

Full Time 481

Chapter 481: The Path of Glory

Chen Gu and the other members of the special operations team went to sleep. They were firm in their confidence in Chen Gu, knowing that if the beast suddenly turned violent, the revelation of its malicious intent would instantly awaken them all.

However, the other followers were unaware of this. They lay down beside the giant beast with fear and trepidation, clutching their weapons, their eyes wide open.

Thus, while Da Jiu watched over the surrounding wilderness, they watched over Da Jiu. The night seemed endlessly long.

The next day, when they resumed their journey, the ordinary followers were all lacking energy, nodding off after just a few steps.

Chen Gu knew not to rush. Subduing the giant beast was part of his plan, a way to introduce the belief to his followers that "all creatures are the children of our God." This, in turn, would lead to the acceptance of the concept that "all beings are equal." Without this concept underpinning their actions, their rebellion against the royal family would merely be labeled "insurrection"—an act of defiance.

Though it might sound like a seemingly optional mindset, what Chen Gu wanted was not a few isolated outbreaks of minor trouble. He aimed for a sweeping change across the entire planet.

After traveling for an hour, they needed to rest. This left Charles with no choice but to report to Chen Gu, "At this pace, I'm afraid it will take us four days to reach Potsdam City."

He wanted to gently persuade the Prophet to drive away the terrifying beast. With it present, everyone was constantly on edge and unable to rest properly, whether at night or during the day.

Chen Gu, however, seemed not to understand. "On the path arranged by our God, there is no need to worry."

Upon hearing this, Charles immediately knelt and repented for his sins. As Chen Gu spoke these words, however, his gaze was fixed on a distant mountain peak, his mind seemingly occupied with other thoughts.

Atop that mountain peak, a group of people lay in ambush within the dense primeval jungle. They were a ragtag bunch, armed with various weapons, including matchlock guns. Over the years, a considerable number of matchlock guns had been "lost" or "damaged" in battle, eventually falling into the hands of bandits.

The leader of this group of "bandits" had a head slightly longer than the others and one blind eye, covered by a black eyepatch. A broad, palm-wide leather belt hung around his waist, into which was tucked a pair of peculiar short guns. They somewhat resembled matchlock guns, yet were not quite the same.

His other eye, however, was exceptionally clear. He descended from a large tree with two other agile bandits, a grass root clenched between his teeth. He cursed dissatisfiedly, "City folk are truly unreliable! What kind of information is this? They got the numbers right, but why didn't they tell us these people were accompanied by an Eight-Toothed Terror Beast?"

The bandits chattered amongst themselves. "If it were just a group of believers, even though we're slightly outnumbered, we could have taken them all down. But an Eight-Toothed Terror Beast... that's no joke."

"Even the boss's guns would hardly inflict a fatal wound on such a huge creature."

"Not worth it, not worth it at all."

The one-eyed leader stroked his bristly chin and then said, "A head-on fight is indeed not worth the cost. But hey, why should we fight them head-on?"

"Have you forgotten the poisoned spring we mistakenly drank from a few days ago?"

His followers' eyes lit up. "Right, good idea!"

All of them had survived for years in the wilderness and possessed ample experience in judging the safety of food and water. Yet, that spring's water—colorless, tasteless, and indistinguishable from any ordinary spring—had tricked even them. Luckily, the water only caused paralysis. After lying motionless under a few large trees for more than two hours, they managed to survive, largely because it was daytime and no large predators were active. Their only misfortune was ending up with several splotches of bird droppings on them.

"Split into two groups! One will secretly follow them, and the other will fetch water from the poisoned spring!"

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When the sun began to set in the west, everyone was clearly weary and unable to walk further. Chen Gu declared they would find a place to camp. They would not push on today but rest well tonight and resume their journey tomorrow.

Some cut down trees to clear a campsite, while others were assigned to find water sources.

Four followers quickly found a clear creek in the nearby mountains and returned with water in leather pouches.

That evening, everyone drank this water, including Da Jiu, who was also suffering from unbearable thirst.

Then, just as night fell and the campfire was lit, everyone began to feel immensely weak. They confessed to Chen Gu, "Prophet, we'll take our rest first."

But as they stood up to walk to their spots, their bodies no longer obeyed their commands, and they collapsed with a THUD.

As if it were contagious, the followers fell one after another.

Da Jiu seemed to sense danger. It stood up with a thunderous roar towards the darkness, but its massive body stumbled. It made several attempts to stay upright, yet ultimately, it fell helplessly. Its head rested on the ground, its large eyes filled with unresigned frustration.

In the entire camp, only Chen Gu and the special operations team sat cross-legged, motionless. However, in the eyes of the bandits, they too must have been weakened to the point of immobility.

"HEE HEE HEE!"

"HA HA HA!"

A series of strange laughs echoed as a large group of bandits sprang from the surrounding forest.

The followers lying on the ground immediately realized they were in dire straits; they were most likely about to die at the hands of these bandits. We are sinners for all time! We were supposed to stay alert and escort the Prophet to Potsdam City to accomplish that great cause!

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But Chen Gu remained composed from beginning to end. Seated cross-legged, he looked kindly at the fierce bandits and said slowly, "You... are guilty!"

His words rang in the ears of the bandits like a great bell, and it felt as if an invisible force had struck their very souls.

The bandits hesitated for a moment but soon started cursing and drawing their weapons, charging towards Chen Gu.

Unperturbed, Chen Gu began to preach to them. These teachings, merely a portion of a vast project, had been summarized by Chen Gu over the past few days. Chen Gu alone certainly didn't possess this ability; even with his 'Brain Domain Hacker' skill, he couldn't have managed it. He had contacted Marcus, and with the help of the internal affairs members of the Bureau of Mystic Security, they had selected the mildest parts from the doctrines of historical churches, blending them with the original teachings of the "Great True God" to finally determine the full "Scriptures."

Chen Gu's voice seemed to possess a magical power. His followers couldn't move, yet they listened with tears brimming in their eyes, truly beginning to repent for their past actions!

Among these followers were quite a few spies placed by Eric and Brenna. At this moment, they loathed themselves more than ever, feeling they had failed "Our God." They resolved never again to engage in betrayal, vowing to follow the Prophet wholeheartedly and serve "Our God" with the purest of hearts!

But the bandits were much more stubborn. Holding their weapons, they continued to advance until they were five meters from Chen Gu before someone burst into tears, threw down their weapon, and knelt with a thud, crying, "I am guilty! I seek Our God's forgiveness!"

The five-meter range became an impassable line of divine judgment. One by one, the bandits knelt to confess, crying bitterly. Only the bandit leader, Cyclops, stubbornly resisted, step by step approaching Chen Gu, raising his twin guns, and aiming at Chen Gu's eyes!

Yet, Chen Gu still didn't move an inch, simply continuing to preach as if he couldn't even see the guns pointed at him.

BANG! BANG!

The shots rang out!

The followers' hearts skipped a beat, feeling as if the whole world had collapsed.

Cyclops also revealed a cruel smile. "Empty words are useless! In the end, what matters is the gun in my hand!"

But he was immediately dumbstruck. After two shots, Chen Gu hadn't collapsed with his brains splattered as expected. It was as if the bullets didn't exist, causing no harm to Chen Gu whatsoever.

"Impossible!" Cyclops roared, concentrating harder, pouring even greater spiritual power into his guns.

BANG! BANG! BANG...

He fired again and again, clearly seeing the powerful ammunition formed by his spiritual power shooting out, but as it approached Chen Gu, it all vanished into thin air!

In his bewilderment, Chen Gu's voice, deep and resonant like a great bell, pierced his mind. Cyclops instantly recalled all the sins of his life. For the first time, never having reflected on himself before, an overwhelming torrent of guilt surged from the deepest part of his heart.

"Ah—" he cried out, throwing down his guns and kneeling before Chen Gu, weeping loudly like a child. "I am guilty—"

"I am guilty!"

SOB SOB SOB—

Chen Gu opened his arms and gently patted the sobbing bandit leader, whispering, "Our God will forgive you."

The followers still couldn't move, but their eyes blazed with fervor. They knew they had witnessed another miracle!

And the moment the Prophet opened his arms, Cyclops "saw" an immensely holy effigy of the "Great True God" behind him, radiating myriad golden rays!

Thus, he completely cast off the burdens in his heart and converted to "Our God."

It was truly miraculous. As soon as the Prophet finished guiding the bandits to their conversion, the paralyzing effect on all the followers began to slowly wear off.

They stirred their limbs and slowly got up, speculating in their hearts that this was a test from "Our God," who was also, in a way, saving these bandits.

Only Boluo, panting secretly in the shadows, complained incessantly. Magical, my foot! It's all because I secretly synthesized an antidote and administered it directly into everyone's bodies!

I'm just a Second Energy Level Alchemist! Treating so many people at once is killing me!

Fortunately, what he had concocted was an ordinary substance, not a potent alchemical creation; otherwise, even if he squeezed himself completely dry, it wouldn't have been enough.

Meanwhile, Dajiu had already scrambled up. It shook its long fur and let out a tremendous roar at Cyclops and the bandits!

The bandits were terrified, but Chen Gu raised his hand and gently pressed down. Dajiu obediently lay down. "Alright," Chen Gu said. "From now on, we are all guardians under Our God. Let past deeds turn to smoke and all grievances scatter."

Everyone thought the Prophet had persuaded the fierce and irritable Dajiu with a single sentence, unaware that Dajiu had truly been pressed to the ground by Chen Gu's gentle touch...

Even Dajiu itself was bewildered. How is he so strong?

Gong Shuxu stepped forward and asked, "Who hired you to ambush us?"

The followers, startled, all turned their gazes uniformly towards Cyclops and the bandits.

Cyclops, prostrating devoutly at Chen Gu's feet, confessed, "We were indeed hired. Otherwise, a large group like yours, accompanied by a giant beast but carrying no valuable cargo—we wouldn't target such a party."

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Then, he said, "A noble from within Potsdam hired us. However, we don't know their exact identity. We have a contact in the city, and such business is usually arranged through them."

"For this particular job, the pay was extremely generous: a total of 1,500 Gold Coins. Half was paid upfront, with the other half to be paid upon completion."

After Cyclops finished speaking, he kowtowed to Chen Gu once more. "As a faithful follower, I have committed many evil deeds over the years and amassed ill-gotten wealth. I am willing to offer it all to Our God to completely sever my ties to sin!"

Chen Gu nodded with restraint. "Using this ill-gotten wealth to glorify Our God is indeed a good way to resolve this."

"Rest for now. First thing tomorrow morning, go and retrieve this ill-gotten wealth."

"Yes." Cyclops accepted the arrangements. That night, Cyclops and the bandits lay down and fell asleep. They hadn't experienced such a deep and sweet slumber in many years.

The followers, having endured such an ordeal and not slept well the previous night, were truly exhausted. They too fell into a deep sleep as soon as they lay down.

Da Jiu shook its body, stood up, and patrolled around the camp.

The rest of the night passed peacefully. In the early morning, the chirping of birds foraging for worms woke everyone. The followers and bandits alike stretched as they got up. They looked at each other, feeling as if an entire lifetime had passed.

After a simple breakfast, Cyclops led the way. They headed to the bandits' lair to retrieve the ill-gotten wealth.

Their lair was a full day's journey away, deep within the primeval forest, accessible only by treacherous paths. It was evening by the time the group arrived.

It was a well-hidden cave. The bandits had installed a heavy wooden door, camouflaging the outside with ancient vines. Anyone unaware would pass by the entrance without noticing it.

Opening the door and venturing deep into the cave, they lit a torch. Its light revealed piles of gold and gemstones, glittering brilliantly!

Everyone gasped. How many sins had these bandits committed to amass such a vast fortune?

Chen Gu stepped forward and laid a hand on the mountain of gold and jewels. In an instant, everything vanished!

Everyone was astonished. Only Gong Shuxu and a few others knew that Chen Gu had directly stored the items in his Dimensional Prison Ring.

Charles and the others were still unaware that Chen Gu possessed such a "treasure."

The followers and bandits were even more astounded. Chen Gu continued to faithfully play his role as a divine messenger. "Our God has already taken away the ill-gotten wealth."

The bandits were ecstatic. They knelt and kowtowed, constantly praising Our God.

Inside the Dimensional Cage, Combat Rooster was fast asleep and snoring. It hadn't been out to play for several days and was feeling incredibly restless.

Suddenly, some "metal" objects rained down, striking it on the head. Combat Rooster awoke with a jolt. It looked around but didn't see its master. Then, it sniffed the "metal" objects and took a bite.

Then, it spat them out. PFFT! So soft, not tasty at all.

After that, it glanced disdainfully at the "metal" objects, shifted its massive body, and lay down to the side to continue sleeping.

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That night, everyone spent it in the cave.

The bandits' lair was well-stocked with many provisions, such as various non-perishable foods like dried meat and rice.

It turned out Cyclops was quite a good cook. He chopped up several types of dried meat, mixed them with rice, and simmered a pot of meat congee. The combination of these dried meats was surprisingly delicious.

The followers' appetites were whetted, and everyone ate heartily.

As for Chen Gu... he found ordinary food increasingly unappetizing. He merely took a few bites before setting his bowl down.

After dinner, while the others rested, Chen Gu called Cyclops over. Looking at the dual pistols holstered at Cyclops's waist, he asked, "Is your spiritual power very strong?"

If anyone had mentioned this before, Cyclops would certainly have been immensely proud and boasted about it. Now, however, he had become exceptionally humble. "It is but a trifling skill, insignificant before the glory of Our God."

He unholstered the dual pistols from his waist and presented them to the Prophet with both hands. "These came from a powerful city-state. It is said they were crafted by the most skilled artisan in this world—weapons that only royalty are qualified to use.

"One can directly form ammunition using spiritual power. The more spiritual power injected, the greater the destructive force. If one's spiritual power is sufficiently strong, it could theoretically unleash power comparable to a city's defensive cannons."

Chen Gu took them and examined them, and could not help but inwardly admire. Such weapons could already be considered 'artifacts.' Although they were still far from the level of 'numbered' items, this doesn't necessarily mean they represented the highest standard of this world. Yet, the Confederation was completely unaware of such weapons. Undoubtedly, the royal families had hidden this secret from them. Their motives are certainly suspect.

He asked, "How long have these weapons been around?"

Cyclops shook his head. "I don't know. I've had these two weapons for over twenty years..." He wore a nostalgic expression as he suddenly asked, "Prophet, may I tell you my story?"

Chen Gu nodded. "Of course. As a chosen of Our God, I am happy to listen to the confessions of the lambs."

Cyclops began slowly, "I was originally a wildling. Our village was hidden in remote mountains and forests. My ancestors grew their own food and forged their own tools, living self-sufficiently. Although life wasn't prosperous, it was stable and dignified."

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"When I was twelve, the army of Zhandeshi City-State attacked our village. They wielded powerful weapons called matchlocks, and we had no means to resist. Many people were killed, and the rest were captured and forced to work in the mines.

"My family was relatively fortunate; my grandfather, father, mother, and two sisters weren't killed in the battle. We all labored together in the mines. The work was even harder than farming, yet our food was much worse.

"My grandfather was old and soon died from exhaustion.

"My parents were heartbroken and furious but powerless to resist. When I was sixteen, the City Lord decided to hold a grand banquet, and all the women in the city were conscripted as serving maids. My two sisters were among them.

"When the banquet ended, they returned and cried all night. I asked them what was wrong, but they refused to tell me. Two years later, both my sisters married. Their husbands were ordinary miners, but they loved each other dearly and supported one another through their challenging lives.

"Life was already incredibly difficult, but the greedy City Lord kept increasing the daily work quotas, so we received less and less food.

"A year later, both of my sisters had children. Their husbands worked themselves to the bone, but they could still barely feed the children.

"But the City Lord raised the work quota yet again. This time, even my brothers-in-law could barely meet it, leaving them unable to earn enough food to provide for the children.

"My two sisters saved their own rations for their children, wanting only to see them grow up. They also had to work in the mines every day, often so hungry they could barely see straight. My eldest sister fainted while carrying ore, and an ox cart following behind ran over her.

"During a mine collapse, my second brother-in-law, weakened by hunger and lacking strength, ultimately couldn't escape...

"Six members from two families—all dead within three short months.

"My parents were devastated. My mother passed away soon after, following my sisters. My father became utterly dejected. He made a mistake at work and was whipped by an overseer. By the time I reached him, his back was a bloody pulp, and he lay on the ground, unable to move.

"At that moment, I was utterly consumed by rage. It felt as if some force inside my head was about to erupt—and then it did. My spiritual power burst forth, killing more than a dozen overseers and a squad of mine guards who rushed over. I then carried my father and fled.

"But in the end, my father didn't survive. When he passed, his eyes were calm, filled with a sense of peaceful release.

"I tried many times to sneak into the city and kill the City Lord for revenge, but I failed every time. They also had many powerful warriors whose spiritual power surpassed mine. During my last attempt, I was gravely wounded and nearly died in the city. After that, I fled Zhandeshi City-State and came here, eventually becoming a bandit.

"This pair of weapons—I seized them during my last attempt at revenge. This eye... I lost it then too."

Cyclops finished his story in a calm voice. His conversion had brought him inner peace, yet even in this tranquil recounting, the endless suffering of the world's impoverished masses was still evident.

Chen Gu wasn't a saint, but in that moment, he felt a flicker of indecision. Fortunately, he quickly steadied himself. What he was currently doing, though born from a different motivation, could still change the fate of these people if he succeeded.

Indeed, as long as the Confederation needed to protect its fundamental interests on this planet, these lower-class citizens could not escape their fate of exploitation.

But even as chives, there were distinctions; he could make their lives a bit better.

Chen Gu asked, "Based on your assessment, how would you rank your spiritual power within Zhandeshi City-State?"

He wanted to use this to gauge the general capabilities of the powerful individuals of this era.

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"They are very strong," the Cyclops said. "I couldn't even penetrate the inner layers of the castle. I was defeated again and again at the periphery. The last time, I almost charged to my death before I broke through the outer defenses, only to be defeated by a member of royalty in the inner layer. I feel that in the outer defenses, there are no fewer than twenty people at my level, and in the inner layer, at least ten are several times stronger than me."

Chen Gu nodded and gently patted the top of his head. "Don't worry, My God has already prepared a place for your family in His kingdom. Go and rest."

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What was supposed to be a three-day journey had been extended by two days due to the trip to and from the bandits' lair. Finally, on this day, they arrived sixty kilometers outside the city of Potsdam. It would be just over half a day's travel to reach the city. But suddenly, lightning flashed and thunder roared. The sky became covered with dark clouds, and before long, heavy rain poured down. This season was the rainy season; during their previous days of travel, they had frequently encountered drizzling rain.

The followers looked up at the sky. Old Charles wiped the rainwater from his face and said to Chen Gu, "Prophet, I'm afraid this rain won't stop anytime soon." For Chen Gu and his fellow Professionals, progressing in the rain was not an issue, but it was for the rest of the followers.

He gestured lightly with his hand. "Let's find a place to shelter from the rain."

They were not far from the main city, so there were considerably more traveling merchants and passersby. When they found a large cave to shelter from the rain, several groups of people were already inside taking refuge. Among them were two caravans; the rest were ordinary travelers.

These people were very wary when they saw Chen Gu's group, as they were numerous, and the Cyclops and his companions clearly didn't look like good people. Chen Gu restrained his men, "Don't disturb the others."

They occupied a space and started fires to dry their clothes. But the rain truly poured without end. They waited for most of the day, but not only did it not stop, it continued to pour relentlessly, showing no sign of letting up. Outside the cave, streams had formed on the surrounding hillsides, flowing with a RUSHING sound.

As night fell, although there were campfires, all the ordinary people in the cave were cold and hungry. The travelers and the caravans didn't have much food left. They had timed their journey carefully, so seeing that they were close to their destination, their food supplies were naturally almost depleted. They had eaten at noon, so there wasn't much left for the evening.

Chen Gu saw that everyone was famished. He thought for a moment before stepping forward. Standing before the bonfire, his figure seemed to be bathed in a golden light. "My God says, 'I grant you food.'"

Then, with a great RATTLE, an abundance of food spilled from the Dimensional Prison Ring!

The followers were no longer as shocked by the miracles the Prophet performed. They felt only devotion and gratitude. They knelt neatly on the ground, kowtowing continuously and murmuring praises to the "Great True God," then took the food in an orderly manner and went to cook.

But the travelers and members of the caravans stared, dumbfounded. What was happening? Could food appear out of thin air? These... who on earth were these people?

However, one of the travelers hesitated for a moment before stepping forward and asking, "Fellow believer?"

The two quickly confirmed each other's identities. The traveler couldn't help but ask, "What... what just happened?"

The follower told the traveler, "That was a miracle performed by the Prophet."

"The Prophet?" This believer had never heard that the "Great True God" had a prophet walking the earth.

"The Prophet is our God's chosen one, the messenger sent by our God to lead us from darkness to light. His presence proves that our God is omnipotent!" the follower proclaimed. He then went on to describe the various miracles the Prophet had performed for the traveler.

The traveler listened in astonishment. Instinctively, he felt it was impossible. But then he recalled the food Chen Gu had just "bestowed" out of thin air, and he couldn't help but believe.

The follower shook his head. "Your faith in our God is not strong enough. I cannot introduce you to the Prophet."

The traveler was immediately filled with regret and knelt. "I too am willing to give up everything to follow the Prophet!"

But the follower said, "You are not yet worthy."

Their conversation caught Chen Gu's attention. He inquired, "What's wrong?"

The follower reported truthfully, emphasizing, "His faith cannot compare to ours." But Chen Gu thought for a moment. With a wave of his hand, more food appeared out of thin air. "My God says, 'All living beings in the world are My lambs. Bestow this food upon them.'"

The followers quickly agreed and distributed this food to the others. The travelers thanked them profusely and took the opportunity to learn more about the "Great True God." The caravans, however, remained cautious. They waited until all the followers had eaten before they started consuming the food in batches. After the first group ate without any issues, the others continued to eat.

The followers felt somewhat indignant about this, but Chen Gu didn't mind at all. He simply provided the food and didn't concern himself with anything else.

The rain persisted until early morning. It only began to lessen by mid-morning before finally stopping. As soon as the rain lightened, the caravans eagerly departed. After the rain stopped, the travelers followed Chen Gu and his group out of the cave.

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But after they had walked more than ten kilometers, some merchant caravans turned back, approaching them dejectedly. "Yesterday's heavy rain destroyed the bridge," they said. "We won't be able to cross for quite some time."

The essential route to the city of Potsdam was bisected by a large river named the Reverse Lock River. The river was wide, and its current usually gentle. However, when the rainy season brought heavy thunderstorms, the water level would surge dramatically. A wooden bridge, the only one nearby leading to the other bank, had been swept away the previous night.

"Who knows how many months it'll take if we expect those royals to fix the bridge. We should return to the cave to settle down first, then look for a boat to cross the river," the merchants planned.

Hearing this news, the other travelers were disheartened. They were more anxious than the merchants; after all, the merchants only stood to lose money, whereas being trapped here could mean starving to death for the travelers.

However, the followers looked calmly at Chen Gu. "Prophet, what shall we do?"

Chen Gu smiled faintly. "Our God commands us to go to Potsdam, so we will follow His arrangements. As long as our faith is firm, we can surely make this journey. We will reach Potsdam on time!"

The merchants shook their heads repeatedly. Is this man out of his mind? they thought. The flood has blocked the road, the bridge is broken, and there are no ferries. What, is he going to fly over?

But the followers unwaveringly continued behind Chen Gu, heading towards the Reverse Lock River.

Old Charles had no fondness for the merchants but pitied the other travelers. He said to those following behind, "Come with us. Our God will surely reveal His divine power and allow us to cross the river. If you follow us, you too can make it across."

"Nonsense," the merchants muttered, walking away without looking back.

The other travelers were somewhat perplexed. At that moment, one believer stepped forward and declared loudly, "I believe! Please, Prophet, allow us to follow behind."

Chen Gu had orchestrated all this for this very reason: to "reveal the miracle" for more people to see. Thus, he nodded slightly.

The believer was overjoyed and hurried to keep up. The other travelers considered it. Following along wouldn't cost us anything, they thought. At worst, it's a wasted trip. But what if we really can get across?

The group marched on, and it wasn't long before they reached the riverbank.

The river, usually only over ten meters wide, had swollen to forty meters wide. The murky, turbulent water churned ceaselessly, obscuring its depth. Anyone who dared wade through would likely be swept away.

The wooden bridge was gone. A few merchants remained on the bank; they had stayed behind to try their luck, hoping to find a ferry.

"You all should go back; it's impossible to cross," said these few merchants.

Chen Gu, however, stepped toward the raging river. "Follow me," he said to those behind him, "and the light of Our God will illuminate our path."

"Yes!" all his followers responded with unwavering conviction.

As Chen Gu was about to step into the river, the merchants watched in disbelief. These people must be fools, they thought.

However, the moment Chen Gu's foot touched the water, pieces of wood and stone suddenly rose from the river, providing a foothold beneath him! Then, as Chen Gu took his second step, more wood and stone surfaced, perfectly supporting him.

Thus, Chen Gu walked forward calmly, without even glancing at the roaring river beneath his feet, as if he truly believed with unwavering faith that God would let him cross. His followers, too, stepped one by one behind him, walking on this special "bridge"!

On the bank, the merchants were dumbstruck. What is happening? What did we just witness?!

When all the followers had set foot on this "bridge," the other travelers, overcome with joy, followed suit without hesitation.

Of all the people, only Boluo cursed under his breath. Why should I be the one to endure all the hardship and effort, only for that guy Chen Gu to take all the credit? Do you have any idea how difficult it is to conjure these pieces of wood and stone from the river, form a bridge, and make it strong enough to bear the weight of so many people? But since Chen Gu held a higher rank, Boluo could only swallow his anger, all the while scheming. Once my Energy Level rises, I'll definitely 'revolt'! I'll make Chen Gu do the work, and I'll be the one to show off!

The forty-meter distance, in reality, didn't take long to cross. Chen Gu quickly reached the opposite bank. Only then did the merchants snap out of their stupor and hurriedly try to push onto the bridge.

But as soon as one of them set foot on it, the wood and stones sank with a CRASH. The man plunged into the river, shouting in shock, and only barely scrambled out with the help of his companions, utterly humiliated.

Chen Gu shook his head gently from the opposite bank. "Those who do not believe in Our God cannot walk this path," he said.

The travelers who had followed, almost in that instant, became the most devout followers of the "Great True God"!

As the last traveler reached the bank, the "bridge" completely submerged into the river. The merchants on the other side were still speechless, struggling to believe what they had just seen. Immediately after, they broke out in a cold sweat. They had dared to openly doubt such a great deity!

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On the Potsdam side of the Reverse Lock River, a long stretch of the road had also been destroyed by the torrential rain. More than two hundred meters from the riverbank, on a slightly elevated earthen mound, a few simple wooden shacks had once stood, where merchants regularly sold food and beverages.

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The river had widened, and this spot was only about a hundred meters from the riverbank. Most of these wooden sheds had now collapsed, though half of one still stood, barely holding together.

Eusebius huddled under the wooden shed, idly picking lice off himself and grumbling about his tedious task. The post-rain sunshine was pleasant, yet his current assignment was a grueling one.

A few days ago, a "Prophet" had reportedly emerged from a small fort, and the masters in the main city took it very seriously. They had assigned him to keep watch here every day. If he saw the Prophet, he was to race back immediately to report so the city could prepare a welcome.

Those fools in the fort, they couldn't possibly believe there's a Prophet who can directly communicate with that ethereal, possibly non-existent Great True God, could they? Are there even any gods in this world? If gods truly existed, where were they when we were suffering? Joining a religion is just about huddling together for warmth, isn't it? We're all a bunch of helpless souls; only by sticking together can we avoid being bullied. Beliefs, shrines, churches—they're all just names. Those idiots better not get tricked into believing in things that don't exist...

Eusebius had been an orphan since childhood and had endured many hardships to survive. He was a practical man: he had joined the shrine because it offered him benefits. If he ever found it could no longer protect him, he would abandon it without a second thought.

The fact that he still referred to the Elders, Association Directors, Grand Directors, and the Chief Director in Potsdam as 'masters'—the same term he used for nobles—sufficiently demonstrated his attitude.

However, Eusebius had been quick-witted and capable since he was young. So, even though those 'masters' knew he wasn't a devout believer, they still entrusted him with many tasks.

Hmph, even among those 'masters,' how many truly believe the Great True God actually exists? The city has prepared a grand welcome ceremony, likely with ulterior motives, deliberately setting up this 'Prophet' to be humiliated. These 'masters' are all shrewd. The Prophet has many followers in the fort; they must expose him publicly, otherwise, those followers from the fort might stir up trouble.

Just as Eusebius was mulling over these things, filled with a smug satisfaction as if he had "seen through all truths," his lice-picking hand suddenly froze. His gaze fixed on the river, his mouth gradually fell agape, his jaw nearly unhinged in astonishment.

What am I seeing?! How... how did those people cross the river? The one in the lead... why is a natural bridge appearing out of thin air beneath his feet?!

It wasn't until Chen Gu had crossed the entire expanse of the river and stepped onto this bank that Eusebius jolted, a sudden realization dawning on him with the force of revelation: this was a divine miracle!

He furtively sized up Chen Gu, a guess forming in his heart—This is the Prophet!—but in that instant, he felt as if the figure radiated myriad golden rays. Eusebius cried out, his eyes stinging, swelling, and instantly gushing tears!

Eusebius hastily bowed his head, utterly terrified, recalling a saying from the shrine: "Those who disrespectfully spy upon Our God shall surely suffer calamity!"

Chen Gu chuckled inwardly. So the power of a Radiation Missionary can be used like this too. This Best Actor truly is a natural performer! Look how masterfully I play the holy charlatan, enough to deceive the entire world.

Chen Gu walked at a leisurely pace. Inside the wooden shed, Eusebius was already trembling and had sunk to his knees. In that fleeting moment, he had transformed from a false believer into the most devout follower of the Great True God!

When Chen Gu and his people arrived at the wooden shed, Eusebius was kneeling by the roadside. He crawled forward and kissed the instep of Chen Gu's shoe.

Chen Gu: "..."

Time to change shoes again, he thought.

Eusebius's voice trembled with emotion. "Prophet! Eusebius, faithful servant of Our God, reverently welcomes Your Excellency's arrival in Potsdam! Your coming will surely spread the light of Our God across this benighted land!"

Chen Gu nodded faintly. "Rise."

Eusebius rose but remained deeply bowed, his demeanor exceedingly deferential. "His Excellency the Chief Director ordered me to await you here. A grand welcome ceremony has been prepared in the city. However, those false believers harbor malicious designs; they require the divine might of Our God to chasten them!"

Like beans tumbling from a bamboo tube, he spilled everything, selling out the Chief Director and the others...

Chen Gu's expression showed neither anger nor surprise. He merely said calmly, "Our God has already informed me of everything. You need not worry. Our God has arranged all, just as Our God preordained that you would witness this miracle here."

Eusebius instantly broke into a cold sweat and dropped to his knees once more, repeatedly confessing his sins.

Chen Gu waved a hand. "Go and report back to them."

Eusebius hastily assented and sprinted towards Potsdam.

Chen Gu's followers, having overheard Eusebius, became furious with the faithful in Potsdam. "They are all false believers!"

"Prophet, you must enact the punishment of Our God upon them!"

Chen Gu showed no reaction, his mind already on his mission.

The powerful figures in the city's shrine don't trust me, he mused. And someone in the city has even paid a full one thousand five hundred Gold Coins to have me assassinated en route.

This is a good thing. It seems the imperial family members supporting the heretical cults are beginning to show themselves. If I can catch one, I can uproot an entire network.

Chapter 488: The Path of Glory (2)

Potsdam City was far grander and more imposing than the fortress. Tall, spired arrow towers stood every one hundred fifty meters along its massive stone walls.

The city was built on a vast plain. The land outside its walls, once fertile farmland, now lay completely desolate. Overgrown with weeds and shrubbery, it had become a breeding ground for all manner of wild beasts and venomous insects.

At the city gates and on the walls, the guards were well-equipped. However, their vigilance wasn't directed at assaults from other city-states but rather at the prospect of the miners rebelling.

Eusebius dashed toward the city, shouting, "The Prophet has arrived," before swiftly rushing inside.

In a mansion near the inner fortress, where the royalty resided, a group of elderly, elegantly dressed figures sat in a circle, a table laden with various fruits and delicacies in the center.

Hearing Eusebius's report, they didn't wait for his fervent praise of the Prophet's miracles and instead waved him away.

The rulers of the city-states' temples each harbored their own thoughts and began to discuss the matter.

The elder sitting at the head of the table had a gloomy look in his eyes, seething with irritation. How could those idiots from Cyclops mess this up? he wondered furiously. They were paid one thousand five hundred Gold Coins, and yet they allowed these people to arrive alive at Potsdam City! After this matter is settled, I'll immediately dispatch the city defense forces to eradicate those bandits. I must kill all these failures and retrieve my Gold Coins!

Meanwhile, Joe Igor Winston, the President of the Potsdam City Temple, spoke slowly, "Now that the Prophet has arrived, let us proceed with the plan we arranged earlier and go forth together to welcome him."

The other Temple rulers also rose, each with their own agendas, following the President to greet the arrival.

In reality, the leadership of the Potsdam City Temple largely agreed: they had to publicly expose this "false prophet," otherwise, it would be difficult to explain things to the fortress. As for the possibility that a public exposé might bring shame upon the entire Church... well, that could no longer be their primary concern. They had to choose the lesser of two evils.

Besides, in this world, there was no other sect competing with them for believers—sacrificing eight thousand of their own to kill ten thousand of the enemy was something they were prepared to do.

Since it was broad daylight and most believers had to go down into the mines to work, the grand welcome could only be arranged for about three or four thousand people.

These individuals were the "trusted aides" of the various altar masters who managed to get leave—sneaking away from certain royals' surveillance—then converging outside the city—and suddenly forming a welcoming aisle for the Prophet!

When Chen Gu arrived at the outskirts of Potsdam City, Joe Igor greeted him with a face brimming with smiles and enthusiastic warmth, shaking Chen Gu's hands vigorously, "Day and night we've waited, and finally we have welcomed the Prophet!"

However, Charles and the others behind Chen Gu exchanged furious looks. This is His Excellency the Prophet, not some common guest in your home! Such a display, while 'enthusiastic,' shows little respect for the one who represents our God!

Chen Gu lightly withdrew his hand and looked at the thousands of believers around him. How could he not know what Joe Igor and his cohort were thinking?

He calmly said, "The glory of our God shines upon the people!"

In this world's rainy season, the weather was ever-changing. When Eusebius was catching lice by the river, the sun shone brightly after a shower.

But by the time Chen Gu reached Potsdam City, dark clouds covered the sky overhead, indicating another impending downpour.

However, as soon as Chen Gu uttered those words, the dense clouds in the sky seemed to be parted by an invisible hand!

Dark clouds remained all around, but right above the heads of the people gathered to welcome the Prophet, an "opening in the clouds" appeared, revealing the azure sky. Golden sunlight poured through this opening, bathing the congregation below!

In an instant, thousands were dumbfounded. They shared the inherent pride of "main city dwellers," and like their leaders, they had internally scorned the Prophet from a remote fortress.

Today's so-called welcoming aisle had also been arranged with some prompting from their altar masters. The intent was for this audacious impostor to make a fool of himself in public, an event they would then eagerly publicize.

But unexpectedly, upon this first meeting, a "miracle" was displayed!

Among them, there were those like Eusebius who worshipped the great and true God for the sake of profit; however, most of these lower-level believers were sincere in their faith.

Regardless of their prior prejudices, the moment they truly witnessed a miracle, their perspectives shifted instantly. Their hearts filled with trepidation, and their faith in our God became even more steadfast and devout.

Joe Igor and the others were likewise agape. Could it be... true? Or was it merely a coincidence?

This time, it was Silver Eagle Charles who was cursing silently in the background.

I am but a Second Energy Level Starwind Centurion! he fumed. Exerting all his strength from a distance of several kilometers, he had dispelled the clouds overhead, yet this grand and beautiful demonstration is now Chen Gu's to claim. I, Silver Eagle, was also once the show-off Prince of Wuzhaoyin City, am I not?

Chapter 489: The City-State Royalty

Charles was secretly gasping for breath, but Chen Gu wasn't finished yet. He looked at Joe Igor and the others, speaking again, "My God will also warn those with treacherous hearts; if their souls are not pure, the mortal world itself is a glacial hell!"

The Glacier Spirit, Joseph, was always prepared, just waiting for this command. He had to coordinate with Big Brother to put on a show! He wasn't like those rebels, Boluo and Charles! From the moment he joined the Bureau of Mystic Security, he'd been Big Brother Chen's loyal little brother! One word from Big Brother, and this little brother would go through fire and flood, no questions asked! Even if Big Brother had abandoned him once, hadn't Big Brother later brought his little brother along when he ascended, chickens, dogs, and all! For unwavering loyalty, count on Joseph!

Beneath the feet of Joe Igor and the others, a layer of ice rapidly formed!

Although Joseph, following his big brother's instructions, didn't freeze them completely, a chill still rose from the soles of their feet, causing these powerful figures from the headquarters to shiver uncontrollably. The ice underfoot was also treacherous, and several people slipped, sending them sprawling to the ground.

The long-headed people, with their large craniums, had unstable centers of gravity. This sudden fall made them shriek in agony. These powerful figures were not young; their tailbones were likely cracked from the fall.

Compared to the physical pain, their hearts were filled with even greater fear.

If the earlier sunshine piercing the clouds could have been a coincidence, this "glacial hell" absolutely could not. The rainy season was muggy; for ice to suddenly appear in such temperatures...

The surrounding believers had also heard the Prophet's words. They now looked at these usually high-and-mighty clergy with eyes full of distrust!

As for Chen Gu, after aptly performing his charlatan's grand trick of "words becoming reality" twice, he paid Joe Igor and the others no further mind. He walked leisurely through the path cleared by the believers, heading towards the inner city.

The believers were actually the first to react. They prostrated themselves en masse, their mixed prayers, praises, and confessions thundering like the rumble before a downpour.

As these "thunderous sounds" resonated, several lightning bolts streaked across the sky, and heavy rain began to pour. Yet, the area bathed in "sunshine," where the believers were gathered, remained completely dry.

Joe Igor and his group only snapped back to their senses after Chen Gu had walked several dozen meters away. Aided by their confidants, they carefully navigated the icy ground and then hurried after him. This time, however, their earlier "enthusiasm" was gone. Instead, they followed cautiously behind Chen Gu, heads bowed, treading carefully. Old Charles and the others sneered inwardly. Now you see the Prophet's power, don't you? A bunch of foolish false believers!

Only when they reached the city gate did Joe Igor dare to approach and ask, "Prophet, shall we visit the shrine first?"

Chen Gu nodded. "Lead the way."

"Yes." Joe Igor scrambled to the front to lead, sweat already beading on his temples. As he walked, his mind raced. He was still unsure how to handle the current predicament. The only thing he knew for sure was that the plans laid in the shrine to discredit the Prophet could no longer be executed.

He shot a look at a confidant, who then dropped a few paces behind. Once sure no one was watching, the confidant immediately bolted, taking a shortcut back to the shrine to dismantle those arrangements.

The old man who had secretly hired Cyclops and his men to assassinate Chen Gu was named Tanbudo Augustine. Standing on the ice, he felt not a shred of repentance, only a deepening hatred.

After Chen Gu entered the city, Tanbudo turned to instruct his subordinates, "Disperse the believers."

But his orders were futile. The believers ignored the clergy's attempts at persuasion. Thousands of them spontaneously followed Chen Gu, even jostling to be at the very front, eager to walk in the footprints he left behind—as if such contact could bring them closer to "Our God." They had descended into a state of fervent fanaticism.

Tanbudo glanced back, nearly apoplectic with rage. A bunch of ignorant fools! he cursed inwardly.

「The city of Potsdam did indeed have a "shrine"; the Citadel did not.」

The faith in the "Great True God" was, after all, still spreading in secret, making it unfeasible to openly construct shrines everywhere. In reality, however, the royal families either turned a blind eye to this cult or had their own ulterior motives. As long as it didn't interfere with mining operations or their pursuit of wealth and pleasure, they had no intention of suppressing it. Doesn't suppression cost money, after all?

The shrine within the main city was quite large. Besides a main hall, two or three stories high, which served a function similar to a church, there were dozens of ancillary stone buildings, all sturdily built and aesthetically pleasing. Constructing a shrine right under the noses of Potsdam's royalty also suggested that the city's nobles were indeed secretly colluding with the church.

The confidant rushed back, sending the shrine into a flurry of activity as they hastily removed the previously prepared "arrangements," lest they embarrass themselves before the Prophet.

When Chen Gu arrived, he prayed with such devoutness before the statue of the Great True God that his performance deserved an Oscar for piety!

The shrine authorities trailing behind him, like Joe Igor and Tanbudo, witnessed with their own eyes how the statue, carved from ordinary wood, suddenly erupted with thousands of golden rays. It was as if this light was punishing their "impurity," making them feel intensely uncomfortable as they bathed in the radiance of Our God.

Chapter 490: The City-State Royalty

Chen Gu quietly wiped away a wound on his fingertip. Just now, he had used "Quantum Teleportation" to transfer a drop of blood from the wound into the divine statue, and then utilized the "Radiation Missionary" power to produce that intense radiation light.

Of course, Joe Igor and his companions were not going to feel comfortable.

After repeatedly being struck by "miracles," Joe Igor and the other clergy members were momentarily rid of any mischief-making thoughts. They honestly settled the Prophet and his entourage in the city, housing them within the sanctuary.

Subsequently, various welcoming events took place. Seeing that they had backed down, Chen Gu no longer "tormented" them.

It wasn't until evening that Joe Igor and the others, trembling with fear, excused themselves, allowing Chen Gu some peace and quiet.

He called over Charles and the others and solemnly said, "Our God needs you to share His concerns."

The few instantly straightened up, as if injected with a stimulant, their eyes firm, their demeanors staunch, ready to face any difficulty without hesitation!

There was no need for grandiose statements to manifest their loyalty; their journey here, following the Prophet, had already said it all.

Chen Gu was deeply worried. "Before we came here, our God had already given us a warning."

"But I never expected that the grand city-state's main society would be controlled by a group of false believers!"

"I need to hear the true voices of the grassroots followers. If you have relatives and old friends in the main city, go and talk to them. I want to know the true situation of Bochita City's religion."

"This is a trial given to us by our God!"

...

By the afternoon of the next day, Charles and the others started to bring people back, one after another.

However, there were no surprises. The social status of Charles and his group was too low, and the ones they brought back were all true grassroots believers... not even a single Altar Master was among them.

When Chen Gu met these people, they were excited and extraordinarily devout. But when asked about the sanctuary's affairs, they could only speak of daily prayers and mutual aid, knowing nothing about the clergy hierarchy.

It wasn't until evening that a follower, who had been gone all day, suddenly returned. He was a spy Grand Leader Eric had placed by Chen Gu's side. However, along the way, he had already been won over by Chen Gu.

"Your Excellency Prophet, I have brought someone. He's a friend of Grand Leader Eric in the main city, an Altar Master."

So, this is Eric's man, Chen Gu immediately understood. He certainly has a long reach. Still, it's only an Altar Master. This suggests that while Eric is ambitious, his plans aren't progressing smoothly.

"Please let him in."

"Yes."

The moment Altar Master Sadek entered, he prostrated sincerely at Chen Gu's feet, speaking excitedly and somewhat incoherently. It took Chen Gu a while to calm him down so he could communicate calmly and rationally.

"What do you think of the situation at the main city's sanctuary?" Chen Gu started with a general question.

Sadek immediately clenched his teeth in anger. "It's an absolute insult to the glory of our God!"

"These people lack foresight and have impure motives, especially those society leaders born into the royal family!"

A thought struck Chen Gu. Born into the royal family? "Who exactly?"

"Tanbudo Augustine, Lyle Augustine, and Michel Augustine!"

Chen Gu then asked, "Isn't the head of the main society from the royal family?"

"He is related to the royal family by marriage, but his family's influence is equally significant. They also have many members with strong spiritual power. Disregarding the military power held by the royal family, the might of the two families is likely evenly matched."

Some longheads awakened to spiritual power later and missed out on becoming part of the royal family, finding all the good territories already taken.

Among them, the unfortunate ones ended up as Cyclops, and the lucky—or rather, cunning—ones became nobles, such as the family of Joe Igor.

Chen Gu, frowning, asked, "Why do they believe in our God? Or perhaps... I should ask in a different way: How did they join the sanctuary?"

Sadek was even more indignant. "They are all a bunch of false believers; they only wish to use the glory of our God to secure benefits for themselves."

"Take Tanbudo Augustine, for example. He was defeated in the royal family's internal power struggle, losing many of his own interests, so he joined the sanctuary as a bargaining chip.

"Because our God can decide how much ore the miners extract. He used this condition to negotiate with other members of the royal family, guaranteeing the ore extraction amount, and in return, retrieved some of the interests he had already lost!"

"Other royals and nobles who joined the sanctuary largely had the same idea in mind."

Under fervent faith, Sadek spilled everything he knew, not realizing that he had betrayed his original master, Grand Leader Eric, who was also a noble.

"As for how they joined the sanctuary..." Sadek sighed deeply. "The royals and nobles are very cunning. They deceived us innocents. Initially, they appeared profoundly devout, like lost lambs seeking a stable spiritual haven.

"After we accepted them, they used their power to perform some favors for the sanctuary, seemingly minor but effective.

"Things that seemed like insurmountable challenges to us were actually mere trifles for them, easily resolved with just a few words.

"In this manner, they deceived us step by step, and their status within the sanctuary quickly rose.

"Then, those who stood in their path to promotion always died or disappeared mysteriously. Soon, they controlled the entire sanctuary. By the time we realized what was happening, it was already too late..."