

## The Gods 65

### Chapter 65: The Fishbone Hall and the Throne of Bones

Cheng Shi was being pulled in again.

The second time he was summoned by a god, it felt a lot more familiar than the first. He didn't resist, allowing his consciousness to fall into the darkness.

Who will it be this time?

The God of Fun or the God of Misery?

No, don't think about it!

At least not like that!

In the presence of deities, he had no freedom of thought. Even his imagination could be judged as blasphemy.

His mentor had once told him: Before you can deceive the gods, you must first learn to endure.

Endure it, Cheng Shi!

As his consciousness gradually cleared from the haze, he nervously opened his eyes.

He had braced himself for the worst, even quickly rehearsing a justification, planning to explain that his "blasphemous" thoughts were nothing more than harmless banter and that he didn't really think of any god as a—well, "you know."

But what he saw wasn't one of those starry, celestial eyes belonging to a god.

Instead, it was a long, winding, white staircase stretching from beneath his feet into the invisible void above.

Each step of the staircase resembled a colossal vertebra, hollowed out with bone-like cavities, gleaming in a blinding white.

On either side of the vertebrae, thick, blade-like spines jutted out, extending like the edges of a cliff.

Looking up at the steep gradient between the bones, Cheng Shi realized the endless white steps resembled the spine of a colossal fish, floating in the infinite darkness and radiating a terrifying white light.

If this were truly the skeleton of a fish, “gigantic” wouldn’t even begin to describe it.

Every word Cheng Shi had ever learned to describe size felt utterly useless against this incomprehensible scale.

It would take at least ten minutes just to walk across a single vertebra.

Cheng Shi was speechless, stunned by the sheer magnitude of it all. He stood frozen in shock.

Suddenly, a chorus of voices filled his ears.

It was a sound that defied easy description—both sharp and raspy, ethereal and heavy, as though the voices of men, women, the old, and the young had been merged into one indistinguishable, overlapping chorus.

“Come up! Hurry up!”

Cheng Shi, startled by the sudden shout, quickly turned his head. Where there had been no one before, he now saw countless life forms standing on the “fishbone” spines.

These creatures, which Cheng Shi had never seen before, were lined up along the sharp, knife-like protrusions, one by one leaping off the edge like dumplings into a pot.

Below the “cliff” was nothing but the void.

As soon as the beings jumped, their flesh was stripped away by the void, their bodies ground down to nothing until they hit an unseen “ground” far below, where even their skeletons shattered into dust.

The impact was so great that their bones crumbled to powder, save for their skulls, which somehow remained intact.

Countless bleached skulls rolled toward Cheng Shi, piling up on either side of the vertebra-staircase, their jaws snapping open and shut in an eerie rhythm, welcoming him with the grating sound of their teeth.

“Come up! Hurry up!”

“The Master is waiting for you! He’s waiting for you above!”

Cheng Shi was completely stunned by the bizarre scene unfolding before him.

To be fair, anyone would be.

Everything he was witnessing was beyond human comprehension, so much so that his legs instinctively felt weak.

As he glanced at the seas of snapping skulls along the edges of the staircase, Cheng Shi’s mind raced:

If I take a step forward, will they rush over and start gnawing on me?

“Come up! Hurry up! The Master is waiting for you!”

The longer Cheng Shi hesitated, the faster the skulls snapped their jaws.

He had a pretty good idea of which deity was up there. Swallowing hard, he gave himself a mental pep talk and then stepped forward.

The moment Cheng Shi stepped out, his skin, muscles, tendons, and blood were peeled from his body, left behind as he stepped forward as a crystal-clear skeleton.

And he didn't just take one step—he was propelled forward instantly, as if the massive stairway had moved beneath him.

The staircase, which had seemed so enormous, now adjusted itself to Cheng Shi's pace, each vertebra sliding into place beneath his feet automatically.

The speed was so fast that it whipped up winds in the void.

As Cheng Shi moved, the skulls along the edges of the staircase grew even more frenzied.

“Move faster, hurry! Don't keep Him waiting!”

Cheng Shi didn't dare take a second step.

He wasn't sure if it was because the wind in the void was too strong or if it was the fact that he was now “naked,” but he felt a cold chill run through his entire body.

Rubbing his bony hands together, Cheng Shi instinctively reached down to cover his crotch.

Wait a minute—does this even count as streaking if there's nothing left to cover...?

He glanced down.

Yep, no need to cover anything. It's all gone.

Guess this doesn't count as streaking after all!

Cheng Shi's mood inexplicably lifted, and he let out a small chuckle before striding confidently forward.

With each step he took, the "fishbone" descended, the white bones stacking layer by layer.

As Cheng Shi counted 404 steps, the endless, monotonous stairway finally began to change.

A sudden disturbance echoed from all directions, and the voices of men, women, young, and old boomed in unison.

Then, countless skulls rose from behind him, from his sides, and from ahead, flying forward at unimaginable speed.

The skulls surged like a white tidal wave, rolling through the dark void like a reverse waterfall of bones.

Cheng Shi stood still on the staircase, not daring to move as he awaited the god's arrival.

It wasn't because his legs were weak; it was because he could already feel the overwhelming presence of [Death].

It was so intense, so suffocating, that it drove one to despair.

This was a true path to [Death]!

Countless skulls rained down, quickly forming a towering throne made of bones in front of Cheng Shi.

And seated upon that throne was an enormous skull, its hollow eye sockets gazing directly at Cheng Shi.

“Cheng... Shi...”

The god’s voice was as cold as the icy flames erupting from the depths of the abyss, freezing everything in its path.

Even though Cheng Shi was reduced to nothing but a skeleton, he felt as though his very marrow would freeze solid.

This was [Death]!

The third god on the path of [Life]!

“I am here,” Cheng Shi responded, gritting his teeth as he struggled against the oppressive divine power.

“Very... good.

I wish to... propose a deal.”

?

A deal?

With someone like me?

Cheng Shi instinctively feared that this was some kind of trap laid by [Death], so he blurted out:

“If there’s something You desire, it would be my honor.”

What could I possibly possess that would interest Him?

After thinking it over, Cheng Shi realized the only thing of value he had was When Fear Descends.

The enormous skull fell silent for a long time after Cheng Shi’s response. Eventually, the god spoke again.

“You... are not quite what... He said you were.”

Who?

Who the hell has been talking about me behind my back!?

Cheng Shi dared not ask, so he simply smiled awkwardly.

Of course, with just bones left, his smile didn’t show, making his awkwardness all the more apparent.

“Bring it out. The deal... will not... disappoint you.”

Cheng Shi wanted to ask, How am I supposed to bring anything out in this state?

But before he could say anything, his consciousness stirred, and the contents of his inventory spilled out at his feet.

Looking at the haphazard pile of items—ranging from knockout drugs to ropes, poisons, and masks—Cheng Shi’s embarrassment deepened.

He hurriedly sifted through the mess, quickly finding the dagger the god wanted, and held it up respectfully.

“Good. Do you know... what this... is?”

“When Fear Descends, a dual-divinity semi-divine artifact imbued with Your essence and that of another god.”

Cheng Shi knew that the people of the Land of Hope often referred to semi-divine artifacts as “subordinate relics.”

“Fear... Such a crude name.

For thousands of years, humanity has made no progress in naming things.

Its name... is the Garuda Dagger.”

“.....”

The Garuda Dagger...

Okay then, Mister God, do you really have the audacity to accuse humans of bad naming conventions after calling it that?

Not afraid of humility from the top students, but seriously unaware of your own shortcomings, huh?

But Cheng Shi remained completely silent, listening attentively.

It seemed that this god was in the mood for sharing.

“Garuda... was a subordinate god of [Life].

He was... also my most trusted envoy.

But he... made a mistake.

He fell in love... with a... bitch.”

!!!

What the hell!?

Did I hear that right?

Are gods really using words like “bitch” now?

At that moment, Cheng Shi’s mind was in an uproar.

To hear a god utter the word “bitch” in such a solemn setting was... thrilling!

Whether it was the juicy gossip or the sheer relatability, the moment reached its peak.

What a coincidence— I know a bitch too!

And she—

Cough, cough. Better stop thinking and keep listening. My life depends on it.

But it was clear now that the god who [Death] referred to as a “bitch” was likely the source of the other half of When Fear Descends’s divine power...