

## The Gods 17

### Chapter 17: Chat Channels: Regional, Faith, and Class

Every time a special trial ended, Cheng Shi would linger in the chat channels to gather information.

Most of the chat messages were chaotic venting and pointless complaints, with only a handful of valuable insights worth noticing.

However, whether he remembered any of it depended entirely on his mood.

He first opened the regional chat, which included players from the nearby streets. Yesterday, over 7,600 players had been online, but now there were only 6,400 left.

The chat channel only displayed the messages—it didn't show the ID of the person speaking, so no one could tell whether the speaker was alive or dead.

"[The Gods] have once again punished the atheists. A new divine kingdom is slowly taking shape, brothers and sisters. Join the divine kingdom and share in divine grace!"

"Feel the grace, embrace the greatness!"

"Everything is a gift from the Lord. All of us survivors should be grateful! Praise be to my Lord, praise be to the gods!"

These frenzied rantings were typical of the "Descenders," those who believed the gods had saved the world. Cheng Shi usually skipped over these messages.

Judging by the tone and wording, it probably wasn't from his neighbor across the way.

"Damn it, 1 billion dead! The world's going to hell! If the [Gods] want to save the world, why are they killing so many people? Grateful? Grateful, my ass."

“Pleasure Night Party! Location: 142 Ningmeng Apartment, Second Floor, Nanjiang Road. We’ve connected 7 rooms, huge space! 14 participants so far. Anyone looking to experience the thrill of surviving the apocalypse, join us! PS: Opposing faiths not welcome. No [Birth] followers accepted.”

“What did [Birth] ever do to you?”

“To the person above: You can make your own, no need to join in...”

“Room 1301, Nanjiang Road, 7th Floor. Little sister here, all alone, scared.”

“Don’t believe her! I live above 1301! Constant banging—total lunatic!”

“Looking for healing potion, A-rank or higher. Can exchange for a run through a class weapon trial. Urgently needed, thank you.”

Despite the massive number of deaths, the chat channels were as chaotic as ever.

Cheng Shi only paid attention to the request for the healing potion. Since the Faith Game didn’t allow private messaging, he had to reply in the public chat:

“Person looking for the potion, are you on Nanjiang Road or Muli Road?”

His message was quickly buried beneath a flood of other messages, but he caught sight of the person’s response.

“Muli Road, high floor.”

Cheng Shi raised an eyebrow. He was on Muli Road too—on the top floor.

“Tch, could it really be right across from me?”

Recalling the sight of his bloodied neighbor, Cheng Shi walked to the edge of the roof and called out, "Hey, are you the one asking for the potion?"

A dirty head popped out of the tent across the way, the person's face filled with surprise and suspicion. After hesitating, the person replied:

"How do you know it's me?"

Got it!

Cheng Shi smiled slightly. "Just a guess. I've got an A-rank Prosperity of Yesteryear, what do you think?"

The guy named Xie's eyes widened as he stared at Cheng Shi for a moment before replying seriously:

"You're at 2000 points?"

In his mind, no one below 2000 points would be willing to part with such a valuable potion.

Cheng Shi wasn't willing either, but he was more interested in what Xie had mentioned about running a dungeon trial for a weapon. He was in need of a reliable item for his next trial.

Most importantly, he still had plenty of Prosperity of Yesteryear left.

"No, I just picked it up by chance in a trial."

"..."

Looking at the 93 bottles of potion in his storage, Cheng Shi couldn't help but reminisce about the good old times of trial running with "that big shot."

In that particular Prosperity trial—meant to protect a pharmacist—the two of them had teamed up and killed the pharmacist early, looting the store and preventing the enemy from getting to him, thus ending the trial in an irrational and illegal manner.

Because of that, each teammate had lost 20 points.

But everyone had walked away with 120 bottles of Prosperity of Yesteryear.

Tch, what a small loss.

“What are you looking for? Do you need a weapon?” Xie asked, confused. “I’m not at 2000 points, so I might not be able to get the weapon you need—at most, A-rank.”

Cheng Shi found this odd. Running a weapon trial, especially for an A-rank weapon, was extremely dangerous. If Xie was injured, why wasn’t he healing up and resting instead of pushing himself?

Even if he healed himself now, wouldn’t he just get hurt again after the next trial?

Did he have a way to avoid getting injured during trials?

“You don’t seem too badly hurt. Is it really that urgent?” Cheng Shi asked.

Xie pressed his lips together, looking a bit downcast as he responded:

“It’s for Xu Lu. She’s not going to make it.”

“Who?”

It took Cheng Shi a moment to recall that Xu Lu was a girl living in an apartment on the lower floors of the neighboring building. He'd never met her personally, but he'd overheard others talking about her in the local chat.

Supposedly, she was a singer—one of the Bards.

“You two are...?”

“She just agreed to be with me... I can't just abandon her.”

Damn, love makes people blind, doesn't it, bro?

Cheng Shi could tell Xie was being sincere, but the problem was that Xu Lu definitely wasn't.

If her injuries were bad enough to require an A-rank healing potion, she'd already be dead. No way she'd still be around and asking for help in the chat.

Cheng Shi hesitated for a moment but decided to warn him anyway.

Xie seemed grateful for the advice but still insisted on getting the potion.

“Thanks, but I know how to judge a person's intentions. Just like I can tell you're not a follower of some evil god.”

“...”

“Actually, I shouldn't hide it from you. She's a Prophet. She foresaw danger in her next trial and wants to be prepared ahead of time.”

Cheng Shi blinked, momentarily stunned.

A Prophet, huh—a Fate Bard.

No wonder she had such a sly vibe to her.

Seeing that he couldn't dissuade Xie, Cheng Shi threw the potion over to him.

Xie caught it easily, looking visibly shocked.

“You're not afraid I'll just take your potion and run?”

Cheng Shi smiled casually. “I'd actually prefer that.”

Xie froze, clutching the bottle tightly before solemnly promising:

“Thank you! I'll deliver the potion first, then come back to discuss the weapon you need. I'll make sure to bring it for you! My name's Xie Yang!”

With that, he bowed deeply.

How dramatic.

Just as Cheng Shi was wondering how to respond, Xie's next actions left him baffled.

He watched as Xie hurried to the other side of the roof, grabbed a fishing rod, and started lowering the potion down with the line...

“Wait... she agreed to be with you but hasn't merged trial spaces with you?”

Xie turned back, explaining earnestly:

“Lulu is a sensitive person; she’s not ready to open up fully to me yet. But it’s fine—I can wait.”

“...”

Oh dear, I thought you were just a lovesick fool; turns out you’re a delusional one. You actually believe that?

Tch. Fate sure is a bitch.

Cheng Shi watched as Xie—like a devoted lapdog—lowered the potion down to Xu Lu. Clicking his tongue, he turned away and opened up other chat channels, continuing his search for useful information.

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[Faith Channel]

“I’ve invented a new drug, Dragon Essence Powder! Increases a warrior’s strength and stamina—perfect for frontline fighters. Too bad I can’t sell it to you guys, such a shame.”

“Saw a girl in a trial, she was gorgeous. Asked about her faith—turns out she worships [Memory]. She could recount her last boyfriend’s story down to the number of thrusts. Total buzzkill...”

“Btw, my regional chat is full of people whining. Was this trial really that hard? I tricked the NPCs so bad their own mothers wouldn’t recognize them—breezed through it.”

“Haha, bro, it’s one thing to trick us, but don’t trick yourself.”

“Have you noticed the smile on your mask widening? Is it just me, or is the mask grinning more the more people die?”

“No idea about that. All I know is that the [Fate] dice seem to have more faces than before. Ran into a 20-sided one today—bet he’s a [Chosen of Fate].”

Cheng Shi frowned, glancing at the die in his hand.

It was still the same six-faced bone die, unchanged.

The strangest thing was that the faith token for [Deceit] was supposed to be a mask with a fake smile. So what was up with this die then?

He wanted to ask if anyone else’s mask had turned into a die, but he didn’t dare.

The guinea pig always dies first—he was sure of that.

Forget it. One step at a time.

The Faith Channel was full of lies, so he switched to the class channel for something more reliable.

As soon as he entered, he saw someone asking for advice.

“Can someone tell me more about the A-rank potion Scorn of the Dead? Has anyone seen it?”

Cheng Shi paused for a moment and then chuckled.

Looks like that’s our flat-chested friend Nangong.

“What is that? What does it do?”

“Sounds like a [Death] potion. Does it keep you from dying?”

“Out of the 1,843 A-rank potions we’ve cataloged, I haven’t seen that one. Which rank do you get it from?”

“Damn, bro, you remember all that? Are you a [Memory] follower?”

“No, I got into a trial with generators and computers. Recording things got so much easier. I can even connect the PC to the chatroom now. The interface is a bit old-school, though.”

“...That’s a thing?”

“Yes, it’s a life-saving potion. I was saved by a big shot who gave it to me during a trial, but I haven’t paid back the favor. I’m trying to figure out what kind of potion would be of equal value.”

A-rank potions had varying values, but clearly, Nangong was trying to repay Cheng Shi’s kindness.

Cheng Shi was about to type, “Fate brought us together,” when a message popped up in the chat:

“I once found Disdain of the Dead, but I’ve been searching for a month and can’t find it again. Did someone named Cheng have it?”

A cold sweat broke out on Cheng Shi’s forehead. Crap, better stay low.

Fortunately, the chat was flooded with messages, and that one was quickly buried.

Seeing no follow-up, Cheng Shi let out a sigh of relief.

You can't walk by the river without getting your feet wet. From now on, I'll have to use a different name for that potion.

As he continued browsing the chat, in a luxurious apartment in another city, a woman soaking in a bathtub gently squeezed the wine glass in her hand.

"Scorn of the Dead? Disdain of the Dead?"

...

Cheng Shi, how much do you have that I don't know about?

You aren't... one of His followers, are you?

I'll remember your name."