

The Gods 85

Chapter 85: The So-Called Choice

Meanwhile, on the other side.

Zhao Qian and Gao Yu stood before the rift between reality and the void, their faces heavy with concern.

When they had awakened, they found only each other—none of the others were anywhere to be seen.

After searching for a long time, they finally confirmed:

In this space, the only thing that could be considered an exit was the rift before them. The rest of the area was filled with endless void.

The difficult choice that lay before Cheng Shi and Su Yida was the same one that now faced Zhao Qian and Gao Yu.

Zhao appeared deep in thought, his head bowed, but in truth, his gaze was on Gao Yu.

A 1700-point Scholar of Knowledge. Young, inexperienced, not deeply scheming. He didn't resist the [Faith Game], even seemed to enjoy it—just like one of those internet-addicted teenagers before the [Gods] descended.

There were many players like him, but no matter how many there were, they couldn't change anything.

Similarly, losing one or two wouldn't affect the larger picture.

“.....”

Zhao Qian clenched his fists, still not having made up his mind.

Gao Yu, oblivious to Zhao's internal struggle, continued to think of ways to resist the pull of the rift using the materials he had on hand.

Most of his tools were gone, and the most reliable solution was still Zhao Qian's fire bow.

If the flames could form a ring in the rift, blocking the void's erosion, there might be a chance to slip through.

But it was still an experiment that required a life to test.

In Gao Yu's mind, if Zhao provided the fire, the life at stake would likely have to be his own.

As for other possibilities...

Gao Yu did have some special materials hidden in his body, but they were embedded in him to protect his heart, meant to be used as a last-ditch life-saving measure.

Without a priest or sufficient medical resources available, he couldn't guarantee he'd survive after extracting them.

So, either way, it was a gamble with his life.

Gao Yu pursed his lips, silently trying to muster his courage.

He began to convince himself:

By the logic that every trial had an answer, the exit must lie in the rift. What they were seeing was probably just an illusion, and with enough bravery, stepping through might lead to another world beyond the rift.

As a follower of [Truth], even in panic, he wouldn't act blindly. He would analyze every factor and draw the conclusion most suited to the current situation.

Gao Yu thought through everything and reached a conclusion.

But just as he was about to discuss it with Zhao Qian, what he got in response wasn't Zhao's agreement—it was a sharp blow to the back of his neck.

The [War] hunter had silently moved behind Gao Yu and delivered a precise chop to his neck.

The strike was clean, and Gao Yu didn't even have time to realize what had happened before he lost consciousness.

"I'm sorry, Gao Yu. I have to survive."

There was no sorrow or regret in Zhao Qian's eyes—only firm resolve, the kind that never looks back.

He took two steps back, once again pulling back his fiery bow, just as Gao Yu had envisioned. He shot it into the void rift.

The white-hot arrow exploded upon contact with the rift, forming a circle, holding back the eroding forces of the void for just a moment.

Then, Zhao picked up Gao Yu and threw him through.

Gao Yu's body was violently torn by the void's pull as he passed through the fire ring, his skin instantly shredding, leaving his body covered in deep gashes that exposed bone. Yet despite how torn his flesh was, he didn't die.

He could survive.

And that was enough.

Seeing Gao Yu, bloody but alive, land on the other side, Zhao Qian let out a long breath.

He drew another arrow.

—

When Cui Dingtian woke up, the pink-haired girl was still lying in the void, her eyes closed.

She had exhausted all of her divine power protecting Cheng Shi. Now, she was covered in wounds, weak beyond words.

The old man didn't wake her. Instead, he explored the entire void space alone.

Upon discovering that every path was blocked by void rifts, leaving no other way out, he returned to Tao Yi's side, his expression complicated as he stared at the young woman before him.

Just moments ago, he had received a [Decay]'s decree:

Have the follower of [Prosperity] embrace decay.

Completing the decree would earn him an extra reward—perhaps additional points on the Ladder of Ascent, or maybe something material.

His god had taken notice of this place, and that meant even with only five days left to live, as long as he completed the decree, his god would not let him die.

And now was the perfect opportunity.

Tao Yi lay there quietly, her breathing faint, unmoving.

With his strength, one punch was all it would take, and the unconscious celebrity would never wake again.

But...

“She’s about the same age as Qiushi...” Cui Dingtian sighed, removing the last bit of cloth from his body and draping it over Tao Yi. Then, he turned and walked toward the rift.

“If someone has to decay, let it be me.

To live with integrity, that’s what my father taught me, and it’s what I taught Qiushi.

Those are the words I’ve lived by my entire life. And now that I’ve reached this age, I can’t disgrace the Cui family, nor can I disgrace Qiushi.”

He muttered to himself, resolutely stepping into the rift.

Indeed, his skin carried [Decay]’s blessing, and his body bore [Prosperity]’s curse. He shouldn’t have feared the grinding erosion of the void.

But in that moment, the power of [Decay] faded away. The void tore into his exposed flesh, carving deep wounds into his body.

And the power of [Prosperity]...

It did not manifest.

[Prosperity] would not watch over an Oathbreaker.

This wasn't a matter of kindness or cruelty—it was simply the nature of faith.

Yet despite this, the “undecaying stone body” cursed by [Prosperity] held strong, protecting him from the void's erosion, allowing him to cross the rift.

But just as Cui Dingtian glimpsed the world beyond the rift, he gritted his teeth and stepped back, retreating across the rift with deep, bone-revealing wounds.

“Huff... huff... I can't go. If I go, the girl will be finished.”

He knelt on the ground, gasping for breath, only to see a pair of delicate feet come to a stop in front of him.

Cui Dingtian looked up, finding Tao Yi standing before him, her expression complicated, as if words were stuck in her throat.

“You're awake... don't worry, I tested it. The rift leads out... we can get out.”

“Mm, thank you.”

Tao Yi's words were sincere. She hadn't felt so genuine since the [Gods] descended.

Because she had woken up much earlier than she let on, and when her consciousness returned, so too did her god's decree:

Kill the Oathbreaker!

Tao Yi had made it this far by keeping her cards close to her chest. She possessed a powerful tool originally intended for an assassin, one that could easily take a life.

But now, should she use it?

Tao Yi had killed people before—many people, in fact—but she had never killed someone she considered a good person.

She thought Cui Dingtian was a good person. But good people were, after all, a matter of circumstance and timing.

To kill or not to kill—she couldn't decide.

So, she left the decision to the old man.

And...

He turned out to be a good man after all. A man who stood tall, just like his name.

“Elder Cui, can you still move?”

“Don't... worry. This old man's tough. Won't die that easily.”

“Good. Let's get out of here.”

—

Back to Cheng Shi.

When Cheng Shi saw Su Yida resolutely step into the rift, he realized he had underestimated his fellow deceiver's desire for godhood.

Becoming one of the gods, sitting on a divine throne—that seemed to be the sole meaning of Su Yida’s existence.

It was the kind of madness that Cheng Shi, who just wanted to live well, could understand but couldn’t personally relate to.

After all, the world had already ended. Shouldn’t people just focus on living happily?

Cheng Shi watched Su Yida’s every move, carefully tracking his posture, path, and reactions.

He hoped to perfectly mimic him when it was his turn to go through.

But then, something strange happened.

Just as Su Yida crossed into the rift, he suddenly turned back and came out again.

Cheng Shi hadn’t even seen him turn around!

It was as if, in the blink of an eye, Su Yida had completed the full rotation and was now striding back out of the rift.

Only, the Su Yida who reemerged wasn’t the same as before.

The fiery obsession in his eyes had vanished, replaced by a cold, determined certainty, like a frigid abyss.

“Cheng Shi, long time no see.”

“?”