

The Gods 115

Chapter 115: So This Is the “Far Dusk” of Far Dusk Town?

Cheng Shi returned to the bar and finally struck up a conversation with the experienced inmate from the dungeon.

However, after exchanging a few words, his confusion only deepened.

This inmate, who had been pardoned, had been assigned a new tour assistant by the Traveler’s Office, and the two of them had already performed the gifting ceremony.

He had left another child in Far Dusk Town.

Just yesterday, he was imprisoned for malicious gifting, yet today he’s not only pardoned but able to perform the ritual again?

What in the world does this so-called special decree mean?

Are they in a hurry to have babies?

Could it be that the death toll of the blasphemers is so high that the town is trying to replenish its population in a planned manner?

It sounded somewhat reasonable, but the urgency of such planning seemed off.

Wouldn’t constantly changing decrees like this stir up unrest among the people?

As Cheng Shi’s thoughts became tangled, the ranger, Li Bola, returned.

She came back with a crucial lead.

“Guess where I went?” she asked, dusting herself off after her return.

Cheng Shi looked at her, trying to guess, “Well, it’s easy enough to inquire about the special decree. Since you know the town has reset the travelers’ gifting rights, you must have wondered if they were trying to replenish the population. So, did you investigate the town’s population?”

Li Bola had barely taken a sip of her drink before she set it down, looking at him in surprise.

“You’re sure you’re not a hunter?”

Cheng Shi cast a simple energizing spell on Li Bola, wiping away her fatigue.

“Night is about to fall. If you don’t share your findings soon, I’ll have to go cheer for Hu Xuan instead.”

“... You’re not wrong. I went to Far Dusk Town’s Administrative Office to look into the population data, but unfortunately, I didn’t find anything there.

However, when I returned to the Traveler’s Office, I found the town’s population statistics in their archives. Alongside it was a record of the number of travelers.

Now guess what I discovered.”

“The town’s population hasn’t changed?” Cheng Shi casually threw out a guess.

He didn’t expect Li Bola’s face to turn dark in response.

“Have you already seen the data? When? Why didn’t you say anything?”

Cheng Shi, you’re wasting my time.”

“.....”

Wait, seriously?

Cheng Shi scratched his head, unsure how to explain. I really just guessed!

Seeing the awkward look on Cheng Shi's face, Li Bola realized he had probably just gotten lucky with his guess.

But that didn't make her feel any better. The feeling of working hard all day only to have a colleague blindly guess the answer was frustrating.

Her face darkened further as she nodded.

"Yes and no.

The town's population has remained remarkably stable, but it isn't entirely unchanged.

However, the fluctuations in population have been tightly controlled, with the number of residents never exceeding a deviation of more than 100 people.

Maintaining such precise population control in a town with tens of thousands of residents is practically impossible.

After all, you never know when someone might die or when new births will occur."

Before she could finish, Cheng Shi's expression grew serious as he interrupted.

"But Far Dusk Town is different. Their births are solely dependent on travelers, so by controlling the number of travelers, they can fully control the number of births.

I'm guessing the traveler data you found shows little fluctuation, right?"

Seeing Li Bola nod gravely, Cheng Shi continued.

"And as for their deaths? Ha, I suppose that's the so-called 'Punishment for Blasphemers'?"

"Exactly!

Remember the bodies we saw in Eternal Chapel? There were both young and old, but none of them were elderly.

At first, I didn't think much of it, but after seeing the population data, I went to investigate several households. That's when I realized we'd overlooked a crucial fact:

Far Dusk Town has almost no elderly residents!"

Cheng Shi's pupils contracted as the realization hit him. He finally understood what had been bothering him about this town all along.

Indeed, in all the time spent among the townspeople, there hadn't been any elderly residents.

The oldest were middle-aged men and women, still full of vigor and charm.

As for the reason...

It was clear now. Any resident nearing old age would die under the so-called "divine punishment," never getting the chance to grow old.

So, the whole "when the night crows sing their dirge" was a lie. The killer wasn't following the night crows to choose his victims—he had already picked them out in advance, and the night crows were merely his signposts!

Could he control animals?

“He’s controlling the town’s population and, at the same time, managing the quality of life. But why?” Cheng Shi wondered aloud.

“Why?”

Maybe we don’t need to think too hard about it. Hu Xuan might be able to find the answer for us.”

They both glanced out the window, where the fading light of the setting sun was disappearing behind the horizon.

“It’s time to go. Where’s the bard?”

No sooner had Li Bola asked than Qin Chaoqe appeared at the bar’s entrance.

Her gaze toward Cheng Shi wasn’t exactly friendly. Cheng Shi, ever flexible, flashed a sheepish smile.

“Got a bit carried away earlier... didn’t realize you fancy girls.”

“Get lost!”

“Alright, alright, I’m going.”

...

When Cheng Shi stood before Hu Xuan again, he noticed she had changed once more.

Her aura was now even more otherworldly, and she had grown even more beautiful.

One glance into her deep, enchanting eyes was enough to stir an irresistible impulse in anyone's heart—the desire to pin her beneath them.

Eww—

The power of [Life] was truly terrifying.

Cheng Shi's gaze sharpened. He had a hunch about what was going on.

“By the way, I knew your mother, and I even helped your grandmother with childbirth. So, what should you call me? Uncle? Or Grandpa?”

Hu Xuan smiled softly, her voice gentle as she responded:

“That depends on what role you'd like to play in our relationship.

Personally, I'm fine with either title.”

“.....”

It's impossible to out-banter someone who spouts nonsense with such a straight face.

It made Cheng Shi feel as though he wasn't crazy enough to keep up with her, which left him strangely frustrated.

And so, he quickly changed the subject.

“Why didn't you... ahem... ‘birth’ yourself a new version this time?”

Hu Xuan shook her head.

“I’ve already inherited everything from her. She no longer has the strength to nurture me.”

“Every word you say sounds perfectly reasonable, yet it gives me the creeps. What’s going on?”

Hu Xuan chuckled, ignoring Cheng Shi’s teasing, and addressed the group.

“The time has come. As promised, I will lead you to find the answer.”

Li Bola raised an eyebrow, voicing a suspicion that had been on everyone’s minds.

“Eternal Chapel?”

Hu Xuan smiled and nodded.

“Follow me.”

With that, she leapt onto the rooftops, moving gracefully toward the chapel.

Cheng Shi watched as Hu Xuan flew off on her own, his face darkening with frustration.

Oh, so flying makes you special, huh?

He turned to look at Qin Chaoge, only to be met with a cold glance. Without even a song to aid him, Qin Chaoge leaped into the air and followed Hu Xuan, swiftly disappearing from sight.

With no other option, Cheng Shi turned to Li Bola.

Unable to hold back her laughter, Li Bola transformed into a gust of wind, whisking Cheng Shi into the air.

“Whoa, whoa, whoa! Slow down, big sis! I’m gonna fall! Ah—faster, faster!”

“.....”

Being carried by the wind was kind of fun, but not something he’d want to do regularly.

It could definitely make you nauseous.

By the time they arrived, Cheng Shi’s face was pale from the experience.

Hu Xuan led them around Eternal Chapel, bypassing the main entrance and stopping at a secluded spot near the back. She closed her eyes and began to sense the surroundings for anything unusual.

A few minutes later, she opened her eyes with a smile, extending her hand toward an empty space in the air and murmuring softly:

“To conceive life, to nurture nature!”

A gentle aura of nature spread out, enveloping everyone.

Moments later, they each felt a subtle change in their bodies.

A small, palm-sized lump appeared on each of their arms.

“???”

“Don’t be alarmed. I’ve merely used the ‘power of rebirth’ to place you under the ‘Law of Pregnancy.’ Only with this can you see the truth hidden behind the mist.”

As soon as she finished speaking, a shimmering, multicolored portal began to materialize on the back wall of Eternal Chapel.

Everyone stared in shock, momentarily speechless.

“This door... where does it lead?”

“It’s uncertain.

But I know He’s there... waiting for me.”

Hu Xuan smiled confidently and stepped forward, entering the portal without hesitation.

Cheng Shi’s face grew heavy as he observed the scene.

This was a door leading to the void!

He could feel the pull of fate from within it, meaning that this door likely held the key to the trial’s solution:

The fate node.

Who would’ve thought the fate node would be hidden within the void!?

In previous trials, the solution had always been tied to something tangible in the real world—a person, an object, a location.

But this time, the answer lay hidden in the void!

“If... and it’s a big if... we didn’t have Hu Xuan’s ‘power of rebirth,’ how would we have ever found this door?”

Cheng Shi asked the question, directing it at Li Bola and Qin Chaoge.

Both women realized the gravity of his point.

Not only had they found no clues about the door’s existence, but even just revealing it seemed like something out of the ordinary.

It was clear that the power Hu Xuan had used to unveil the door was tied to the authority she had stolen from [Eternal Sun].

And this meant that if the players had taken any step that had caused Hu Xuan to miss out on this power, they would have been left with no other option.

But given the misleading clues and the backtracking they had done, would they have had enough time?

They only had three days for this trial.

Li Bola realized the severity of the situation. With a complex expression, she remarked:

“This is fate.

It seems that fate is on our side this time.

At least we can be thankful that Hu Xuan isn’t the one who killed our teammate, and we’ve made it this far together.”

Speaking of the killer...

Where was Ji Ran?

Cheng Shi suddenly turned to Li Bola, only for her expression to darken as she shook her head.

“Before the door opened, the wind told me he was still at the inn.

But now...

He’s gone.”