

Chapter 107: New Boys in Town

“Do you really think that Nosei guy will pull through and get us that meeting with someone higher up in Ferrumus Corp?” Thorne stared straight at me from his bed in our shared hotel room.

“Hard to say... I doubt Ferrumus Corp’s intelligence department doesn’t know that we’re here and what we’re here for. It’s just that to them, this whole matter isn’t that high of a priority.”

It would be foolish of us to bank it entirely on them reaching out. Their intel department may know about us, but who knew if they had deemed it important enough to pass it on to someone in a position to do something about it?

I would need to devise a more reliable way to speak with someone in Ferrumus Corp if we want to secure our chances of attaining their support and have them hold back Virtue Corp from further interference in our war.

“We need to go gather information and find ways to come into contact with an executive from Ferrumus. We don’t really have any connection up here, so we’ll have to go ask around.”

“...Rollo, you want to walk around when spec ops from High Gate are probably lurking around?”

“Being on the move is better than hunkering down here as a stationary target. We can’t entirely trust them to not make a move just because this hotel is owned by a B-Class corp.”

“...You better stay in the power armor then. We don’t know the area enough to prevent a sniper or something from getting the jump on us.”

As Thorne directed his attention to calling up Andrew’s team to discuss the security arrangements for our outing, I looked up the web for any potential mercenary hangouts in Aegis.

Unlike what was on the surface, it didn’t seem like mercenaries had any fixed presence around here.

How am I supposed to find a QG now? Do they even operate here—No, they must. They’re everywhere.

My search came up empty even by the time we were ready to set off. We rented a vehicle from the hotel and headed for a random bar I found online instead. It didn’t take long to get there as this city had drastically less traffic compared to what I was used to. Something tells me it had to do with the lower standard of living the common folks had up here.

“Andrew, head in while disguised. We’ll monitor the situation from the outside.” I commanded.

It wouldn't do to walk in there with two power armors and a team of corporate soldiers all armed to the teeth. There was no need for us to expose the capability of our Shades, especially as it could expose how long it could last. The one I had installed in the power armors had access to ample power and could even last longer, though.

A video feed was soon directed to my optics from Andrew's point of view. I watched as he walked inside with Peng and took a seat in a corner. They wore casual clothing, which was actually a projection from their implants.

Most people in the bar appeared to be wearing overalls with some still in their space suit. They appeared to be mostly asteroid miners, which made Andrew's party slightly stand out.

"We'll get two of these...and why don't you get those two ladies another round on me as well," Andrew said to their server.

The two ladies he was talking about had been sizing them up from the table over and Andrew naturally shifted over to their table once he placed his order.

"Hey there, would you two ladies like to drink with us tonight?"

While the hostility in their eyes eased up once they heard Andrew bought them drinks, they still regarded my two employees cautiously.

"We'll spare you the time it takes for one drink. You two better not be getting any funny ideas, though." She glared at Andrew, who nodded before moving her gaze to Peng.

Peng blankly stared back at her until he received an elbow from Andrew.

Their party then made some small talk as they drained their cups before Andrew asked the important questions.

"So do you girls happen to know who to find for someone who knows a lot around here?"

"...That depends on why you're asking. Some people don't take kindly to people coming in from other sectors, snooping around. Are you guys from a gang or something?"

"No, no. You see, we're looking for some information with this corporation that's been breathing down our necks."

The girls visibly flinched back before they got out of their seats.

"That topic is too heavy for us. Don't get us involved." They said before quickly taking their leave.

With that failure, Andrew began trying to chat up some other patrons and the bartender, to no avail. They simply didn't know much or barely spoke at all.

“Well, that was a good start.” Thorne’s voice rang out in the power armor’s audio.

“...Maybe we’ll need to find someone more involved in the black market for answers.”

Once Andrew and Peng returned, it wasn’t hard to look up areas of the city that didn’t have the best of reputations. We parked the rental car in a nearby lot to avoid damaging it before walking around a notorious area known for occasional gang disputes.

The people who loitered in this area were visibly armed and had a dangerous glint in their eyes, but compared to the typical thug I was used to seeing in Elevate City, they were heavily under-equipped and seemed to barely have any cybernetic enhancements.

Our entire squad of six was disguised as the asteroid miners we saw earlier as we toured around in overalls. While we received some looks, everyone seemed to be leaving us alone. Just as I was about to suggest we downsize our party, a dull gunshot rang out. It wasn’t that loud, but I had Kiri on the lookout for it, so my auditory implant picked it up perfectly. The sound of the impact against something metal was much louder than the actual shooting, though.

It didn’t take long before several more gunshots followed as we made our way over. We used our Argus to scan the area ahead to get a more detailed location of where it was.

We turned on our active camouflage as we closed in and found two groups having a shootout with each other inside an alleyway. There were less than ten people involved, with a group of four hooded figures, against a group of five, who all had numerous face tattoos.

I had our team simply watch as they fought, and their numbers soon dwindled until the hooded group only had two people left against the four on the other side. Seeing how it may end soon, we took action. We would be helping the losers as I believed saving them would loosen their lips and definitely had nothing to do with me wanting to gain more experience points at all.

I also wanted to try using the power armor, so I had everyone else on standby while I dove in.

While in the power armor, shooting was linked to the targeting system through my SAID, so I didn’t actually have to manually aim the guns. That’s why I tested the melee combat of the armor instead. I closed in behind the tattooed men while remaining in stealth and unleashed the vibroblade hidden in the sleeve of the power armor.

As the four men laughed hysterically as they pushed on the position of their adversaries who were taking cover behind a dumpster, I swiftly lashed out and bisected the two men who were in the back.

+10 EXP +10 EXP

The vibro blade cut well as always, and it was refreshing to be using a bigger version of my usual dagger. My inexperience using the sword resulted in blood all over my suit as the geysers of blood spurted out from my downed foes. The blood even splattered over to their allies, drawing their attention.

I quickly dashed toward them as fast as I could and activated the jetpack function to give my lunge a little boost. The intermittent boost I had installed on it was meant for maneuvering in zero-g environments, but that didn't mean I could use it to enhance my movement normally as well.

The speed it propelled me almost caught me off guard, but I reflexively slashed out with my blade before entirely overshooting the last two foes.

+10 EXP

+10 EXP

When I glanced up, I saw my team had already moved to apprehend the two members of the hooded gang, and we quickly extracted them from the area. We moved just far enough from the area to prevent any reinforcements from either side from interrupting us as we interrogated our two guests.

Inside a secluded alleyway, we posted Nyes in our surroundings to keep watch as the questioning began. I unhooded one of the guests to find a woman glaring up at me. When I removed the restraints around her mouth, I found sharp cybernetic teeth, glistening in a threatening manner at me.

"You better release me, you fools! Or you will be seeing members of our Banshee's Fangs eating your family alive by the end of the day before moving on to you! This is your first and last chance to avoid your deaths, so unhand me!"

I proceeded to unhood our other guest and found another woman with similar-looking teeth who also spewed threats nonstop, along with her companion.

"Thorne, bring this one with you to another alley. They're too loud together."

He shrugged and went to carry one of the ladies when she suddenly tried to lunge at Thorne and take a bite out of him. The restraints around her limbs were still in place so she only pathetically fell over on the ground. Thorne sighed before picking her up and I resumed questioning the one who remained as soon as they were away from earshot.

"I don't care about your gang or anything. I just want to know how to find a QG in this city and I'll let you go."

"Fuck you!" She spit at me, and it landed on the exterior of my armor. "You new boys in the city? Corpo motherfuckers."

She continued spewing profanities at me and refused to cooperate at all. It didn't take me long to figure out she wouldn't be cracking soon, so I gagged her and hoped Thorne received better results.

Unfortunately, we weren't so lucky.

"So now what? Pick up members from the other gang?" Thorne asked.

"I'd rather not when we already initiated hostilities with them. Let's try talking to these so-called Banshee's Fangs' leaders first. They may be willing to talk in exchange for their friends here."

"...If you say so...But don't say I didn't warn you, I think they're a gang of crazy bitches and you won't find any luck with them."

'Multiple people heading rapidly in this direction detected. All armed and equipped with a small amount of cybernetics.' Kiri's voice suddenly alerted me.

"Everyone scan with your Argus in that direction now! We've got company." I shouted.

We staggered our Argus scans in intervals and linked our vision together, so we soon could spot the incoming party through walls in real-time. There were a dozen of them, and they all moved quickly across the roofs of the nearby buildings that were all tightly packed together.

Our entire team soon engaged our active camouflage and waited to see what they were up to. They soon arrived in our position and slowed down before cautiously making their way onto the street level.

"Boss, they should be around here." A hooded figure said as they looked left and right around the area.

They were staring straight at where Andrew was holding our captives, so that meant they must have trackers on them.

I had my men throw them down to avoid giving away their position, and from their point of view, their friends suddenly materialized from thin air.

"What the fuck?" One of them yelled.

"Scatter! That's a corpo hit squad!" Another hooded figure yelled.

"Wait! We're not hostile!" I quickly yelled out as their gang was about to disperse.