

## The Gods 43

### Chapter 43: I'm Not Here to Do Charity

Cheng Shi furrowed his brow, piecing together the clues he had gathered. After a moment of contemplation, he ruled out the possibility that the killer was a follower of [Decay].

[Decay] and [Prosperity] were opposing faiths, but if a follower of [Decay] had killed someone in a place under [Prosperity]'s protection, the corpse would have shown signs of decay as a clear challenge to [Prosperity]. It would be a way for the follower to flaunt their faith and glorify their patron.

But the bodies had no visible injuries, which suggested that the killer was trying to create an atmosphere of fear.

For such a calculated killing, the killer was likely a follower of either [Corruption] or [Death].

Considering the killer's faith wasn't merely an academic exercise. It was crucial for solving the puzzle.

It was important to remember that [Death] and [Prosperity] were both part of the [Life] path. While their philosophies didn't align perfectly, they weren't diametrically opposed.

This much was clear from studying "Blooming in Waiting of Withering."

The artifact protected living beings up until the end of their natural lifespan, but when their time came, it allowed them to die.

After all, [Prosperity] was about maximizing one's potential during life, not about preventing death.

Ultimately, in the [Life] path, [Death] was the natural conclusion.

With that in mind, Cheng Shi began considering his options.

The trial of [Death] would ultimately require a sacrifice to honor the god, but who would that be?

Would they offer up a follower of [Corruption], who was creating these killings and warping the natural order of death in the town?

Or would they assist a follower of [Death] in carrying out their designs by killing a target of great interest to [Death]?

One option was to catch the killer.

The other was to help the killer.

These two paths were completely opposed to one another.

Choosing the wrong one could lead to irreparable consequences.

As Cheng Shi was deep in thought, not far from him, another player was also lost in contemplation.

Wei Guan, apparently, had figured out that the key to solving this mystery lay in the Law Enforcement Bureau. He had been lingering around the area for a while, waiting.

When Wei Guan saw more of their teammates arriving, he snorted in disdain and left.

Seeing Wei Guan leave, Cheng Shi chuckled to himself.

Followers of [Folly] always considered themselves too good to associate with others. Perhaps he had figured something out, or maybe he just hated the idea of collaborating on the same case as the rest of them.

With the relevant information gathered, Cheng Shi left the Law Enforcement Bureau and wandered around town for a while.

As the sun began to set, fewer people appeared on the streets, and the residents' faces grew more anxious. Finally, Cheng Shi made his way back to the inn at a leisurely pace.

By the time he arrived, the first floor of the inn was packed with people. The other four team members were already seated around a wooden table, waiting for him to return.

Cheng Shi greeted the group and sat down.

His gaze casually swept toward the staircase, where he noticed the ascetic monk standing silently in the shadows, his eyes locked on them. For a brief moment, Cheng Shi made eye contact with him.

Cheng Shi was startled, but then he smiled and nodded in greeting.

The monk's expression remained unchanged—neither happy nor sad—and his gaze never wavered.

What's with this guy? Doesn't he ever get tired of standing all the time?

Fang Jue saw that everyone had gathered and took charge.

"Let's start sharing intel. I'll summarize what I've learned today, and you all can fill in the gaps."

As expected of a Lawbringer—his report on Eternal Bloom Town's situation was thoroughly organized, down to the smallest details. It was so comprehensive that it felt less like the work of one person and more like a report compiled by a large team that had spent a month doing background research!

Cheng Shi was impressed by Fang Jue's capabilities.

If some of the managers at investment firms were this competent, I wouldn't have lost so much money before the [Gods] descended, he thought bitterly.

What a bunch of lazy bastards, taking money without doing any real work!

When Fang Jue finished, the others nodded in agreement, except for Wei Guan, who sneered in disdain.

“Unnecessary and redundant.”

Fang Jue merely shrugged, indicating that it was now their turn to share.

Du Xiguang, however, stood up for him, saying:

“Why don’t you share your brilliant insights, then?”

Wei Guan glanced at Du Xiguang with a mocking smile.

“Always looking for something for nothing, huh? A brain that never thinks will only grow duller. If you want answers from me, prove your worth first.”

“Pfft.”

Cheng Shi couldn’t help himself—he burst out laughing.

The sudden sound drew everyone’s attention.

Realizing all eyes were on him, including Wei Guan’s with a look of contempt, Cheng Shi quickly waved his hand.

“Sorry, couldn’t hold it in. It’s my first time seeing someone justify freeloading with such confidence. Quite an eye-opener.”

Though Cheng Shi’s comment was clearly aimed at mocking Wei Guan, the latter didn’t respond. Instead, the others seemed to regard Cheng Shi more favorably.

Sure enough, nothing brings people together like a shared disdain for an idiot.

As for Du Xiguang, he simply smiled. Whether he genuinely wanted to prove himself or was just tired of waiting for Wei Guan to respond, he decided to share his thoughts.

His analysis was the same as Cheng Shi's—essentially, there were two possible paths, and they had to choose one.

A simple and straightforward way to solve the trial, but also the most reliable.

Cheng Shi nodded in agreement, and the two exchanged a glance, quickly feeling a sense of camaraderie.

Funny, Cheng Shi thought. I never expected to find myself allied with a follower of [Memory].

Yunni didn't add any new information. Instead, she shared what she had observed during the autopsy.

"There's no morgue in the Law Enforcement Bureau. The bodies of the four victims are just being stored in the archives. I examined them thoroughly—there were no injuries on any of them.

It looks more like they were cursed than murdered."

"A curse from the underworld?" Cheng Shi asked, surprised.

Yunni shot him a sideways glance and irritably nodded.

"Yes, this kind of killing method usually originates from the underworld. It's likely that [Corruption] is spreading fear. Creating fear and feeding off terror is just another form of indulgence in desire."

Yunni's guess was bold, but it made sense.

However, each player had their own judgment, and such subjective speculation was difficult to get everyone to agree on.

Next, it was Cheng Shi's turn. He didn't hold anything back, quickly summarizing the pieces of information the others hadn't mentioned. Then, he began analyzing the clues, trying to figure out the key to breaking through the trial.

Fang Jue gave Cheng Shi a thoughtful look and teased:

"You really don't seem like a follower of [Chaos]."

Cheng Shi knew what he meant—he had been acting too methodically, more in line with [Order].

But Cheng Shi simply laughed and replied playfully:

"Don't you think that getting close to [Order] is just another form of [Chaos] for me?"

Fang Jue smiled at that, but beneath his smile, his eyes grew more serious.

He was right.

Forcing a follower of [Chaos] to abandon chaos at its core was perhaps the deepest form of chaos—one that even [Order] couldn't fully suppress.

Initially, Fang Jue hadn't thought much of Cheng Shi.

But now, his heart stirred with a hint of killing intent.

Discovering a high-potential follower of an opposing faith was never good news.

Cheng Shi had no idea what was running through Fang Jue's mind. After sharing his thoughts, he passed the conversation over to Wei Guan.

This [Folly] follower, who seemed to radiate an air of "I'm not targeting anyone, I just think all of you are fools," had been listening to everyone all night without offering a single opinion of his own.

It was starting to get annoying.

"Alright, the foolish players have shared their ideas. Now it's time for the smart player to give his feedback."

Wei Guan sneered, then turned and walked away.

As he left, he loudly mocked:

"Your thoughts are worthless. You don't deserve to know the answer."

Even Fang Jue's patience was wearing thin. He slammed his hand on the table, standing up with a stern expression.

"Leaving means you're abandoning your cooperation with us."

Unintentionally, Fang Jue's voice activated one of his bard talents, making it more intimidating.

Many of the other patrons in the inn turned their heads in curiosity.

But Wei Guan didn't slow down at all. His destination wasn't the second-floor rooms—it was the inn's front door.

“You people haven’t earned the right to call this ‘cooperation.’ My time is too valuable to waste on charity cases like you.”

With that, he shoved the inn’s door open.

At that moment, the inn’s doorman grabbed his sleeve in panic and pleaded:

“Dear guest, even if you’ve had a disagreement with your companions, I must warn you:

The nights are no longer safe.

The Law Enforcement Bureau has declared a curfew.

Staying in the inn is your best option. Please reconsider!”

Wei Guan sneered and scoffed:

“Cowardice and stupidity always go hand in hand.

I’ve already figured out the answer, so I won’t be cowering from some so-called murderer.

Besides, his methods seem just as foolish to me.”

With that, he brushed the doorman’s hand away and marched out into the night.

The moment the door slammed shut, everyone at the table muttered the same word in unison:

“Idiot.”

