

The Gods 75

Chapter 75: Going with the Flow? No! 20,000 Miles Under the Sea

Everyone was momentarily knocked unconscious by the immense impact.

Everyone except Cheng Shi, who kept his eyes wide open, navigating the barely buoyant raft through the murky depths of the ocean.

Yes, Cheng Shi wasn't knocked out.

In the instant before the giant wave crashed down, he had cast every skill he had on himself, leaving a buffer of protection.

This allowed him to withstand the powerful impact and remain fully conscious.

As for the others...

Well, it's just some blood—no one's dying from it.

After all, they're not the captain.

Now that the battlefield had shifted from the mountain tops to the ocean depths, Cheng Shi, with his Underwater Heal, had gone from being the useless priest to the acting captain with a significant say in the group's survival.

All he needed to do was cast Underwater Heal on himself and then use Shared Divine Grace to grant his teammates the ability to breathe underwater. With minimal energy expenditure, they could all breathe as much water-infused air as they needed.

Not only that, but as a priest, he had one of the highest affinities with water elements, second only to Water Elemental Judges. With precise control, he could guide the "raft-submersible," becoming the group's navigator in these calmer waters.

In fact, Cheng Shi was already doing just that.

Zhao Qian, the fittest among them, was the first to regain consciousness.

When he realized that he could still breathe and saw Cheng Shi skillfully steering the raft deeper into the ocean, he knew the situation was under control.

He felt relieved.

Not because Cheng Shi had suddenly become reliable, but because Underwater Heal hadn't mysteriously caused him to get pregnant.

Soon, the others began to wake, and once they realized their condition wasn't too bad, they all breathed a sigh of relief.

The players found themselves in an unusual situation:

The hollow “logs” made from the reinforced vines were providing excellent buoyancy and sealing, keeping them afloat at the top.

Beneath the raft, several vine baskets dangled, each containing one player. Although everyone was submerged in the water, thanks to the effectiveness of Underwater Heal, their breathing wasn’t hindered.

If there was any discomfort, it was the strange sensation of inhaling murky seawater which would then vanish inside their bodies—it wasn’t exactly pleasant.

But the raft’s buoyancy was so strong that Cheng Shi was having trouble controlling it at such depths.

Thankfully, his teammates weren’t freeloaders. Unlike Cheng Shi, they didn’t just sit around and watch while others worked.

Tao Yi was the first to grab a few spare vines from the raft and weave them into makeshift paddles. She strapped them to her arms and began paddling manually, adding power to their movement.

Seeing this, the others followed suit.

Only Zhao Qian remained still, continuing to observe the surroundings.

Cheng Shi caught sight of him out of the corner of his eye and found himself becoming more intrigued by the team's de facto leader.

There was something odd about this [War] follower. Although he had taken on the role of leader, he rarely exerted any additional effort outside of crucial moments.

Plenty of players preferred to conserve their strength during trials, especially when trust was lacking, as it was a very effective strategy.

But Zhao Qian was different.

He didn't come across as an absolute egoist. His eyes were filled with a desire for cooperation, yet his actions were oddly solitary.

This subtle contradiction... felt strange.

But as long as Zhao Qian wasn't doing anything detrimental to Cheng Shi, he could be left to his own devices.

Cheng Shi chuckled to himself and focused on steering the raft again.

As Cheng Shi continued to guide the raft, keeping an eye on the others, Tao Yi spoke up.

“Glub... glub... Cheng Shi, are we not going to float upward?... glub... glub...”

“We can’t risk it. There’s no telling what the waves are like up above, and this raft won’t survive another hit like the last one. It’s safer down here.”

“Glub... glub... Is that so? Will your mental strength hold out? I have a decent affinity with water... glub... glub... I could take over for a while...”

Oh, no way! I’m just getting into the fun of being captain!

Cheng Shi was thoroughly enjoying being in charge of the raft. The amount of mental energy this was consuming was definitely manageable—he could easily stay submerged for an entire day.

Provided, of course, that the waters remained calm.

Rather than address her offer directly, Cheng Shi teased:

“Why do you keep saying ‘glub glub’ with every word?”

“Glub... glub... Don’t you think it makes me sound like a fish? Glub... glub... We’re underwater now, so we’re like sea people... It’s so fun!”

“.....”

Childlike innocence defeats all logic.

Cheng Shi was at a loss for words.

While the storm raged above, the waters beneath were surprisingly calm.

Aside from occasionally dodging debris carried by the current, there wasn’t much danger in their underwater journey.

But, of course, good times never last.

After a few hours of smooth sailing, trouble struck again.

Although the group’s senses were far duller underwater than on land, Zhao Qian seemed to have detected something and immediately spoke up.

“Be careful, something’s coming from below!”

Cheng Shi’s heart skipped a beat at the warning.

They were currently floating in the upper-mid levels of the water column—far enough below the surface to avoid the storm, yet nowhere near the ocean floor.

By now, anything that was supposed to sink to the bottom would have done so, and anything meant to float should have already drifted to the surface.

Whatever was rising up from the depths could only mean trouble.

“What is it, something alive? Or something dead?”

“Can we steer away from it? We can paddle faster!”

“From below? I don’t see anything.”

Cheng Shi had the best forward visibility, but like everyone else, he couldn't see anything below. The water was too murky, full of debris and soil churned up by the storm, making it impossible to see clearly. Zhao Qian, it seemed, wasn't relying on sight to detect the threat.

"I can't see anything! Can you sense what it is?"

Zhao Qian closed his eyes and extended his spiritual senses like sonar. The moment he did, his expression darkened dramatically.

"We can't avoid it! It's all around us—front, back, left, and right! Cheng Shi! We're about to collide!"

"Whoosh—"

As soon as Zhao Qian spoke, the raft began spinning wildly in the current.

"Glub... glub..."

Countless bubbles rose to the surface—this time, the glub glub was real.

"Everyone, brace yourselves! Priest, get ready to heal!"

There was no need for Zhao Qian to remind him. The moment the spinning began, Shared Divine Grace spread seven or eight Heal spells across the entire team.

Cheng Shi's face grew serious, and he focused all his attention.

Because now, he could finally see what was rising from below.

It was a massive—no, a colossal—creature that he'd never seen before. Its skin was peeling and bloated, its eyes half-open and milky white, indicating that it was long dead. It was like an over-inflated balloon, floating upwards from the ocean floor.

The problem was, as it ascended, it was on a direct collision course with the players.

Calling it a "collision" might actually be an understatement.

Compared to the size of the beast, the raft was like a tiny fisherman's boat next to a giant ocean liner—completely outmatched.

To the massive creature, the raft was probably less significant than a ripple in the current.

But to the raft... it was a potential death sentence.

Fortunately, the raft didn't crash directly into the beast. Instead, it was caught in a powerful suction current, drawn forward as the creature's mass displaced the water around it. The raft was torn apart in the chaotic flow, breaking apart into pieces.

Everyone's faces turned pale as they realized what Zhao Qian had meant by "front, back, left, and right."

Tao Yi clung tightly to a vine log, her eyes wide with fear as she stammered in disbelief:

"We... we're..."

Cheng Shi, gripping onto Gao Yu, furrowed his brow and responded grimly:

"Yes, it's exactly what you think."

We've...

...crashed into the belly of the beast."