

The Gods 163

Chapter 163: Yes, I Am the Clown

The spear had pierced about an inch into Cheng Shi's flesh and went no deeper.

It wasn't because Ji Yue lacked strength, but because Cui Qiushi and Fang Shiqing had rushed over, each holding one of the furious acting captain's shoulders to restrain her.

Ji Yue turned her head coldly, glancing at Fang Shiqing with a mocking expression.

"The Necromancer's Guild?"

Since when did the necromancy talent tree include the ability to summon other players?"

The embarrassment flashed briefly in Fang Shiqing's eyes, but she still managed to force a graceful smile.

"You don't seem surprised at all by Cheng Shi's arrival. It seems that in high-level games, there really are ways to summon other players."

"You don't need to be in a high-level game. You can do it, can't you?"

Fang Shiqing shook her head slightly, smiling as she replied, "Being paired with someone like you, Ji Yue, already counts as a high-level game."

It was a well-crafted compliment.

So well-crafted that Ji Yue momentarily faltered, unsure how to respond.

Clearly, Fang Shiqing had offered an olive branch.

Without the help of NPCs, Fang Shiqing and her group were now Ji Yue's only remaining allies.

Even though they sought the same thing, it didn't matter. According to rumors, the scholars had preserved two unwithering Whispering Petals. Grabbing an extra one for herself wouldn't offer much advantage, so there was still room for cooperation.

That is, as long as their other teammate, the Elemental Judge, didn't mind.

Speaking of teammates, where were the other two?

Just as Ji Yue furrowed her brows and scanned the area, the two players Cheng Shi had yet to meet emerged from the rubble.

One thing you can always count on with players is their survival skills.

In the midst of chaos, they always find a way to protect themselves.

As the two men approached with different expressions, Cheng Shi's attention shifted from the pain in his shoulder to these new arrivals.

One was a 2500-point [Order] mage, an Elemental Judge.

The other was a [Silence] bard, a prisoner, though Cheng Shi had no idea what his score was.

"You..." the Elemental Judge, named Mo Wu, began with a voice full of exasperation. "Are you all insane? All the NPC knights are dead—how does that benefit us?"

And who are you?"

Mo Wu's eyes locked onto Cheng Shi, filled with suspicion and caution.

Cheng Shi could feel the palpable hostility from his “comrade,” but that was understandable—[Order] and [Chaos] were natural enemies.

Even though Cheng Shi wasn’t truly a follower of [Chaos], everything he had done so far would certainly please [Chaos].

While the Elemental Judge voiced his concerns, the prisoner, with chains in hand, remained silent.

Silence was the way of most who followed [Silence].

Even bards, whose power came from their voices, could only express themselves through the clinking of chains, guided by His will.

As the prisoners grew closer to His will and understood His teachings more deeply, they would eventually abandon these “external tools,” replacing them with “silent screams” and “soundless shouts.”

Only then could a prisoner truly be called a [Silence] bard.

As for this particular prisoner, Cheng Shi guessed he was probably still below 2000 points.

Still, regardless of rank, prisoners were a formidable profession.

Their support wasn’t just limited to empowering teammates; they excelled at crippling their enemies.

When the clashing of manacles and chains resonated in the air, enemies caught in the “Imprisonment Melody” would often find themselves restricted, their movements slowed, leaving them exposed for execution.

Cheng Shi studied the two men closely, then rose from the ground, still with a spearpoint pressing into his chest.

He turned to Ji Yue and, without hesitation, admitted his identity.

Very straightforward, completely sincere.

“Yes, I am the Clown.”

“Cheng Shi, you...” Fang Shiqing gasped in shock.

“Big shot?” Bai Ling was dumbfounded.

Cui Qiushi... well, he was probably the least surprised of the group.

Given everything that had just happened, Cui Qiushi had already concluded that Cheng Shi was an elite among elites.

And as for the whole “being a clown” thing, Cui Qiushi figured that the only real clown here... was probably himself.

“.....”

Ji Yue shifted her gaze away from her teammates, turning coldly back to Cheng Shi.

“Even with ‘Lies of Yesterday,’ you can’t switch faiths twice in the same trial! That ‘Shared Divine Grace’ chain you cast—what’s that all about?”

“Why should I tell you?”

Just because your spear’s longer?”

Ji Yue sneered, her eyes scanning the others—Fang Shiqing, Cui Qiushi, and Bai Ling.

“I’m not sure where you people come from, but if you think you’re going to accomplish anything in this trial with just a Clown who’s stolen [War]’s faith, a well-read bard, a goody-two-shoes Order Knight, and a... cute little hunter, you’re mistaken.

I’m your only ally in this trial, and I’m your only choice.

Give me answers and ease my doubts, and I’ll consider working with you.”

Ji Yue’s words were telling. She had said “you” and not “you all.”

Clearly, after the chaos, she had taken a liking to Cheng Shi... or rather, his abilities.

And now that she knew he wasn’t the Devourer of Reason that Fang Jue had warned her about, she was even more inclined to team up with a “strong player.”

Cheng Shi, hearing this self-assured, almost arrogant proposition, couldn’t help but laugh.

“Listen, just because we’ve had some ‘up-close and personal’ time doesn’t mean I have to pick you.

I’m not a masochist, and besides...

We still have an Elemental Judge here.

Personally, I prefer [Order] over [Truth].”

No sooner had Cheng Shi finished speaking than two scoffs echoed through the group.

One from Ji Yue, the other from Mo Wu.

Both of them could see that Cheng Shi's cautious glances toward Mo Wu were filled with suspicion and calculation. Before dealing with the Elemental Judge, Cheng Shi seemed to have no other option.

"You don't have to worry about sparing my feelings. You don't trust me, just as I don't trust you."

Mo Wu laid his stance on the table, his voice firm with the conviction of [Order].

"But I'll say this again: until we've found the real prize, our trust shouldn't be broken."

"....."

Alright, alright, you're all upstanding folks, and I'm the only bad seed here, huh?

Cheng Shi laughed bitterly at their attitude before explaining:

"It's called psychological suggestion.

His followers' 'reason' is never strong to begin with. What they responded to wasn't the 'mind-breaking' ability of a Devourer of Reason, but the primal madness inside them.

Before the expected chaos unfolds, all it takes is a small nudge, a slight hint, and those who can't hold onto their sanity will bite the bait.

And the act of slaughter, combined with the title 'Devourer of Reason,' is the best suggestion.

It wasn't my skill that made them lose their reason—it was themselves.

To them, both disguises and killings are chaos. There's no distinction between the two.

But when the situation visibly devolves into chaos and even breaks down completely, no matter what purpose they had for hiding in the squad, they won't let go of such an opportunity for disorder.

Because all of this is the best offering to Him.

Honestly, I didn't expect your squad...

No, I didn't expect you had infiltrated the enemy's ranks.

If it weren't for me, you lot would've died without even knowing how!

Of course, no need to thank me. This is just how a Lawful player should behave.

Oh, and stop mourning those dead knights. You know as well as I do that in this situation, they weren't going to escape, no matter when or how.

I just... brought forward the time of their release, that's all.

So... guess I'm quite the good guy after all.

But Captain Ji, you're not the sentimental type.

Trying to use sympathy as a bargaining chip? That card's a bit outdated."

As Cheng Shi spoke, Ji Yue instantly withdrew her spear.

She smiled—a dazzling, intoxicating smile—and extended her hand toward Cheng Shi.

"Pleasure doing business."

“?”

Cheng Shi was stunned.

Her change in demeanor was so abrupt—from cold hostility to warm handshake—and it didn’t even have a smooth transition.

But still, Cheng Shi reached out and shook her hand.

“Darling, you’re scaring me a bit.”

“Scared of what?”

“Scared that when you sell me out, you’ll do it just as decisively.”

Ji Yue laughed heartily. “It’s not decisiveness—it’s pragmatism. And pragmatism is His will.”

Ah, of course. Let’s just hope you’re being pragmatic and not planning to “seal the deal” for real.

“How amusing. The trickster and the scholar have reached an agreement. Seems like I’m the one left looking like the clown now.”

Mo Wu chuckled self-deprecatingly, taking a step back to distance himself from the group.

In this situation, he now seemed to be in an awkward position.

But Cheng Shi had no intention of excluding anyone. He immediately stepped forward, grabbed Mo Wu’s hand, and placed it on top of his and Ji Yue’s hands, smiling as he addressed the group.

“You see? United we stand, divided we fall. We’re all good people here—why can’t we all work together?”

Ji Yue cast a sidelong glance at Mo Wu but said nothing, clearly intrigued by Cheng Shi’s sudden shift in tone.

Mo Wu, on the other hand, was clearly not as relaxed. His hand rested stiffly atop theirs, his wrist gripped by Cheng Shi’s other hand. His brows furrowed as he studied the two of them, distrust still evident in his cautious posture.

It was obvious he didn’t trust the Clown.

He had no idea what the Clown had up his sleeve.

But Cheng Shi wasn’t selling anything—he was just taking the pulse.

“Tsk, brother, your heart rate’s a bit slow.

Generally speaking, people with heartbeats this slow... well, they usually aren’t good folks.”