

The Gods 155

Chapter 155: A Summon from...!?

Something was wrong!

Something big was wrong!

Cheng Shi may have walked casually, but inside, he was on full alert.

Ever since the dice of fate had jumped earlier, he'd been hearing an indistinct, intermittent voice echoing in the depths of his mind.

It seemed to come from the deepest recesses of his consciousness, or perhaps from some distant void, faint and fragmented, as if it were both near and far.

Cheng Shi focused hard, listening for some time. He could tell it was a woman's voice, but he couldn't understand what she was saying.

This filled him with unease.

This time, it really felt like something sinister!

Hearing what sounded like ghostly whispers in a facility dedicated to studying "truth" and exploring cosmic principles—nothing about that felt right.

His gaze swept over the nearby scholars, but no one seemed to be paying attention to him. He then glanced at his teammates, only to realize that they had already left.

Taking advantage of the lack of attention, Cheng Shi quickened his pace and climbed down a ladder into a less crowded walkway, finding a corner to hide in.

He needed to figure out what this eerie voice in his head was before deciding whether he should deal with a ghost or continue collecting information.

But to his surprise, the moment he settled into the corner, the voice in his mind became clearer.

Feeling tense, Cheng Shi held onto his [Death] ring and glanced around nervously. After confirming that no one was around, he concentrated on the voice.

And then... he heard a hazy, haunting song:

“The dead have long... not closed their eyes, their bones whisper... softly hum...

This is... His domain, where death... is rebirth...

Return, my warrior... this requiem is... your triumphant song!”

As the words of the song became clearer, Cheng Shi’s heart began to race, as if something was summoning him to an unknown world.

Panic surged within him. He clenched his wrist, feeling the increasingly forceful pulse beneath his fingertips, his expression growing anxious.

“Crap, it’s the debt collector!”

Come on, I just signed that IOU! Why are you already asking for repayment?

Couldn’t you give me two more days? It’s not like I’m not going to pay.

Don’t rush me!

If you panic, I’ll panic too!

As his heart pounded faster and faster, Cheng Shi gritted his teeth and cast a calming spell on himself.

He exhaled heavily, twice, and started performing a body scan, using his heightened senses to check his surroundings, trying to determine if anyone had cast a spell on him.

If someone had tampered with him, it could only have been Hu Wei.

Because if Bai Fei wanted to kill him, she wouldn't need to resort to such tricks—one arrow would probably be enough to end him.

And Yan Chun? He was too inexperienced to pull off something this subtle.

But even if it was Hu Wei, what was his goal?

What did he want from Cheng Shi?

Cheng Shi replayed the events of the day in his mind, certain that he hadn't revealed any critical information or fallen into any verbal traps. There was no reason for Hu Wei to act so hastily.

So, what was wrong?

Furrowing his brow, Cheng Shi pondered deeply, moving to a different spot to see if it would change the situation.

Yet, as he walked along the path toward the central platform where the massive tree stood, the voice in his head grew even clearer!

His steps faltered, and he looked up at the towering tree before him.

When the whispers had been faint, he hadn't noticed, but now, standing so close, he realized that the murmuring voice in his head seemed to be coming from the direction of the Whispering Tree.

The Conjugated Whispering Tree?

Was this how it “whispered”?

Cheng Shi’s expression darkened, and he cautiously took a step closer to the tree.

Sure enough, with each step toward the tree, the voice in his head grew louder.

Could it be...

Was this tree somehow connected to the one on the throne?

How else could a tree planted by the scholars of the Tower of Logic whisper such songs of [Death]?

And more importantly... this voice... it felt familiar.

Cheng Shi’s brow furrowed as he tried to recall where he had heard it before. But before he could piece it together, the dice in his chest pocket suddenly jumped again.

Startled, Cheng Shi clutched his chest, discreetly pulling out the dice.

But the moment his fingers touched the surface of the die, his entire consciousness was immediately pulled into the void.

Meanwhile, his body remained in place, standing naturally.

The shell of his body stood motionless, one hand on his chest, brow furrowed in thought.

Though he stood still, he didn't appear out of place—he looked no different from the scholars around him, who were silently contemplating the nature of truth.

...

This journey into the void was different from previous ones. Cheng Shi felt as though he had been drifting in darkness for a long time before he finally found a beam of light, following the direction of the song.

As he hesitated, unsure whether to jump into the light, a familiar voice called out from the other side.

It was this voice that suddenly jogged Cheng Shi's memory. Overcome with shock, he made a decisive leap into the light.

...

"Return, my warrior! This requiem is your...

Triumphant song!"

"....."

"Qing... Sister Qing, this is the seventh time. Will it really work?"

A soft, melodious voice rang out, tinged with doubt and confusion but noticeably free of any suspicion.

Perhaps she was merely curious, wondering why this particular artifact hadn't worked as expected.

"It will work!"

The woman called Sister Qing bit her lip, her face pale.

In her trembling hands, she held a golden mask, splattered with conspicuous bloodstains. Her knuckles were white, her hands shaking slightly as she clutched the mask, betraying her inner uncertainty despite her confident words.

The flickering firelight played across her face, mirroring the constant change in her expression.

She was wavering.

She was uncertain!

Though she prided herself on never misjudging people, the man who had given her this golden mask remained an enigma.

But now, with the situation so dire and no other options left, she had no choice but to take this gamble.

If she gave up, what would become of her companions?

No, it wasn't time to give up yet!

Fang Shiqing, you can't give up yet!

Yes, this woman, who was softly singing a requiem of [Death], was none other than Cheng Shi's former teammate—Fang Shiqing, the one who had once tried to recruit him into the Torchbearers!

The two injured teammates standing beside her watched her with tense expressions.

All the team's hopes seemed to rest on the mask in her hands.

Seeing Fang Shiqing prepare to sing again, her male companion placed a hand on her shoulder, shaking his head with a grave expression.

“Sister Qing, you’re running low on ‘Bone Soldier’ pages. If we keep this up, I’ll be the only one left to defend our position, and I won’t be able to hold them off much longer.”

Fang Shiqing turned to him, her previously uncertain eyes now shining with hope. She smiled and reassured her companion:

“Don’t worry. Any artifact that defies common understanding will always have some quirks we can’t explain.

I’m not placing my trust in a vague summoning; it’s just that, in our current state, we won’t last much longer.

Even if the Bone Soldiers can hold off the enemy charges, the problem is...

We’re too weak.

I’m out of healing pages, and we desperately need a healer.

At this point, our only option is this mask.

I’ve thought of a possibility.

Maybe the ‘Bone Soldier’ page’s grade is too low to trigger its effect—to support a high-grade ‘Player Puppet.’

But don’t worry—I still have a ‘Bone Warrior’ page. That’s an S-rank [Death] talent. If...”

“No!”

Before Fang Shiqing could finish, her male companion cut her off.

“That page is your last line of defense. We can die here, but you can’t.

Sister Qing, the Torchbearers cannot lose their Flame-Seeker, just as a fire cannot burn without kindling!

We may fall here, but there will always be more of us. But right now, you are the last remaining Flame-Seeker...

For the sake of the Torchbearers, for everyone’s hope, Sister Qing, you cannot die.”

“I...”

Fang Shiqing knew this all too well. But abandoning her teammates to survive until the trial’s end alone? That was far too cruel.

She didn’t want it to come to that, so she was determined to take one last shot.

The [Truth] bard tightened her grip on the golden mask, hesitation flashing in her eyes before it was replaced with resolve.

“I... I want to try one more time...

This isn’t just some useless mask. Even though he rejected my invitation, I... I trust him.

He wouldn’t deceive me.

If we can truly summon a Forgotten Doctor’s puppet, it’ll be enough to get all of us through the trial’s final moments!”

“But...”

Her male companion was about to argue further, but just then, the corpse lying at their feet, which had been motionless this entire time, suddenly opened its eyes.

Those bright, piercing eyes gleamed like jewels embedded in rotting flesh. As they opened, the corpse shed its skin, sloughing off all filth and corruption.

Beneath the decaying exterior, a fresh, new body slowly sat up.

The figure looked around, noticing the three people standing nearby.

Seeing the astonished, hopeful, and relieved expressions on their faces, the “Bone Soldier,” now revived within the corpse, shook the blood from his arm and spoke.

“Yo, big sis. You’re looking pretty breezy today.”