

The Gods 26

Chapter 26: So, You're an Executioner

The fog still hadn't cleared, so thick it was impossible to see even a hand in front of your face.

Cheng Shi had only taken a few steps with Fang Shiqing in his arms when he heard Ah Ming's anxious voice calling out from ahead:

"Sister Fang! Brother Cheng! Where are you?"

Cheng Shi perked up his ears and listened carefully. The surrounding chatter had seemingly disappeared, and he was surprised by how quickly the little assassin had taken care of things.

In such a short span of time, he had already wiped them out.

Fortunately, the poor souls who had been slain weren't the memory cores.

"Over here," Cheng Shi called out, then crouched low, moving stealthily away from his original location.

Ah Ming followed the sound of his voice but, seeing no one, immediately grew alert. Just as he was about to leave, Cheng Shi grabbed his arm.

"Who's there?! Wait—Brother Cheng?"

"Yeah, I didn't want to risk you being replaced, so I had to test you. But, I have to say, assassin friend, you're pretty quick."

Ah Ming rubbed the back of his head, embarrassed. When he saw the unconscious Fang Shiqing in Cheng Shi's arms, he asked:

"What happened to Sister Fang?"

“Nothing serious, just a minor issue. I managed to save her. What about the others?”

“They’re probably back there. When I woke up, I spotted a few berserk dwarves. They attacked with killing intent, and I didn’t have enough space to retreat, so I had no choice but to fight back.

Luckily, they weren’t that tough. They just had some remnants of [Corruption]’s divine power.”

The dwarves had died, but the memory hadn’t collapsed, meaning they weren’t the memory cores.

Cheng Shi gave Ah Ming a thoughtful look.

“You’re not hurt?”

“Luckily, no.”

“Good, then let’s wait for the fog to clear. It shouldn’t last too long.”

“Okay. Do you need help?” Ah Ming offered, extending his hand to assist with carrying Fang Shiqing.

Cheng Shi smiled and politely declined.

The two of them sat in a corner and began chatting idly.

“How many enemies were there?”

“Six.”

“You took care of six that quickly? Impressive.” Cheng Shi didn’t hold back his praise, leaving Ah Ming a bit flustered.

“Well... I’m an assassin, and the fog works to my advantage.”

“True. But if you’re that fast, why did you take so long to join us at the circus in the second memory?”

With Fang Shiqing in his arms, Cheng Shi asked casually, as if making small talk.

The question caught Ah Ming off guard.

His expression stiffened momentarily, but before he could respond, Cheng Shi added nonchalantly:

“By the way, don’t you think it’s weird that Old Man Huang still hasn’t shown up?”

Ah Ming’s face darkened even further, and he mumbled hesitantly:

“Well, we don’t really need him, right? Maybe it’s better that he didn’t come.”

“You’re worried he might cause trouble too?”

“Yeah.”

Cheng Shi raised an eyebrow and smiled.

“So you know he’s a Discordant Bard? Oh, I get it now—you’re an Executioner.”

A Discordant Bard was a bard that followed [Chaos].

An Executioner was an assassin that followed [Order].

And [Order] and [Chaos] were sworn enemies, opposing faiths.

Ah Ming froze for a moment. His eyes flitted toward Cheng Shi, a sharp and irritated look flashing across his face, but it was quickly replaced by his usual awkward, bashful demeanor as he scratched his head, unsure of what to say.

The fog still lingered, obscuring his expressions, but Cheng Shi had already pieced it together.

“It’s fine,” Cheng Shi said, waving it off. “Opposed faiths are no big deal. An ancient scholar once said, ‘We didn’t create the opposition of faiths, so it’s not our burden to carry.’”

Cheng Shi chuckled lightly as he spoke, though his hand casually moved toward Fang Shiqing’s chest.

Ah Ming, with his heightened senses in the fog, noticed Cheng Shi’s hand moving toward Fang Shiqing’s... rather full chest, but he only furrowed his brow and said nothing.

Soon, the fog was filled with other voices:

“Sister Fang? Sister Fang, where are you?”

“Help, big shot! I’m scared!”

One voice trembling, the other flirtatious.

Clearly, nothing had gone wrong.

The two female voices immediately shattered the awkward tension between Cheng Shi and Ah Ming. Standing up, Cheng Shi dusted himself off and said cheerfully:

“Everyone’s here. Let’s regroup.”

And just as he spoke, the fog began to lift.

Ah Ming also stood and looked over, only to see Fang Shiqing, who had been in Cheng Shi's arms, already wide awake.

"Sister Fang, you're alright?"

"....."

A flicker of anger flashed in Fang Shiqing's eyes, but she quickly smiled and nodded.

"I'm fine, thanks to Cheng Shi. He saved me just in time."

Her words were kind, but the clenched teeth behind them exposed her true feelings.

She couldn't mention the Torchbearer situation in front of the others, so even though she was upset with Cheng Shi for how he had rejected her offer, she couldn't confront him now.

As a fighter hiding in the darkness, a Torchbearer had to be cautious. Any unexpected spark of light could reveal their movements and undo years of effort.

Cheng Shi clearly understood this, which is why he turned around and joked:

"Don't you still owe me a 'thank you?'"

"You..."

Fang Shiqing nearly snapped. She gritted her teeth, quickly composed herself, and then forced a smile.

“Thank you. I’ll remember this.”

“No worries, just lending a hand.”

Indeed, it was just “lending a hand”—a quick karate chop to the neck only requires one hand.

As the fog gradually dispersed, the two groups finally saw each other.

They moved toward each other, but halfway there, they saw the aftermath of a brutal slaughter.

Six dwarves lay on the ground, their heads severed, blood pooling around them, forming a faint image of a guillotine on the floor.

Had Cheng Shi not known that Ah Ming was an Executioner, he might not have recognized the significance of this symbol.

It was the signature move of the Executioners of the Grand Tribunal, who would draw the tool of execution using the blood of their victims.

However, the guillotine drawn here was crooked and clumsy, clearly the work of someone still getting the hang of it.

“Tsk, pretty ruthless.”

Xu Lu and Bai Ling shuddered at the sight, while Fang Shiqing simply gave Ah Ming a thoughtful look and said nothing.

“Where are we?” someone asked.

They were in a large room, with a row of beds lined up on one side, workbenches and tools on the other, and racks of clothes hanging in front of them. Behind them were several smaller, private rooms.

The room where Cheng Shi and Fang Shiqing had met was clearly one of those private rooms.

Fang Shiqing glanced at Cheng Shi, seeing that he was still pretending to be clueless about everything. She sighed and decided to move on, her brow furrowing as she thought aloud:

“It looks like a servant’s quarters, but it’s much larger than usual. This could house a dozen people. I’ve never seen a servant’s quarters this big. To be safe, we should change into these clothes before going out to avoid conflict with anyone outside.”

Everyone agreed without hesitation, changing into the clothes and following Fang Shiqing out of the room.

After ensuring the area was safe and encountering a few actual servants, they learned that they were indeed in a servant’s quarters.

And there was more than one.

Because this was the Duke of Brookes’ manor, and the duke was currently hosting a grand banquet.

“A banquet?”

The hypnotized servant answered excitedly:

“Yes! The duke has invited all the town’s nobles and plans to announce a new refugee law at the banquet. All refugees from Garthmelia will be expelled. There’ll be more food for us, and we won’t have to worry about jobs anymore!”

“So... the memory core from the last scene was a servant at the Duke’s manor?”

“Wait, you didn’t know? Yolke is the duke’s stableman,” Cheng Shi interjected helpfully.

Xu Lu frowned and muttered, “Why didn’t you mention this earlier?”

Cheng Shi blinked and asked, “Did you ask?”

“I…”

Xu Lu was speechless, her annoyance evident. She huffed and moved closer to Fang Shiqing.

“Why would dwarven refugees be at the duke’s manor?” Ah Ming quickly interrupted, steering the conversation away from the brewing tension.

“The duke wants to drive them out, and naturally, the refugees don’t want to be expelled. So their motive for being here is pretty obvious, isn’t it, Big Sis?” Cheng Shi said, turning to Fang Shiqing.

But Fang Shiqing was in no mood to entertain Cheng Shi’s commentary.

She had this gut feeling—she was certain that Cheng Shi wouldn’t reveal the secret about the Torchbearers, but she still couldn’t understand why he had so decisively rejected their offer.

Her S-rank talent, Resonance of the Heartstrings, did more than just let her hear the music of someone’s inner self. It also gave her a vague sense of their intentions and inclinations.

Cheng Shi’s inner voice had clearly leaned toward accepting the invitation, yet he still refused.

What was going on in his head? How could he go against his own instincts?

She didn’t understand, and there wasn’t time to figure it out.

So far, nearly five hours had passed, and they had about seven hours left. They still had several more memory layers to get through, and they had no idea how long those would take.

“Private estates are different from public areas. Any disruptions will quickly cause a commotion, especially in a duke’s manor.

We need proper identities. While being servants gives us some access, it won’t get us everywhere we need to go.

Everyone, spread out, see if you can find a new identity. We’ll meet back here in an hour.”

As she spoke, Fang Shiqing pointed to a small passageway.

“Remember, stay away from the servant’s quarters. We didn’t deal with the bodies, and if anyone finds them, it could trigger a chain reaction. The closer you are, the more likely you’ll be discovered. Now, let’s move. Good luck.”

The group quickly dispersed. Before leaving, Fang Shiqing shot one last glance at Cheng Shi.

But Cheng Shi wasn’t looking at her—he was looking at Ah Ming.

He watched as Ah Ming headed away from the servant’s quarters.

After waiting a while, until none of his teammates were in sight, Cheng Shi’s lips curled into a mischievous smile. He took his time and leisurely strolled back to where they had just come from.

Back to the place everyone was deliberately avoiding...

The servant’s quarters.