

The Gods 42

Chapter 42: The Town Under the Gaze of [Prosperity]

In trials, there is often a lot of background lore related to the [Gods], but very few opportunities to directly study objects or relics connected to them. This made the so-called 'Will of [Prosperity]' particularly intriguing to Cheng Shi.

In all honesty, he thought, this is a rare chance to study the [Gods].

No player would pass that up.

Eternal Bloom Town was much larger than Cheng Shi had anticipated. What he had initially expected to be a small settlement turned out to be more of a sprawling city.

Apartment buildings stood densely packed together, and manors and guildhalls were scattered throughout. It was a well-organized settlement of devout believers, its thriving nature something to marvel at.

It took Cheng Shi over an hour to walk to the town center.

Along the way, as he gathered information and pieced together what he'd learned, he finally understood what the innkeeper had been referring to.

And finally, he understood what they meant by the "Will of [Prosperity]."

At this moment, he stood in Eternal Bloom Square.

In the center of the square was an enormous, almost unbelievable "flower" in full bloom, radiating a soft, life-filled light that spread outwards.

Estimating quickly, Cheng Shi guessed it to be about three or four stories tall.

From afar, the flower appeared to be a stone sculpture. But upon closer inspection, he noticed that as soon as you focused on one of the petals, it would seem to come to life, transforming into a detailed, vibrant plant.

Each petal had its own unique texture and intricate veins. The delicate network of lines looked less like vessels for transporting nutrients and more like divine runes, intricately carved into the flower.

The “statue” was named “Blooming in Waiting of Withering.”

It was a sacred artifact. In player terminology from the [Faith Game], it would be considered an SSS-tier divine relic—essentially a semi-divine artifact.

Its rank was only below that of subordinate gods, but it lacked independent consciousness.

And indeed, this artifact housed the Will of [Prosperity].

Because wherever its light touched, prosperity would flourish endlessly—until the end of life itself.

In other words, theoretically, no one could die in Eternal Bloom Town before reaching the end of their natural lifespan!

Cheng Shi was awestruck by the divine artifact before him.

No wonder the trial’s title was “Which Path Leads to Death.” After all, in this place, death might not even be possible.

And with a seven-day time limit, there was no way they could wait for someone to reach the end of their natural lifespan.

Moreover, there was something else to consider!

If no one could die before their natural end, then as a priest...

Just as Cheng Shi was thinking this, he turned his head and saw that a woman had silently come to stand next to him.

Yunni had arrived, standing shoulder to shoulder with him.

Her voice, as always, was as captivating as it was unexpected.

“What’s the matter? Are you scared?”

“Scared of what?” Cheng Shi chuckled.

“Losing your job. He watches over this place, so there’s no death. They wouldn’t need a priest, would they?”

“You’ve tested it?”

“No, but I’m about to.”

With that, in a blink, Yunni drew a dagger and stabbed Cheng Shi directly in the heart.

Blood splattered, and a sharp pain shot through Cheng Shi’s chest.

Crap.

My poor heart. You’ve really been through it, haven’t you?

Despite the blood gushing from his chest, the pounding heart struggling from the blow, and the dizziness from blood loss, Cheng Shi remained standing and didn’t collapse.

He didn't pay attention to the "murderer" by his side, instead focusing completely on assessing his own condition.

It was a strange feeling.

A concentrated force of [Prosperity] was clashing with the deathly energy within his body, quickly erasing all traces of death.

Before long, Cheng Shi felt the wound on his heart healing.

His life was saved, but aside from the injury to his heart, the wound on his chest continued to bleed.

In other words, "Blooming in Waiting of Withering" indeed protected everyone in the town from death.

But while it could stop death, it couldn't heal injuries.

The injuries would persist within the body, with the body's natural healing ability just barely balancing things out.

It wouldn't be life-threatening, but it would leave the person in considerable pain.

Cheng Shi chuckled and applied a healing spell to his chest.

"Looks like they still need a priest after all."

Yunni nodded in agreement, then handed him the dagger.

Cheng Shi was a bit surprised, feeling that this [Oblivion] follower's thought process was a bit... peculiar.

“?”

His expression clearly conveyed his confusion.

Yunni waved her hand impatiently and said:

“I’m not stabbing you for free. Now it’s your turn.”

So that’s what she meant—she wanted them to take turns stabbing each other?

Cheng Shi laughed, taking the dagger from her and admiring its cold gleam.

“You sure?”

“Hurry up.”

With a nod, Cheng Shi stabbed the dagger into Yunni’s chest.

However, the angle of the stab was precise but odd. The blade slid in a few centimeters but didn’t quite reach her heart.

Cheng Shi raised an eyebrow in surprise. The cushioning in this area seemed a bit thicker than expected...

Yunni’s eyes widened in shock at first, but then her expression darkened, her voice turning cold.

“You enjoy that?”

Cheng Shi chuckled, released the dagger, and turned to leave.

As he walked away, he said:

“You see, what I like may not be what you like, and vice versa.

Nobody likes getting stabbed for no reason.

We’ve only shaken hands—don’t treat me like your test subject.

And don’t assume your so-called ‘fair exchange’ is actually fair. If the other person doesn’t consent, it’s not fairness at all.

So put away your dagger, assassin girl, or there will be more things you won’t like coming your way.”

Yunni felt the changes in her body as she silently pulled the dagger out of her chest.

Blood splattered onto the ground, only to disappear in the blink of an eye.

Looking down at the blood gushing from her chest, her expression became unreadable.

Meanwhile, amidst the crowd, a shirtless man cast a glance in their direction, his gaze full of contemplative thought.

...

Cheng Shi left Eternal Bloom Square, heading toward the Law Enforcement Bureau as his next destination.

He was very curious about the murder case that the inn’s guests had been so reluctant to discuss. After all, murder and [Death] seemed like a perfect match.

So much so that Cheng Shi couldn't help but wonder if the trial's clues were going to be this simple.

As a member of the Natural Alliance, Eternal Bloom Town's governance followed a similar system to that of the alliance.

However, rather than being a political party alliance, it was an alliance of functional departments.

Various departments, each responsible for different aspects of town life, worked together voluntarily, forming a simple parliamentary system where the heads of each department convened to discuss the town's development.

And the Law Enforcement Bureau was the most powerful of these departments.

It functioned as the town's court, prison, and police department all rolled into one.

The Bureau was located in the southeast corner of the square, taking up a significant amount of space. As Cheng Shi approached, he saw more and more uniformed law enforcers moving in and out of the building.

Faced with an unfamiliar enforcement body, Cheng Shi didn't approach them directly. Instead, he pretended to be a passerby, quietly eavesdropping on the conversations of the enforcers around him.

It didn't take long before he pieced together the details of the murder case from bits of scattered conversation.

Seven days ago, a jeweler in town had died suddenly.

Had this happened anywhere else, it might not have drawn much attention—just another murder-robbery case.

But it happened in Eternal Bloom Town, a place where no one was supposed to die except at the end of their natural life.

The residents of the town were immediately alarmed, and the Law Enforcement Bureau swiftly intervened to launch an investigation.

Strangely, the jeweler's body showed no signs of injury, other than an expression of extreme terror. It was as if he had died of fright.

This made the situation even more bizarre. No one should have been able to die under the protection of Blooming in Waiting of Withering, unless...

His death carried the will of another [God].

The town's autonomous council quickly realized the implications and filed a report with the Grand Tribunal, requesting assistance from followers of [Order].

However, while they were awaiting a response from the Tribunal, two more people died under the same mysterious circumstances.

All three victims had been found dead on the town's streets at night.

The sudden, successive deaths had thrown the entire town into a panic, casting a dark cloud of fear over every resident.

The council had no choice but to impose a temporary curfew.

And yesterday had been the first night of the curfew.

Despite this, yet another person—a drunken patron—was found collapsed just five meters outside the tavern.