

FOOLISH GAME OF THE GODS

Chapter 5: The Trial Begins: The Terror Fiends' Ambush

The other five didn't go far, and soon everyone returned to the place where they had initially arrived.

Cheng Shi looked over at Chen Chong and noticed that he had transformed the greatsword in his hand into a shield.

[Order] warriors were among the few professions known for their defensive prowess, making them well-suited for survival-type trials.

The shield-sword was a weapon that could freely switch between forms, an A-rank item that could only be obtained by players with a ladder score of 1600 or above.

Chen Chong, just barely above 1600, had managed to get his hands on one, indicating his luck was quite good.

“I’ve found today’s [Order Anchor Point]. There’s a bar buried beneath the rubble. I dug through the debris and uncovered one of the bar’s rules: ‘Only fruit wine shall be consumed today.’”

As he spoke, Chen Chong flipped his hand and pulled out a bottle of fruit wine, a brand that no one had seen before.

It was clear this one didn’t come from the ruins but from his personal storage space.

Every player had a personal space about the size of a secure locker, used to store their most important items.

Cheng Shi had one too, filled with all sorts of odd and unique things, though he hadn’t expected to meet someone else who, like him, enjoyed storing drinks in it.

The others were clearly more confused than Cheng Shi. Seeing everyone looking at him, Chen Chong smiled and explained:

“The pressure is too much. I can’t sleep without having a drink or two, so I always keep a few bottles on hand. Each of you take a sip, and you’ll be under the protection of [Order’s] light. Don’t worry, it’s low-alcohol and won’t affect the upcoming battle.”

The [Divine Will] of [Order] required players to seek out and adhere to order. Only those who followed some form of rule or regulation could receive the blessings.

And for anyone wishing to receive [Order’s] protection, they also had to abide by the discovered rules.

This simple rule anchor would clearly increase everyone’s safety, so they were all pleased. Each person took the bottle in turn, sipping lightly.

Except for Cheng Shi, who, when it was his turn, downed half the bottle with a few big gulps.

Chen Chong’s eyebrow twitched, suddenly feeling that this priest might not be very reliable.

Nearby, it seemed Cao Sansui had also completed his [Divine Will] successfully. He pulled out several golden pocket watches and began distributing them to the group.

“I’ve anchored time and synchronized all the watches. This watch will sound an alert 5 minutes, 3 minutes, and 1 minute before the hour. Please be mindful of your own conditions. A Time Walker can decide when a [Time Battlefield] starts and ends, but can’t control your state within it.”

Cheng Shi accepted the pocket watch from Cao Sansui and began inspecting it closely.

The watch was clearly pure gold, even the hands gleaming brightly, giving it a very luxurious appearance.

Unfortunately, in the current world, gold wasn’t worth much.

Trials that required gold were even easier than those that needed food.

Still, that didn't stop some players from valuing gold highly, using it to fulfill desires left over from their previous lives.

Seeing everyone examining their watches, Cao Sansui continued:

“In case anyone doesn't fully understand the [Time Battlefield], let me remind you again:

The [Divine Will] of [Time] is precision and punctuality.

Once I set the [Time Battlefield], we must start on the hour and end the battle or dispute by the next hour.

If we fail, we will be trapped in an eternal time loop until we succeed.

But each loop will erode our concept of time!

Over-looping will cause us to lose ourselves in the river of time. As for what that entails, I'm sure I don't need to elaborate.

So, if you're confident that you can solve the problem in one go, don't trigger it.

Time reversal is not a cure-all."

The players who had survived this long were already familiar with the complex interplay of different classes and faiths, so they nodded in understanding.

Afterward, the other four, including Cheng Shi, all spoke up, confirming that they had successfully completed their respective [Divine Will].

Seeing that everyone was ready, Chen Chong nodded and suggested:

“To the east of these ruins, there are still a few buildings that weren’t completely destroyed. For safety, let’s hide there first. We’ll decide what to do after encountering one of the warring sides or if we’re forced into a confrontation. How does that sound?”

“No objections.”

Xia Wan’s tone was as cold as ever. She continued:

“Under the rubble nearby, I found the corpses of Bo’medians. This must be a small town in the Land of Hope. From the chat logs in the hunter channel, I recall someone mentioning that the Land of Hope was destroyed by the Skeleton Army.”

Cao Sansui picked up the conversation:

“That’s right, we’re likely near the Forest County. The mage channel has quite a few who research trial history. If we’re indeed in the Land of Hope’s counterattack, then we’re probably facing the right flank of the Skeleton Army.”

Cheng Shi admired those who studied trial history because he never did. Nor did he have the patience for it.

In this bizarre world, simply surviving takes up half of his energy.

And the other half, he reserves for deceiving people.

About two weeks after the [Faith Game] started, people began to notice that every trial seemed to transport players to a world that once existed.

Many players, curious about these worlds found only in trials, began to gather background information and organize it, sharing it with others through the class and faith channels.

Unfortunately, Cheng Shi's faith channel rarely contained any useful information.

All the historical fragments pertaining to trials came from the class channels.

He really was a priest, after all.

It was clear that Chen Chong wasn't a fan of history either, as he frowned and asked: "So?"

Xia Wan continued, "There's little information about the right flank of the battle, but if I remember correctly, the most documented part is..."

Before she could finish, a sharp screech suddenly pierced through the sky in the distance.

Everyone was startled and quickly turned their heads.

In the distance, the sky had turned pitch black at some point, and a storm of dark, flapping wings was approaching, so dense that it blotted out the sun.

“...Terror Fiends.”

Xia Wan’s face darkened as she spoke the answer.

Terror Fiends were hellish demons with fleshy wings on their backs, feeding on fear and skilled in sowing chaos. They were followers of [Corruption] and the mortal enemies of [Birth].

Terror Fiends.

Judging by their overwhelming numbers, if they engaged in battle, the six of them wouldn’t even be a snack to this army.

“This is... way too many!”

Cheng Shi frowned as he glanced at his pocket watch, noticing that it had just gone past the hour—9:01—and the time battlefield hadn’t had a chance to activate.

Cao Sansui's expression also changed. Clearly, he hadn't expected the pace to pick up so quickly, and to face an airborne army right from the start.

"Brother Cao, are the 1900-level games always like this?" Song Yawen asked in shock.

Cao Sansui bitterly thought to himself, **Hell no, I've never seen something like this before either.**

"Retreat, quickly! Before they spot us, get into the cover of the ruins. They're marching, we need to avoid direct contact. Move!" Chen Chong shouted, lowering his massive shield to cover its glowing surface, leading the group as they crouched and ran eastward.

Song Yawen led the charge. As he sprinted into the shadowy remnants of the ruins, he vanished in a puff of smoke, disappearing before everyone's eyes.

It was the assassin's class ability—Shadow Step.

Assassins could traverse through darkness, moving through shadows. In short distances, they could reposition themselves and conceal their presence using the shadows.

This concealment wasn't just hiding behind objects but slipping into a shadow dimension, effectively disappearing.

Xia Wan wasn't far behind in speed. As a hunter, agility was her forte.

However, unlike Cheng Shi and Nangong who were running hastily, she was scattering something on the ground as she moved.

Cheng Shi glanced back and noticed she was throwing down [Genesis Seeds].

These weren't actual seeds but a blessing for hunters from [Birth].

It was a life trap—any living creature touched by the seeds would be influenced by the will of [Birth], causing them to crave reproduction and rapidly gestate an independent being that defied the host's consciousness.

Just like the pregnant woman Cheng Shi had neutralized earlier, who yearned to become a mother.

This technique was one of the main attack methods of [Birth] followers.

They never destroyed their enemies directly. Instead, they twisted them, causing their enemies to bring about their own downfall.

Though the gods of the [Life] path generally leaned toward lawful powers, this lawful nature didn't prevent them from warping the physical world. In some manifestations, lawful gods were no less terrifying than chaotic ones.

Even, in some cases, more so.

“I need at least 57 minutes and 42 seconds to reset the time battlefield. Until then, I can only manipulate each of your time fields. Pray, my friends, and hope they haven’t noticed us,” Cao Sansui said, wiping sweat from his brow.

“Stop talking and speed us up now!” Chen Chong growled, pushing his pace even faster.

Time Walkers could manipulate time, which was incredibly useful in situations requiring speed.

Though Cao Sansui didn’t want to drain his mental energy too quickly, there was no better option. He gripped his pocket watch tightly and shouted to his teammates:

“Fast-forward the region!”

As soon as the words left his mouth, the five of them seemed to be fast-forwarded, accelerating as if someone had pressed a button. In the blink of an eye, they had covered nearly a hundred meters.

Meanwhile, the air in the adjacent area seemed to slow to a crawl, with even the dust kicked up by their movement suspended in midair.

Time's potential energy always balanced within a given area. When one side sped up, the other naturally slowed down.

Cheng Shi felt like he was flying, the wind beneath his feet, covering ground in seconds that would usually take minutes.

Unfortunately, this acceleration only worked within a designated area. Once they left it, their speed immediately plummeted back to normal.

Though Cao Sansui had a high rank and was in better condition than the others, the large acceleration field had left him exhausted. Seeing his fatigue, Chen Chong grabbed him and slung him onto his back, continuing to run forward.

“Assassin, clear the ruins ahead! Find a stronghold!”

“Nangong, restore the mage’s mental energy! Fertility Priest, stay put—it’s not your time to shine yet.”

“Set more traps, Hunter! The Terror Fiend scouts won’t stay in midair forever. When they land, stall them as long as possible!”

Chen Chong was calm and decisive in his commands, demonstrating the strength that had gotten him to 1600 on the ladder.

However, the situation was far more dire than anticipated, giving him little choice. As they ran, he carefully scouted for ruins that could shelter all six of them, hoping they could avoid the impending disaster.

But the battle was escalating faster than they had expected.

Before they could reach the still-standing building ahead, the dense swarm of Terror Fiends had already descended toward the ruins.

Among them, the scouts had already spotted the players.

“Yaa—Saa—!”

The horrifying screech echoed across the ruins, and it was clear the Terror Fiends were excited. It was as if they had stumbled upon an unexpected delight during their march.

“It’s too late! The seeds have been triggered! Prepare for contact!”