

The Gods 81

Chapter 81: Warhorses and Workhorses

When someone can't fight against gravity, the sensation of falling becomes their worst nightmare.

But for players, simple free-falling wasn't something to fear.

The moment the ground disappeared beneath her, Tao Yi reacted swiftly, grabbing onto a piece of driftwood. Then, channeling all her [Prosperity] power, she extended the wooden material into a massive wooden parachute.

Seeing this, the others quickly grabbed onto her before they could fall too far.

And so, while everything around them plummeted downwards, the six players, tethered like kites on a string, began gently drifting down at an extremely slow pace.

The sudden crisis had been quietly and effortlessly smoothed over.

"Impressive!"

Even Cheng Shi couldn't help but praise her. Well-fed Tao Yi was definitely quick on her feet.

"Hehe, thanks!"

Tao Yi smiled, accepting the compliments from her teammates while adjusting the parachute to ensure they descended at a perfect angle.

Since there was no immediate danger, the players dangling beneath her began to survey their surroundings.

Truth be told, the moment the sea disappeared, their entire environment had been violently altered.

The players couldn't see any traces of mountains or land within their visible range—only endless darkness stretched below them.

Above them, the sky was clear, bathed in daylight, but below them lay a deep, unfathomable abyss.

This stark and jarring visual contrast filled everyone with an eerie sense of disconnection, a surreal feeling that something about this world was fundamentally wrong.

The sharp black-and-white divide was now just beneath them.

Zhao Qian, ever cautious, drew back his bow and shot a fiery arrow toward the darkness below.

The moment the flaming arrow crossed the black-and-white boundary, the fire abruptly vanished from their sight.

It happened so fast that Cheng Shi thought his eyes were playing tricks on him.

The afterimage in his vision told him there had been some faint light left down there.

"Did... did it just disappear?"

"There's danger, Tao Yi, slow down!"

"Something's wrong with the boundary! We can't go any further!"

"I've already slowed it down as much as possible!"

"Then we need to go up!"

Suddenly, Su Yida spoke up, pointing at Gao Yu.

“Gao Yu, make a metal furnace. Zhao Qian can provide fire, and Tao Yi can keep the parachute steady. We’ll make a hot air balloon and fly back up!”

Cheng Shi raised an eyebrow. This guy’s quick-thinking, too.

Su Yida was above Cheng Shi, holding onto Tao Yi’s ankle, while Cheng Shi was gripping Su Yida’s leg.

Gao Yu was below Cheng Shi, and he immediately responded:

“That could work!”

Without hesitation, Gao Yu pulled out the scraps from the previous alchemy furnace and began hammering them into a thin metal container with hooks attached. He even thoughtfully left a small opening at the bottom of the furnace—for fuel.

As for the fuel...

It was, of course, Zhao Qian’s flame-spewing left hand.

“.....”

Zhao Qian clearly wasn’t thrilled about using his [War] power for something like this, but with the threat looming below, he glanced at everyone’s faces and sighed in resignation, accepting the situation.

Cheng Shi nearly burst out laughing at the sight.

It was like watching a warhorse being blindfolded and forced to pull a millstone, radiating frustration and “pent-up” energy.

Still, a warhorse is a warhorse—it's stronger than any workhorse.

When Zhao Qian's [War] fire ignited the furnace, the makeshift parachute immediately halted its descent and began rising.

Success!

They had actually managed to turn a crisis into an opportunity, floating above the abyss like some absurd carnival attraction.

"Wow, I never thought I'd be riding in a hot air balloon for the first time... in the middle of a trial." Cheng Shi remarked with a hint of wonder.

Gao Yu chuckled lightly.

"Is it possible that since the [Gods] descended, every 'first' in your life will happen during a trial?"

Cheng Shi froze for a second, then awkwardly laughed.

"Well, there aren't that many 'firsts' anymore."

".....?"

The others, choosing to ignore the strange conversation between Cheng Shi and Gao Yu, turned their attention back to the boundary below.

Su Yida frowned, deep in thought about what might lie beneath: Was it a darkness that devoured everything, or a rule that punished those who dared cross it?

"Thinking won't help. You need to test it to know."

Cui Dingtian peeled off the skin from his hand, fashioning it into a rope, and tied it around everyone's wrists.

"Keep the fire low and hold steady. I'm going down to check."

With that, he let go of Tao Yi's leg and leapt toward the abyss.

His action shocked everyone.

"Whoa, old man! Are you crazy?"

"Elder Cui, be careful!"

They quickly tightened their grip on the skin-rope, afraid that the old man might not come back.

As gravity and the pull of the rope worked together, Cui Dingtian's skin began peeling off rapidly, unfurling behind him like a long white ribbon. Soon, he had descended to the spot where the flaming arrow had vanished.

Tensing his muscles, he stopped unspooling the rope, positioning himself just above the black-and-white boundary.

From his perspective, the world was split perfectly in half—one half, the tangible reality; the other, the void-like abyss.

"What do you see?"

"White and black."

“???”

The others on the hot air balloon hadn't expected a joke from an old man like him and were momentarily stunned, unsure how to react.

Was this some ancient dad joke?

Way too cold.

But Cui Dingtian didn't leave them in awkward silence for long. He took a handful of small wood chips that he had prepared earlier and flicked them toward the black-and-white boundary.

The moment the wood chips crossed the line, the same thing that had happened with the flame happened again.

The wood chips disappeared.

Despite being so close, Cui Dingtian couldn't see what had happened.

His expression darkened.

“What did you see?” Zhao Qian asked again, noticing the old man's grim look.

Cheng Shi helpfully added:

“Other than just black and white.”

“.....”

“They vanished. Completely vanished.”

“Huh? What vanished?”

“The wood chips. A whole handful of wood chips—they all disappeared.”

“Wood chips?”

Such small objects... maybe something was off?

The rest of the group shared the same thought and began gathering anything throwable they had left. They tossed it toward the boundary below.

Zhao Qian sent another flaming arrow, Su Yida tossed away some food, Gao Yu kicked off one of his crafted shoes, and Cheng Shi...

Spat.

If he hadn't caught Tao Yi glaring at him when he reached for the torn cloth around his waist, he would've gladly provided more “test liquid.”

All their makeshift projectiles fell past the old man toward the boundary. And one by one, they disappeared the moment they crossed the line, just like before.

This time, none of the players could laugh.

Everything had vanished.

Which meant they had no way of crossing the boundary.

Even worse...

Although Tao Yi's wooden parachute could technically last indefinitely once it was created, and while Gao Yu's thin furnace could keep burning as long as it wasn't remolded, the other key element of the hot air balloon—fire...

Was running out.

"Think of something! My mental strength is almost drained!"

Zhao Qian's face had turned pale, and his body looked as though it had been completely sapped of energy.

Without hesitation, Cheng Shi cast a mental restoration spell his way.

"Don't worry, I've got you!"

While the words should've been reassuring, Cheng Shi's sly look made it seem like he was saying:

"It's okay if the workhorse is slacking off; just whip it a few times, and it'll move again."

"....."