

The Gods 167

Chapter 167: This Is Who We Are! This Is the Torchbearers!

Excellent, the scholar has sworn by [Truth], and the prisoner has shattered the chains of [Silence].

The heart-to-heart meeting under the banner of [Deceit] was going quite smoothly.

Seeing Ji Yue and the prisoner being so sincere, Cheng Shi decided to reciprocate with sincerity himself.

He glanced around, “just to be sure” that there was no one else around, and then cautiously and carefully revealed the “secret” that required an oath as a guarantee.

“Torchbearers.”

The moment that word left his mouth, three out of the five people present instantly tensed up.

This reflexive reaction couldn't escape Ji Yue's notice. She glanced around with amusement, then fixated her eyes on Cheng Shi, waiting for him to continue.

Fang Shiqing's mind buzzed—part of her had anticipated this moment, but another part hadn't.

She stared blankly at Cheng Shi, wondering if the mask he held truly had the power to bind an oath and whether the two standing before them would actually uphold their promise not to reveal this secret.

She thought about a lot, and for a long time. But curiously, the thought of killing these two non-Torchbearer orderly individuals never crossed her mind.

Cheng Shi, however, paid no attention to the varied expressions of those around him and continued speaking.

There was a glimmer of hope in his eyes, and a determined smile on his face.

“I don’t know if any of you have ever considered what direction this world is heading in since the Gods descended and brought the game to us.

And what about humanity—what fate awaits us, the ones who have been taken as players?

In the millions of years since humanity’s inception, we have never faced anything as catastrophic as this.

While the [Faith Game] is called a ‘game,’ all of you are surely aware of the price of failure—and that price is death.

The entire world is trapped in this ‘Colosseum of Gods,’ and aside from following Their will, there seems to be no other choice.

No matter who you are—young or old, strong or weak—everyone is struggling. But is this really what we want?

No, it’s not!

This is what They want, and we have no means to refuse.

But what if we could refuse?

When I reached 1200 points, I saw a world filled with despair.

When I reached 1600 points, I discovered that within the [Faith Game], there is still a glimmer of hope.

When I reached 2000 points, I felt that a corner of the Gods’ secret had finally been revealed.

And when I reached 2400 points, I began to wonder... Why can’t I be one of those seated on high?”

“.....”

“.....”

“.....”

Cheng Shi’s expression didn’t change at all as he spoke. He wore a slight smile as he said these words.

But to the others, his words were like a thunderclap from a clear sky!

Except for Ji Yue, everyone was dumbfounded.

The Torchbearers were stunned—Cheng Shi’s words had nothing to do with the true essence of the Torchbearers.

The prisoner was also stunned—this organization didn’t sound like something a player of his rank could even consider joining.

Only Ji Yue remained composed, though internally, she was filled with fervent admiration for such a bold stance. It lit up her soul with wild approval!

The influence of [War]’s wildness and recklessness had reached its peak within her at that moment.

Not physically—but within her very soul.

A thousand spears echoed in resonance!

“You think I’m crazy?”

No, I’m not crazy—I’m extremely clear-headed.

This isn't some vague fantasy, nor is it a delusional dream.

Because...

He once told a certain player that humanity can become gods!"

"!!!!!!!"

"Clank—"

"Boom—"

"Clack, clack, clack—"

The Hunter stood frozen, the prisoner's chains slipped from his hands, the poet dropped her book, and the knight clenched his fists tightly.

Only the "calm" scholar remained motionless, but her gaze toward Cheng Shi was filled with the unmistakable light of greedy curiosity and frenzied approval.

"Yes, you heard me right—humans can become gods.

After learning this secret—the one the Gods wish to conceal most—the Torchbearers were born.

Born from the hands of that player, born at the very starting point of the path to godhood.

He has been tirelessly exploring every possible route to godhood, not because he wants to become a god himself, but because he believes that humanity should not be toyed with, enslaved, and mocked like this.

Even if our civilization isn't perfect, even if this world isn't noble, it's our world—so why should it become the playground of the Gods?

But what if...

What if a human were to sit upon the throne of the Gods?

Under 'His' protection, could humanity then have a new future?

A future where we are not mere pawns but masters of our own fate!

Now you understand why I've been so cautious, why I haven't dared to reveal this.

Because what we are opposing are the Gods themselves, and what we seek to replace are Them—the ones seated on high.

If our existence were discovered, we would face the wrath of the Gods, and there would be no future for us—only erasure and oblivion.

Some of you might think this is laughable.

You might think that even the most powerful players only have abilities granted by the Gods, so how could anyone possibly become a god?

But... how will we know if we don't try?

And I—we—are the ones walking this path to godhood, handpicked by him!

The Torch we carry is not one of mere survival—it is a Torch of hope for godhood.

We believe in him; we support him; we follow him.

We will stop at nothing to find the path to becoming gods, and at the most opportune moment, at the perfect juncture, we will push the most suitable candidate onto that 'divine throne'!

When the dream becomes reality, when that vision materializes—this world will be reborn.

This... is who we are.

This... is the Torchbearers.

This is the greatest secret I carry, and today, it is the most sincere part of my heart that I am sharing with all of you."

Cheng Shi smiled as he looked at Ji Yue, whose eyes sparkled with a strange light. He continued explaining:

"We are neither so noble nor so selfless.

Indeed, many of us agree with his vision. We fight for humanity's future, for freedom from slavery.

But many of our comrades fight for personal reasons: for their families, for their friends, for themselves, and for the bonds they hold dear.

So when we seek out companions, we never judge them by good or evil. But there is one quality they must possess:

The determination to resist all forms of oppression, and...

The understanding that the goal might not be achieved in their lifetime.

These three companions, the ones you've met from the supposed 'Necromancer's Guild,' were the ones I wanted to recruit.

I gave them a mask representing the Torchbearers and told them they could call on me whenever they needed help.

But I also told them that when we met again, they would have to give me an answer.

That is my secret, Scholar, Prisoner, and that is the sincerity with which I have revealed my intentions to you."

Cheng Shi's gaze slowly shifted to Fang Shiqing as he smiled and said:

"But let's set aside the matter at hand for now, my three friends. The time has come for you to give me your answer."

As soon as he finished speaking, a resolute and decisive voice rang out.

"I'll join!"

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