

The Gods 53

Chapter 53: A Lively Night

Cheng Shi was completely unaware that Du Xiguang had invited Fang Jue for a secret midnight meeting.

At that moment, he was busy downstairs in the inn, trying to extract information from the drunken regulars who had often shared drinks with the “bard.”

These drunks didn’t seem to care about the bard’s death at all; they were only concerned about whether today’s drinks would be on discount.

As usual, Cheng Shi used his old trick—he stole some drinks from another table to trade for stories at this one.

Upon seeing the free drinks, the drunks gleefully began embellishing their stories of camaraderie with the “bard.”

“ArDOS was a well-traveled man. Sure, he couldn’t hold his liquor—couldn’t drink much at all—but he had seen a lot of the world. They say he’d even been to the underground realms.”

“And you’re saying he was a puppet? Get outta here, pal! He must’ve been replaced. How could a puppet drink? Wouldn’t it rust? And besides, he was the one paying for all the drinks.”

“Why bother asking where the real him is? I just wanna know where his money is. Damn it, they already cleared out his room, those enforcers. I heard he made a lot of money from writing books. If I could get my hands on that, I’d drink myself to death!”

“Bull! I’m ArDOS’s son. Only I have inheritance rights!”

“What? A follower of [Corruption]? No way. He was a beggar of faith—prayed to every god.”

“How do I know? He could rattle off seven or eight blessings from different gods in one breath. Can you do that?”

“Hey, buddy, got any more free drinks? If not, go ask the innkeeper for some. Ardos used to do that all the time, and the innkeeper would always give him a bottle or two.”

With a stiff smile, Cheng Shi excused himself from the table and returned to his room. The moment he closed the door, his expression grew serious.

The puppet control had been masterful—none of the bards’ drinking buddies had noticed anything strange.

There were only a few professions capable of controlling a puppet with such precision. If it was tied to [Corruption] and [Death], then it could only be one profession:

Desire Dominator.

A mage who followed [Corruption].

A class that could craft puppets from desire.

The problem now was: where was this Desire Dominator hiding?

No puppet could stray too far from its master, which meant the killer was still somewhere in the inn.

But... could they really be hiding that well?

Not a single person suspected them. They hadn’t exposed themselves at all, even while toying with the Grand Tribunal. They didn’t seem to be losing control at all.

Cheng Shi began to wonder if the exposure of When Fear Descends was all part of the killer’s plan.

Such a well-hidden killer could have easily kept the artifact on them, making it impossible for anyone to find it.

So why had they left the semi-divine dagger in the room? Was it meant to fall into the Grand Tribunal's hands?

What was the point of doing that?

Wait a minute!!

Could it be!?

Was the target all along... the judge?

Moxius!!?!

Cheng Shi was shocked by his own thoughts, but the more he considered it, the more everything started to fall into place.

The killer had used a puppet to create chaos, fading into the background, then threw out the murder weapon to make the Grand Tribunal think the case was as good as solved.

Next, they would use the When Fear Descends in Moxius's hands to carry out some unthinkable scheme.

Cheng Shi took a deep breath, a bold theory forming in his mind.

Could it be that the offering for this trial... was Moxius himself?

How could that be!?

A first-class judge from the Grand Tribunal?

The way the townspeople reacted to his presence showed just how respected he was. And judging from the way Yunni and the ascetic monk had died, it was clear just how powerful he was.

Could players really take down someone like that?

Well... six players with 2400 points might stand a chance.

But three of them were already dead, and out of the remaining three, one was just a freeloader.

Not saying who the freeloader is, of course.

Then again, there could be another possibility—the offering might be the killer.

But as things stood, the “offering” seemed even more dangerous than the Grand Tribunal judge.

They hadn’t even figured out where the killer was.

Clues were scattered, and guesses were their only hope.

Cheng Shi spent the rest of the night in his room, thinking while keeping his ears open for any sounds from the room next door.

Finally, at around 2:30 in the morning, he heard a subtle noise outside his door.

Startled, Cheng Shi looked up.

“?”

Why is there a sound coming from outside my door?

He quietly slipped out of bed and crept toward the door. After confirming that someone was indeed outside, Cheng Shi didn't waste any time. Instead of taking a defensive stance, he suddenly yanked the door open.

In an instant, a startled and embarrassed inn servant, who had been leaning against the door, tumbled headfirst into the room and landed flat on his face.

An inn servant?

Cheng Shi quickly pinned the servant down with a foot on his shoulder, asking playfully:

“Working late? Picking up extra shifts?”

The servant clearly didn't understand the sarcasm. He gave an awkward smile, not struggling at all, and said:

“My apologies for disturbing you. The innkeeper said you were injured, so he sent me to bring you some medicine. It's in the pocket of my jacket.”

Cheng Shi didn't budge, pressing his foot down harder.

“Oh? Then I suppose I should thank your innkeeper. But tell me, is this how you normally deliver medicine here?”

The servant awkwardly chuckled, his face flushing red.

“My apologies again. It was my fault—I was just curious. I'll report everything to the innkeeper. Please, sir, forgive me.”

The servant wasn't lying, and his attitude seemed genuinely sincere.

After a moment of hesitation, Cheng Shi reached toward the pocket of the servant's jacket.

But as soon as his fingers brushed the servant's chest, he froze, then quickly pulled his hand back, smiling as he offered his thanks.

The servant scrambled to his feet, bowing several times before making a hasty exit and closing the door behind him.

Cheng Shi stared at the scrap of paper he had taken from the servant and fell into deep thought.

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Meanwhile, Du Xiguang stood silently by the wall, listening closely to the sounds coming from Cheng Shi's room next door. Once the noises died down, he shook his head at Fang Jue, who was sitting in the room.

"The innkeeper sent him medicine, but it seems this servant might have had other motives. Cheng Shi figured it out.

He's sharp—too sharp to be a follower of [Chaos]."

Fang Jue nodded, then shook his head, replying:

"The scent of [Chaos] doesn't lie. His divine essence is strong. As he said, approaching [Order] itself is a form of chaos in the eyes of [Chaos]."

"Haha, does that mean you're even more chaotic than he is?"

"The difference is that he follows [Chaos], and I follow [Order]. The same outward behavior, wrapped around different cores—that is why no two humans are truly alike."

“Alright, enough small talk. There are only 15 minutes left. I’m looking forward to tonight’s little journey.”

“So am I. Once we leave, make sure to take down the soundproof barrier. We don’t want the guy next door getting suspicious.”

Fang Jue nodded, saying no more.

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3 a.m. arrived quickly.

Cheng Shi sensed that his neighbors had left, and he immediately pushed open his own door.

He had a suspicion about where the two had gone, but for now, he chose not to follow his hunch.

Instead, he glanced at the note in his hand once more, his face dark as he descended to the first floor.

The note said there was a sealed room beneath the bar on the first floor—a perfect place for a meeting. He was told to come alone.

Alone?

Fine, alone it is.

Tonight, I’ll play the lone wolf.

I’ll see for myself what kind of face the killer behind the fear in Eternal Bloom Town wears!