly part of the Ether Association's pharmaceutical research team as a branch leader. Confirmed contaminated by the Ancient God six months ago—he absconded with stolen Ancient Documents."

"Zhou Ting, codename Scholar, following the Heavenly Master Path as a Third Rank Mind Master. Twenty-nine years old, previously served in the Ether Association's fifth task force as Deputy Captain. Confirmed Ancient God contamination—he defected in allegiance to the Pharmacist."

Gu Jianlin glanced down at the photographs of the two individuals, a glimmer of realization flashing in his eyes.

After so much scheming and maneuvering, he had finally caught them.

These two were currently in Peak City's Forbidden Zone.

Gu Jianlin had already sensed them earlier; they had consumed the Ancient God's Blood. He could scarcely imagine what level of evolution they might have reached.

"And then there's the Sea Demon."

He mused internally: "Though her identity remains uncertain, let's assume she's already compromised."

At this moment, someone took a seat beside him, holding up a phone in front of him.

On the screen was a WeChat QR code.

Gu Jianlin blinked, then looked up.

Unbeknownst to him, Tang Ling had already sat down next to him.

The girl lowered her head slightly; her black visor hat obscured her frost-like, exquisite features. A massive black violin case was slung across her shoulder, and a faint chill emanated from her, carrying an icy, crystalline scent.

Gu Jianlin saw she had no intention of speaking, so he opened WeChat and scanned her QR code.

"You've added Thunder as a contact."

Her profile picture was a slightly silly-looking owl.

After adding him, Tang Ling turned away, moving to another seat at the back. She began typing on her phone.

Soon, Gu Jianlin received a message on WeChat.

"You're not Zero-tier, are you? If you are, you wouldn't be able to kill the Joker."

Gu Jianlin hesitated for a second.

"I don't know what you're talking about."

Almost instantaneously, another message arrived.

"If you are Zero-tier, then you must have some other methods. Don't worry—I won't tell anyone."

Gu Jianlin was a bit startled, unsure of what she meant.

"Professor Gu Ci'an's son couldn't possibly be so simple."

"Not that you need my reminder, but this mission is extremely dangerous. Be careful."

"No need to reply."

Tang Ling sent her last message, then put her phone down and stared out the window in silence.

Gu Jianlin looked at her, utterly puzzled.

At this moment, the bus exited the transoceanic bridge, abruptly slowed, and made a sharp turn. Dense fog rushed toward them.

The world suddenly grew dark, enveloped in pitch-black gloom.

Yet, it was daytime—only eleven in the morning. It couldn't possibly be night.

Gu Jianlin raised his head. Above, the sky was smothered by thick clouds, not a single ray of light penetrating through.

"Look ahead—what's that?!"

Someone cried out in alarm.

Gu Jianlin lifted his gaze and saw a crumbling, eerie cityscape revealing itself under the oppressive dark clouds.

Peak City was a first-tier city celebrated for its serene blue seas and picturesque skies. Yet, this dilapidated urban mass seemed like a relic of the previous century, a jagged and rust-covered dagger violently stabbed into the canvas of a masterpiece.

His phone chimed.

"Welcome to the Forbidden Zone, Black Cloud City."

Gu Jianlin surveyed the scene.

This was the hiding place of the Grave Digger Organization.

And Kui—was he here too?

