

The Gods 57

Chapter 57: You're Actually Followers of Him!!??

They're insane!

These people have completely lost their minds!

Cheng Shi furrowed his brow and cautiously took two steps back.

As he suspected, they were indeed followers of [War], and their goal was to drag the entire Land of Hope into the depths of conflict.

But despite this revelation, he still couldn't definitively conclude whether the offering for [Death] was this group of lunatics or if it was Moxius himself.

He needed more information, so he asked again:

"Why do you think I am so 'suitable' for your plan?"

Chernosly's eyes lit up as he looked directly at Cheng Shi, as if he were gazing at his most treasured possession.

"Why?"

Because you carry His essence, because your will aligns with His, because you too are under His gaze...

Even if you don't realize it yet!"

Wait a minute! No, something isn't right!

Cheng Shi's eyes widened as a horrifying possibility started to form in his mind.

Before he could fully process it, Chernosly gave him the answer:

“Oh, great God of [Chaos], your servant has found the first being awakened to the will of chaos. He will join us in witnessing...

Your descent!”

!!!!!!

Cheng Shi’s spine stiffened, cold sweat running down his back.

[Chaos]!

It was actually [Chaos]!

They were followers of [Chaos]!!!

How could this be?

In an era where [War] had only just begun to take notice and [Chaos] was still unheard of, Cheng Shi had stumbled upon the first group of [Chaos] followers!

The fabled “Seedling Followers”!

And his current identity—ironically—was even purer than theirs in this regard!

No wonder...

No wonder the killer acted with such impunity, no wonder Chernosly was so maniacal, no wonder they had chosen him!

Their god's will was just like this.

[Chaos] brought everyone together!

“.....”

The weight of the revelations and the sheer mental strain left Cheng Shi in a daze for a long while. It wasn't until Chernosly let out a low, manic laugh that Cheng Shi was jolted back to reality.

“Now that you know the name of the [New God], will you still refuse?”

Think about it. In the coming era, your name will be sung by countless followers, just like us, as one of the Chosen of [Chaos]!”

Chernosly paused suddenly, scratching his head in slight embarrassment.

“Uh... remind me, what's your name again?”

Cheng Shi blinked in surprise, then a sly grin spread across his face as he regained his confident demeanor:

Absolute honesty.

“Before that, why don't you tell me exactly what I'm not supposed to refuse?”

Chernosly nodded.

“Of course. As someone under His gaze, you must take part in welcoming our Lord's descent.

Your position allows you freedom, and you can do far more than we can.

Find Moxius. Get close to Moxius. And then... kill Moxius.

Once the Grand Tribunal loses its 'Son of [Order],' their fury will inevitably turn toward the Tower of Logic."

"How can you be so sure that the Grand Tribunal will go to war with the Tower of Logic?"

"You already know. The truth is, they've already started fighting. It's just been small skirmishes for now, but Moxius's death will accelerate the conflict.

Why, you ask? Haha, well, Ardos was a scholar of the Tower of Logic, and so was Kataro. Once the Grand Tribunal uses 'that object,' they'll easily trace everything back to the Tower.

Hahaha! It's a perfect loop with no escape!"

That object?

Cheng Shi raised an eyebrow, but he didn't ask directly. Instead, he vaguely probed:

"But the Grand Tribunal knows the Tower of Logic expelled them long ago."

"No, you don't understand. Expulsion doesn't necessarily mean separation, just like acceptance doesn't necessarily mean integration. Once the seed of doubt is planted and war fans the flames, everything will fall into place naturally."

"...And what about you? If 'that object' is brought into play, won't your identity be exposed too?"

"Me?" Chernosly pointed to himself, then laughed again.

“You’ve all been looking for the mastermind, haven’t you? Well, I could be that culprit.

Even though we don’t know exactly what you’re after, that doesn’t matter.

You can kill me to satisfy yourselves.

This place is a space we carved out deep underground, beyond the protection of [Prosperity].

If I die here, no one will ever find my body. Not even the Grand Tribunal.”

!!!

As Cheng Shi stared at the crazed grin on Chernosly’s face, a shiver ran through him.

This man wasn’t insane—he had figured out that the players were searching for the killer!

Yet, at the same time, he was utterly mad. Despite knowing this, he was still willing to offer up his own life as a bargaining chip, all to gain Cheng Shi’s cooperation!

And for what—a faith that was so far away, so intangible—to bring about the descent of the [God of Chaos]...

“You... aren’t afraid of dying?”

“Everyone dies eventually.

I’m not afraid of death. What terrifies me is the thought that our Lord may no longer watch over us.

Truth be told, we weren't entirely confident when we came here. But when we met you...

I understood. This was His guidance.

You are aware of His presence, and you will help us accomplish this great act!

Kill Moxius. Show our Lord...

Our devotion!"

With that, Chernosly pulled out a dagger.

The blade glowed with an eerie, sinister red light—so familiar that Cheng Shi's eyes widened in disbelief.

"When Fear Descends? But didn't Moxius take it with him?"

Chernosly let out two soft laughs, this time tinged with a rare sadness.

"Five of us came from the underground. Ardos is dead, Kataro and I survived. Can you guess where the other two went?"

A lightbulb went off in Cheng Shi's mind:

Alchemy, creation, dual divinities, two people...

A wild thought rose in his head, and he murmured in disbelief:

"Creation... could it be that they made..."

A replica of the semi-divine artifact!?”

“You’re incredibly sharp.

Qing was a follower of [Death], and Uia Glia was a follower of [Corruption]. Ardos used them to create a replica of When Fear Descends, stealing a fragment of its divine power.

As long as the dagger wasn’t in use, the replica could perfectly mimic the original artifact’s authority.

To approach Moxius, we imbued the replica with special divinity, so that only [Order] followers can wield it.

Once the original dagger selects its target, Qing and Uia Glia will be rejected by the artifact’s true divine power, and their bodies will revert from their puppet form. The replica will vanish, and they will instantly die, offering themselves to the great [Chaos].

We’ve never worried about the artifact being taken; we’ve only worried about getting close to Moxius!”

“.....”

What is this, some kind of magic gourd from a fairy tale?

“And then what?” Cheng Shi asked. “You’ll kill Moxius with the fake and keep the real semi-divine artifact safe?”

“Of course not. There’s no need to protect the artifact. It wasn’t a gift from our Lord—it was discarded by other [Gods].

According to Ardos’s plan, once Moxius obtains the replica, his guard will drop to its lowest, and that will be the perfect moment to break through his defenses!

The real semi-divine artifact should only be used at the most crucial moment.

Don't you agree?"

Damn it, that's... actually quite reasonable.

Cheng Shi was at a loss for words.

"So, don't you think Ardos was a genius?

His teacher was even greater than he was. But this world has no room for geniuses, nor for their great inventions.

People claim to follow their faith, but in reality, they do things that contradict those very beliefs.

And that, my friend, proves that this world is inherently disorderly!

Everyone is a contradiction, a manifestation of chaos!"

"....."

To be fair, the rhetoric of the followers of [Chaos] was pretty compelling, but Cheng Shi wasn't buying it.

At least not in his case—he wasn't chaotic by any definition. In fact, he was consistent in one thing:

He had always lied, including to himself.

"Accept our invitation, and not only will you kill the 'killer,' but you'll also get your hands on Ardos's 'Alchemical Notes.'

This is the legacy of one of the greatest geniuses of this era. Once the scholars at the Tower of Logic get wind of it, they'll fight over it.

So, think carefully. What will you choose?"

Heh. What choice do I have?

After all this, if I refuse, I'll be the one who ends up dead.

Cheng Shi shook his head and chuckled lightly.

"Aren't you curious about my identity? You probably don't even know why I'm here."

"That doesn't matter. Compared to the descent of our Lord, nothing else matters."

"And what about Kataro? What will happen to him after you're dead?"

"His purpose is to prove to the world that you're not the killer! At the right moment, he will demonstrate his devotion."

Wow, you guys really think of everything.

And let me guess—he's going to 'prove it' by committing suicide?

"You've killed two of my companions but are only offering one life in return?" Cheng Shi asked playfully, continuing to push back.

Chernosly paused for a moment, frowning slightly before shaking his head.

“We’ve only killed one person. I can tell that the hunter wasn’t truly in sync with your group.”

“?”

He’s not even lying!

Which meant...

They had only killed Wei Guan!

Then how had the ascetic monk died?

Was there actually someone else stirring the pot?

Who could it be?

Cheng Shi thought hard but couldn’t come up with an answer.

Maybe someone else had handled the semi-divine artifact before the ascetic monk?

There were too many people at the scene, and no clear clues.

Forget it, back to the main issue.

“Even if I accept your invitation, how do you expect me to make a first-class judge of the Grand Tribunal feel fear?”

Chernosly burst into laughter.

“Judges are human too. And as long as they’re human, they fear. You should ask him if he remembers me.”

Got it.

Cheng Shi sighed and asked one more question:

“Is it worth it?”

Chernosly glanced at him but said nothing.

Yet in that moment, Cheng Shi saw the aged man’s unwavering resolve. In this instant, Chernosly had nothing to do with chaos.

Cheng Shi wasn’t a bleeding heart, nor was he ungrateful.

One of his best traits was that he knew how to listen.

He understood what Chernosly was saying, so he nodded and said:

“Deal.”

Chernosly went wild with excitement, trembling as he handed over *When Fear Descends*, then lifted his head, offering his neck up for the strike.

“If your god descends after your death, will you regret not being able to see Him?”

“Regret?”

You don’t understand.

You've only just realized His existence, but you haven't yet grasped the true essence of [Chaos].

Do it. Let me be part of the sacrifice!

Let me join this glorious welcoming of our Lord!"

The semi-divine artifact now lay quietly in Chernosly's hand, a stark contrast to the way it had behaved when the ascetic monk held it.

Cautiously, Cheng Shi reached out, gently touching the dagger's hilt.

A wave of deathly energy surged through his fingers, sending a shiver down his spine.

No rejection?

"Semi-divine artifacts have no consciousness, so they don't resist. But the replica forged by Qing and Uia Glia carried their lingering wills. They reject anyone who isn't a follower of [Order]."

Cheng Shi, feelings mixed, pocketed *When Fear Descends* and pulled a surgical scalpel from his sleeve.

Though this artifact was a semi-divine weapon, it didn't feel nearly as comfortable in his hand as his scalpel.

"Any last words?"

Chernosly laughed wildly.

"My friend, remind me, your name was...?"

Cheng Shi paused, then smiled and replied:

“Ultraman. My name’s Ultraman.”

Yes, I’m the Ultraman.

To you all, I’m just an outsider.

Goodbye, Chernosly.

I hope you were my answer.

“Ssshhh—”

“...Guh... Guh...”

With a swift, clean motion, Cheng Shi brought the blade down.

A thin line appeared on Chernosly’s neck, and as his pupils shrank, the tiny wound split open, spraying blood infused with the powers of [Order], [Corruption], and [Chaos] all over the room.

Chernosly’s face remained frozen in a crazed smile as he died, his life ending with that same wild expression.

Cheng Shi, his expression unreadable, wiped the blood from his hand.

“Wrong answer.”