

The Gods 58

Chapter 58: Vanished Memories!

The way back to the inn was incredibly simple—just step out of the cave’s exit.

Chernosly had arranged everything meticulously, even going so far as to post exit signs on the walls, as if he feared that his death and the transaction that followed wouldn’t proceed as planned.

But there was a problem—this deal had no guarantees.

To Cheng Shi, it held no binding power.

Even if he changed his mind now and decided to take both *When Fear Descends* and the “Alchemical Notes” with him, without fulfilling his end of the agreement, these seedling followers of [Chaos] couldn’t do a thing about it.

But Cheng Shi didn’t plan on going back on his word, nor could he.

Because killing Moxius was very likely the key to the trial.

Moxius’s death might be the offering needed for [Death]—the key to ending the trial.

“Did they all calculate that I would do exactly this?”

He didn’t dare think too deeply about it.

For these people to have figured out his identity and intentions after only two days of observation—they were, without a doubt, top-tier threats. Even if they weren’t favored by anyone else, they would surely become legends given another chance.

But now...

Was it worth it?

Even if it wasn't, does it really matter?

As long as I get what I want.

Cheng Shi smiled wryly at himself, picked up the "Alchemical Notes" from the table, and stored it in his inventory. Without a second look, he turned and left.

When he opened his eyes again, he was back beneath the bar.

The night was still dark, and the lobby was eerily quiet.

Cheng Shi carefully hid the dagger on his person and moved silently up to the second floor.

It had only been about half an hour—hopefully, he wasn't too late to catch up with Fang Jue and the others.

But when Cheng Shi arrived at Ardos's old room on the second floor, he found...

No one.

"It's over?"

He blinked in confusion, then searched the area thoroughly. There were no signs that anyone had been there at all.

"?"

Did I guess wrong?

Could it be that they didn't come to the bard's room after all?

Then where did they go?

Considering Du Xiguang's role as a Memory Traveler, the most likely place for them to go would be somewhere related to the killer.

Since none of them had realized the innkeeper was the true mastermind, their target should have been Ardos—the one who had turned himself into a puppet.

They wouldn't have been foolish enough to go straight to the Law Enforcement Bureau to confront Moxius, right?

They couldn't be that reckless.

Unable to make sense of it, Cheng Shi decided to return to his room and wait out the night.

After the intense events of the previous day, blending back in and staying unnoticed was his top priority.

Besides, he now had all the information he needed, and the semi-divine artifact was in his possession. He already had an advantage.

The night passed without incident.

But it also passed without sleep.

As the morning birds chirped outside, Cheng Shi opened his door and stepped into the hallway.

He had spent the night thinking and had finally come up with a flimsy excuse to approach Moxius directly.

He would demand compensation.

He had committed no crime, yet he had been struck by the judge's lightning, leaving him injured and unable to sleep all night.

Surely, he was owed an explanation.

Hopefully, the enforcers wouldn't just dismiss him with compensation. What he needed was a personal apology from the man himself!

The idea amused Cheng Shi even as he thought about it. Asking a first-class judge to apologize was tantamount to saying the judge had made a mistake in his "judgment."

Who knows if Moxius will be able to tolerate that?

With a spring in his step, Cheng Shi began heading toward the Law Enforcement Bureau. But as he passed through the lobby on the first floor, he noticed clusters of guests whispering to each other with expressions of shock.

He instinctively paused, ready to do what he did best—gather intel.

If he could glean any information from the guests' gossip about where Fang Jue and Du Xiguang had gone last night, all the better.

But he never imagined that the news he would overhear this time would feel so surreal, as though he were still trapped in a dream.

The noise around him, the scene before his eyes—it all seemed like an illusion.

"Who could've guessed that the killer would turn out to be a follower of [Order]? I heard the town's alliance council is in a panic—what a mess! They brought in the Grand Tribunal to help, only to uncover their dirty laundry."

"But haven't they finished the trial yet? Are you sure?"

"Oh, it's no joke! The culprit used puppets to distract the enforcers and tried to escape with the murder weapon. Caught red-handed—what's to argue?"

"Wait, didn't that guy in the strange clothing, the one with glasses, also turn out to be a follower of [Order]?"

"Not sure. But I think he was—otherwise, why wouldn't the Grand Tribunal make his trial public?"

Wait!

Cheng Shi's ears buzzed as his body tensed.

Who was the killer?

And who had died?

What on earth had happened?

I didn't sleep through the entire third day... so how could all of this have happened without my knowledge?

Reeling from the information overload, Cheng Shi rubbed his stiff face, forcing a fake smile as he approached the crowd to ask questions.

"Excuse me, who was it that died?"

"Huh? Were you one of the guys who ran off scared last night? What a pity! If you'd come upstairs with us, you would've seen it all. Moxius caught the killer—two out-of-town followers of [Order]. One was killed on the spot, and the other was taken into custody.

No need to worry anymore. The Grand Tribunal has driven out the fear. Just relax and enjoy the rest of your trip, haha!"

Cheng Shi forced a polite laugh as he pushed for more information:

"Right, I was terrified last night and hid away. About the one who died—was he the one with glasses?"

"Yeah, he was dressed in this fancy coat I'd never seen before. Definitely a traveler from out of town—real academic-looking guy. The other one had golden hair, more like a local."

"No, no way that guy was local. With all that blood on his hands, he's probably one of those underground imposters."

"You're crazy! He was a—"

"Shhh! The Grand Tribunal hasn't said anything, so we don't know for sure."

"Oh, right, right. We're just gossiping. Don't ask too many questions, okay? Bottom line, Eternal Bloom Town is safe now."

Cheng Shi smiled and nodded along, but under his clothes, cold sweat drenched his back.

Du Xiguang was dead. Fang Jue had been arrested.

He had gathered all the details.

Without a doubt, the guests were referring to the two of them as the culprits.

But the question remained: when had this happened?

By the time Cheng Shi had been on the second-floor hallway last night, there hadn't been a single person around.

So where had they seen Moxius take action?

The time didn't match up.

The people didn't match up.

The person Moxius had killed—or rather, the person who had died—had clearly been the ascetic monk.

Cheng Shi refused to believe that his memory was faulty. He wandered through the lobby, subtly probing for more information.

But after a while, his cold sweat returned.

The ascetic monk had vanished.

Everyone claimed they had never seen a shirtless monk, as if he had never existed at all.

As the bright morning sunlight streamed through the inn's front doors, Cheng Shi felt a chilling cold spread through his entire body.

He thought long and hard but couldn't figure out why a trip to the underground had caused reality to shift so drastically.

Was this one of Chernosly's tricks to drive him mad? Or had something beyond his imagination occurred?

Could it be... that all of this was the doing of the Memory Traveler?

Had he found the truth and set up an elaborate trap?

No, that didn't make sense.

Cheng Shi was still in the trial, which meant the trial hadn't concluded yet.

Could it be the work of [Memory]?

It certainly seemed like it.

But based on Cheng Shi's knowledge, he couldn't recall any follower of [Memory] possessing such a powerful talent.

Then again, this could be some SS-tier talent he had never encountered before.

So...

Was history being twisted, or had his memories been altered!?

Cheng Shi furrowed his brow in deep thought.

The trial was supposed to last seven days, yet now, on the third day, there were only two players left:

Himself...

And the imprisoned Fang Jue.

Six were now down to two.

Something was terribly wrong.

To understand what had happened, he needed to figure out the events that had unfolded.

The regular guests certainly wouldn't know the truth, but there were three people who might:

Moxius, the captured Fang Jue, and the last [Chaos] seedling follower, Kataro.

The first two were hard to approach, but the third was still somewhere in the inn.

Cheng Shi immediately set off to find him.

But after searching the entire morning, he couldn't find any trace of Kataro.

Even the secret entrance beneath the bar had disappeared.

Every clue had been severed.

Exhausted, Cheng Shi sat on the steps outside the inn's entrance, clutching his head as he sank into deep thought.