

## The Gods 174

Chapter 174: Return [Truth] to Its Conclusion, Force [Fate] to Be Generous

To be honest, Cheng Shi didn't feel particularly reluctant about it.

As a walker of the [Void], he didn't need to experience [Life], and besides, he had never considered this [Divinity] to truly belong to him.

It was something he carried because of his promise to Elder Cui, a testament to the man's upright and honorable character.

Cheng Shi had never viewed it as a source of power but rather as a memento of witnessing the light of human nature.

But now, he suddenly realized that using this [Prosperity Divinity] here wasn't unfitting at all.

Because of Cui Qiushi, because of the Torchbearers!

The World Tree had never blossomed or borne fruit, which meant that the historical accounts of the Whispering Petal's effects were merely the speculations of later generations.

Yet, even if they were just speculations, the Torchbearers, who had fallen into a crisis of trust, needed a petal to stabilize their ranks.

Therefore, handing over this [Divinity] to accelerate the maturation of the Conjugated Whispering Tree, and in exchange, obtaining a true Whispering Petal, was the best way Cheng Shi could repay the Torchbearers who had summoned him.

Who would've thought that Elder Cui's kindness would ultimately be repaid through Cui Qiushi?

Cheng Shi glanced at the grand scholar, then at the Conjugated Whispering Tree behind him, and after a moment of reflection, he decisively made his choice.

"What do I need to do?"

A spark of hope flashed in Kuwei's eyes.

"Young man, you don't need to do anything.

I still possess enough ability to extract the [Prosperity] within you.

All you need to do is relax and not resist, and I'll be able to catalyze the Conjugated Whispering Tree in no time, allowing it to...

Fully mature!"

No lies.

There was no need for lies.

Cheng Shi had already figured it out. This grand scholar had long since dedicated everything to this experiment.

Aside from the experiment's results, nothing else mattered to him.

"That's fine, but...

I do have a condition."

It was time for Cheng Shi to negotiate. He stared intently at the grand scholar, and without waiting for a response, he laid out his terms.

“You are free to use the [Prosperity Divinity] within me, but before the fruit ripens, I need you to preserve two...” He paused mid-sentence, realizing his error, and quickly corrected himself, “all the non-withered petals of the Conjugated Whispering Tree!”

Since the World Tree had never blossomed or borne fruit, it was clear that the historical records mentioning only two petals were false as well.

So, having come this far, why not ask for more?

It wasn't like he wasn't paying for them.

Kuwei was momentarily taken aback, his expression showing hesitation.

“The Conjugated Whispering Tree isn't an ordinary plant as humans would typically understand. While we've theorized that it should self-pollinate between reality and void, we don't know if plucking its petals will affect its eventual fruiting.

Therefore, I can't guarantee your request...

But if the tree blossoms abundantly enough, it shouldn't be too hard to fulfill.”

His meaning was clear—he couldn't promise anything.

Cheng Shi frowned, but after thinking for a moment, he realized he had no choice but to accept this non-committal promise.

Because he had no other alternatives.

[Fate] and [Truth]—both were surely waiting for this moment.

“Alright, I understand.” His response was succinct. “Let's do it. Time is of the essence.”

“Thank you, thank you! The Void Matter Theory department will remember you, the Tower of Logic will remember you, history will remember you!”

The grand scholar nodded fervently, his excitement causing his body to tremble slightly.

Remember?

It’s better if they don’t.

Cheng Shi smiled faintly, then relaxed his body, spreading his arms wide.

Seeing him ready, Kuwei began the process.

The grand scholar extended a hand and touched the air, and at the point where his fingers touched, reality seemed to dissolve, revealing countless cracks in the void.

Within these cracks, tangled roots intertwined, pulsating with the light of [Void] and [Existence], both dark as ink and vibrant with color.

Under Kuwei’s guidance, the thin roots began to “crawl” out from the cracks in the void, reaching toward Cheng Shi.

Without moving, Cheng Shi watched as the roots swiftly burrowed into his body, remaining perfectly still.

It wasn’t that he had let his guard down, but rather that he noticed something strange—these roots from the Conjugated Whispering Tree had begun to resonate faintly with him.

It was the same sensation he had felt when he had leaped into [Laughter and Mockery]; the moment the roots pierced his body, Cheng Shi felt like he had returned home.

“Don’t be afraid. They won’t drain your life force.

They’re just hungry, having smelled the scent of [Prosperity], and they’re eager to feast.

You see, when the Conjugated Whispering Tree was first planted, it was catalyzed using the [Divinity] of [Prosperity].

Perhaps they recognize the scent of their ‘mother,’ which is why they’re so impatient.”

“.....”

The [Divinity] of [Prosperity] was dwindling.

The tree was indeed absorbing it, and as the roots fed, the branches and leaves of the Conjugated Whispering Tree began to sway gently.

They became greener, more vibrant, filled with life.

The walls of glass around them seemed as if they had been filtered with a highly saturated lens, making the entire laboratory feel lush and alive.

And yet, despite this, Cheng Shi couldn’t spot a single flower or bud among the visible branches of the giant tree.

The grand scholar seemed equally puzzled.

After several minutes of absorption, Cheng Shi’s [Divinity] had nearly been drained.

“Grand Scholar... are you certain it’s only six months away from full maturity?”

“Yes!

I’m sure of it!

We’ve measured the growth rate of the Conjugated Whispering Tree countless times, constantly refining its curve.

The curve began to converge decades ago, steadily approaching its peak.

After generations of verification, we are certain—it’s about to mature. And it will happen within the next six months!”

“And how can you be so sure this tree will even bear fruit?

As you said, it’s not an ordinary plant, and the theory of it self-pollinating between reality and void is just your hypothesis!”

Kuwei’s gaze turned resolute as he answered:

“[Birth]!

The seed of the Conjugated Whispering Tree was created using His power!

He unites opposites, advocates for creation, and all things born from Him will give rise to new life.

This was confirmed through countless experiments conducted by our predecessors at the Tower of Logic, all related to [Birth].

So, it will bloom and bear fruit.”

“But it hasn’t!

And the [Divinity] within me is almost gone.”

Kuwei saw the situation too, and sweat began beading on his forehead. He frantically flipped through his experimental notes, as if desperately searching for where things had gone wrong.

Cheng Shi pressed his lips together in frustration, feeling like he was about to burst, and couldn’t help but ask:

“You ever consider that this tree’s reflection in the void might be the new life birthed from the World Tree?

Or maybe... the World Tree itself is the new life birthed by the Conjugated Whispering?

Who says new life always has to be the next generation?

What if... they’re just growing up together?”

The more Cheng Shi thought about it, the more plausible it seemed. And in no time, his face turned grim.

It was over. The Tower of Logic’s scholars, who had dedicated 500 years to this experiment, might have been chasing nothing but a joke...

No wonder his Patron hadn’t bothered to break through the High Wall of Knowledge after 500 years to take a peek.

Interrupting the long process of this experiment was far less entertaining than waiting until the scholars’ hopes had nearly reached fruition, only to mock them as they were left with nothing.

Cheng Shi could almost hear faint sounds of laughter echoing from the cracks in the void.

That barely audible chuckling began to reverberate through his soul.

“.....”

“How could this happen? Why hasn’t it bloomed?”

Why hasn’t it borne fruit!?

[Birth] can’t be wrong, [Truth] can’t be wrong, reality and void can’t be wrong, and the experiment’s data can’t be wrong!

Why!?

What’s the reason!?”

Cheng Shi’s expression twisted in frustration.

None of Them are wrong, because... it’s you who are wrong...

He glanced sympathetically at Kuwei, unsure of how to console the red-eyed, trembling scholar.

“Grand Scholar...

The [Divinity] of [Prosperity]... has been consumed.”