

The Gods 74

Chapter 74: Day One: The Day of the Flood

“Getting close to [Order] creates even more chaos from the perspective of [Chaos].”

Who would have thought that a joking lie, meant to conceal his identity, would actually come true?

All because a follower of [Chaos] bore the fabricated name and approached [Order], killing the Son of [Order], thus birthing true chaos.

From then on, the Grand Tribunal became mired in the quicksand of war, unable to pull itself free. As the war dragged on and the faith spread, [Chaos] began to descend.

So, who am I, really?

Am I Ultraman of the Land of Hope?

Or am I...

The real Cheng Shi?

That’s a huge question, one that could easily drive someone to the brink of madness.

To avoid spiraling into insanity, Cheng Shi quickly decided to skip over that particular line of thinking and refocus on the trial at hand.

This wasn’t something a mere mortal could fully comprehend. At least, not right now.

He swiftly composed his thoughts and his expression, careful not to let Gao Yu detect any cracks in his facade that might lead him to draw conclusions about Cheng Shi’s identity. Cheng Shi then skillfully changed the subject.

Gao Yu seemed slightly disappointed, but when Cheng Shi stopped engaging, continuing the topic alone would have made Gao Yu seem childish. So, after opening and closing his mouth a few times, he finally gave up.

The group had been trekking through the mountain valley for four or five hours by now, and the rain was starting to pool at their feet. In some of the lower areas, the water had already risen past their ankles.

The path was becoming more and more difficult.

But fortunately, their destination was within sight.

Zhao Qian looked up at the towering mountain in front of them and spoke solemnly.

“Miss Tao, I’ll leave it to you.”

Tao Yi nodded and began casting spells at the vines growing along the mountain wall.

With a wave of her nimble fingers, the vines on the cliff face began to grow wildly, spreading like ink on white paper. Within a few breaths, the vines had covered the entire rock wall.

Clearly, everyone was expected to climb the vines.

Time was running out, so they had decided to forgo taking a detour to scale the mountain. They would climb straight up.

Cheng Shi looked up at the nearly 90-degree cliff face and clicked his tongue.

Gao Yu heard the noise and muttered under his breath:

“Need some help?”

An adult being offered help by someone who wasn't even 18 yet? Under normal circumstances, most people would at least decline out of pride, putting on a show of strength to maintain some semblance of dignity.

But not Cheng Shi.

What's pride?

All I have is the will to let things fall apart.

“Yes.”

His answer was as firm as it was shameless.

Gao Yu gave him a look that screamed, I thought so, then mechanically nodded and pulled out his toolkit from his clothes.

He took out a palm-sized piece of silver metal and a small hammer, suspended the material in midair, and started hammering away at it.

Before long, and with Cheng Shi enthusiastically chanting, “Forty, forty, forty,” under his breath, Gao Yu, looking thoroughly displeased, produced a brand-new chair.

A chair designed for someone to sit on while being carried up the cliff!

Cheng Shi wasn't particularly interested in the chair, but the alchemical construction techniques used by the mechanical engineering school fascinated him.

Clearly, the little hammer in Gao Yu's hands was a powerful spell-casting tool.

The kid didn't even have to focus on shaping the material; he just casually hammered away, and the chair took the shape he had in mind.

This level of craftsmanship far surpassed something like 3D printing.

"You're... going to carry me?"

"....."

Gao Yu turned to Cheng Shi, giving him a look that screamed, You're even more shameless than I thought, and gritted his teeth.

"I'm a mage!"

Cheng Shi laughed, grabbing the chair and eyeing the people ahead.

The old man...

Forget it. His lungs were about to cough themselves out.

Zhao Qian...

Already halfway up the cliff—no sense in asking him to come back down.

Su Yida...

That bastard had already caught onto Cheng Shi's thinking and had immediately put his hands on the cliff face, clearly signaling his refusal to do any heavy lifting.

That left only one person...

The pink-haired girl...

Uh...

The kid makes the tools, the woman does the heavy lifting?

If that's the outcome, then I, a grown man, would be utterly useless.

"Need help?"

Tao Yi seemed to have anticipated that Cheng Shi would ask for help. She turned toward him, eyeing the chair in his hand.

Cheng Shi hesitated, then gathered all his remaining masculine pride and declared:

"Yes!"

He then sidled over to Tao Yi with a goofy grin and asked:

"Uh, would that be convenient for you?"

Tao Yi's eyes narrowed playfully, like a little fox, her smile mischievous.

"Of course! I have them."

With a wave of her hand, the vines on the cliff extended downward, picking up the chair and positioning it next to her.

Cheng Shi was overwhelmed with gratitude and quickly jumped into the chair.

Ah, a human elevator—so convenient.

Gao Yu, thoroughly unimpressed, followed behind with a look of exasperation on his face.

He had some sort of leg-boosting mechanism, allowing him to scale the cliff with ease.

The group made their way to the middle of the stone mountain, broke off a few layers of rock, and set up a makeshift shelter from the rain.

“The rock here is solid, and it’s easy to come up or down. This is a good spot,” Su Yida said, running his hand over the stone as he confirmed Zhao Qian’s earlier assessment.

Zhao Qian chuckled lightly, standing on the edge of the cliff as he gazed out into the distance.

“Don’t get too comfortable. We still don’t know if rain is the central theme of this trial. We’re just taking it one step at a time.”

“Cough... cough... but no need to be pessimistic either. Cough... cough... We just handle things as they come.”

“Well said!”

Having not exerted any physical effort, Cheng Shi didn’t have much to do but play the role of the team spirit booster, offering everyone some vocal encouragement.

Su Yida glanced at Cheng Shi and couldn’t help shaking his head with a wry smile.

This guy... A [Birth] priest? Let's just hope he can be a bit more useful.

Cheng Shi caught Su Yida's expression out of the corner of his eye. He responded with a cheerful smile, pretending not to notice the unspoken critique.

Time seemed to fast-forward, and the rain only grew heavier.

What had started as a curtain of rain soon became a torrential downpour.

No, at this point, calling it a downpour didn't even do it justice. It was as if someone had drained an entire river and dumped it on them all at once.

The sheer volume of rain was overwhelming, to the point where lifting one's arms felt like a struggle.

The deluge hammered down furiously, so much so that even standing still felt like a burden, the water pressing down on their shoulders and necks.

Conversation was no longer possible. The noise of the rain drowned out their voices, and the stone slabs sheltering them shook dangerously under the strain of the downpour. Su Yida clamped his hand over his nose and mouth, barely able to make himself heard as he spoke.

"The water's only just reached the base of the mountain. How can it rise so fast?"

"You have to factor in the increasing intensity of the rain. It's going to get faster, not slower! Miss Tao, Gao Yu, help me out."

"Got it!"

Tao Yi stood beneath the shaking stone slabs and cast her spell again, causing the vines on the cliff to grow up faster, turning into the raw materials for their crafting.

Gao Yu swung his small hammer, solidifying the vines into hollow, compact “logs.”

But their efficiency wasn’t nearly as high as when Gao Yu had worked with the special metals.

Zhao Qian busily lashed the logs together, assembling a raft as quickly as he could.

In the face of a rapidly approaching flood, the simplest solution was to build a raft that could float on the rising waters.

As for why they weren’t asking the mechanical prodigy to just craft a submarine...

Cheng Shi had thought about it, but Gao Yu didn’t have nearly enough materials in his toolkit to pull it off—not even for a single-person model.

“Wow, the gods really thought of everything. Sealing our storage spaces was a stroke of genius.”

“How many more do we need?”

“About three more logs should do it!”

Just as the raft was nearing completion, Su Yida came running back from the edge of the cliff, his face tense.

“Get ready, everyone! We’re out of time!”

The group looked up in confusion, only to see that beyond the mountains, on the far horizon, a white line had appeared.

That white line grew larger and larger, and soon, everyone saw its true form.

It wasn't a white line at all—it was a massive tidal wave, large enough to make anyone's jaw drop.

The wave was so tall it made you crane your neck just to take it all in!

What the hell!?

A wave this size!? What good is a raft?!

With that much water crashing down, even the mountain might be obliterated!

“Tao Yi, keep going! Gao Yu, make baskets! Elder Cui, reinforce the baskets!”

Zhao Qian quickly shifted tactics, trying to turn the raft into a floating device that could lift them above the flood.

Given the situation, being dragged underwater was almost a certainty. So the only option left was to focus on floating upward as fast as possible to avoid being submerged.

“Su Yida, if we fail, do we get another shot at this?”

Zhao Qian asked, his expression stern as he looked to Su Yida for an answer.

Su Yida's eyes darkened, and he responded seriously:

“I'll try my best.”

He hadn't given a definitive answer, but the reply was positive enough.

That was all Zhao Qian needed to hear. His expression lightened somewhat, and he turned to Cheng Shi.

“Priest, the breathing and healing spells will be on you once we’re underwater. Don’t worry about the ‘newborns.’ We’ll handle them.”

As a priest, one of Cheng Shi’s basic skills was Water Heal, which allowed him to provide ample breathing and healing for allies underwater. It was a standard spell, and of course, Cheng Shi had it.

He nodded confidently but quickly furrowed his brow.

The trial was supposed to last three days.

If day one was already this intense, Cheng Shi could hardly imagine what the next two days would bring.

Would they be surfing through this disaster?

And this wasn’t internet surfing. It wasn’t going to pass the time easily.

“It’s coming! Everyone, into the baskets! Now!”

As soon as the words left Zhao Qian’s mouth, the world went dark.

The rumbling roar of the wave crashing down was so loud it even drowned out the thunder!

Without hesitation, Cheng Shi leaped into the vine basket that had been secured to the raft. He watched as Elder Cui, coughing all the while, accelerated the decay of the vines to make the raft even sturdier. Cheng Shi took a deep breath, feeling the tension rise in his chest.

There was no way not to be nervous in a situation like this.

The enormous wave was now right in front of them, like an impossibly tall wall of water stretching from the earth to the stars. The oppressive weight of it all was enough to crush any hope.

“Priest, prepare your healing!”

And with Zhao Qian’s final shout...

“Boom—”

The wave hit, massive and world-destroying.

Everyone felt as though the sky itself had collapsed onto them, the weight crashing down so hard they all spat up blood.

But that blood disappeared quickly.

Because after the world spun and blurred, everything—the so-called mountains and high peaks—had become nothing but jagged rocks jutting out from the sea’s depths.

Everything in sight had sunk beneath the water.