

The Gods 176

Chapter 176: Cheng Shi: The Ending Shall Be Written by Me, and Generosity Shall Be Bestowed by Me

Although Ji Yue had been accepted as a “Torchbearer” by Cheng Shi, in Fang Shiqing’s heart, she already saw Ji Yue as half a Torchbearer.

And trusting your teammates, trusting your companions, had always been a guiding principle for all Torchbearers.

So, hearing Ji Yue’s instructions, she decisively led the others toward the laboratory that wasn’t far off, where Cheng Shi was surrounded by the dense foliage of the Conjugated Whispering Tree.

The prisoner ran, striking his shackles as he went, and under the influence of the [Silence] bard’s abilities, the Torchbearers grew faster and faster.

In the blink of an eye, they rushed through the door, entering the highest laboratory that had stood for over five hundred years.

But just as the four of them parted the sprawling branches of the giant tree, they saw a familiar figure cautiously climbing down the thick central trunk.

In his hands, he held a bundle wrapped in clothing, bulging as though it contained something of great value.

On the other side of the laboratory lay the corpse of a white-haired scholar, eyes wide open in death, his finger still pointed in the direction of the figure.

Seeing this, the group’s eyes narrowed, and shock was written across their faces.

“Cheng Shi!?”

“Big shot?”

“You...”

That's right, the person they were looking at was none other than Cheng Shi!

Startled by the sudden voices, Cheng Shi immediately turned around, hurriedly shifting the bundle in his hand behind his back.

Only when he saw that the newcomers were his own teammates did his previously serious expression relax slightly.

However, as he moved the bundle behind him, the clothing that wrapped it momentarily shifted, revealing its contents for just a split second.

But that split second was enough for the four people at the door to catch a glimpse of what Cheng Shi was holding.

A flash of black and white!

If it had just been that fleeting glance, perhaps the group wouldn't have thought much of it.

But when combined with Cheng Shi's cautious climbing, his serious expression, the corpse of the scholar on the floor, and the direction the scholar's finger was pointing...

The answer to what Cheng Shi was holding became all too obvious.

Everyone immediately thought of the ritual phrase Ji Yue had quoted earlier:

"O tree that blossoms beneath the heavens, blooming with white flowers that reflect the void's shadow, and bearing black fruit."

White and black—couldn't that perfectly describe the petals and fruit of the Conjugated Whispering Tree?

It couldn't be wrong!

What Cheng Shi was holding was likely the petals and fruit of the Conjugated Whispering Tree!

Everyone was stunned, their gazes fixed on Cheng Shi and the bundle he was trying to conceal behind his back, their expressions filled with disbelief and amazement.

He did it!

He actually got it!?

Could it be that the scholars' shouts were false, that their minds had truly been affected by [Chaos]?

The Conjugated Whispering Tree had bloomed and borne fruit after all, and now both of them were in Cheng Shi's hands!

The results of the Tower of Logic's centuries-long experiment now belonged to us?

There were too many questions swirling in the players' minds, and there wasn't enough time for Cheng Shi to explain everything. Fang Shiqing understood this well, so she only asked one question:

"You... is that...?"

She was so tense that the hand clutching her Book of Truth was trembling, her knuckles white from the pressure. Her lips pressed tightly together, and she stood frozen, waiting for Cheng Shi's response.

But the hope in her eyes made it clear—she was ready for good news.

Cheng Shi didn't let her down.

His gaze locked onto Fang Shiqing's, and he nodded, barely containing his excitement.

"I got it. One fruit, three petals!

History was wrong—it wasn't just two!

They preserved three petals that had not withered!"

What!!

Three!?

Fang Shiqing was dumbstruck, Cui Qiushi was equally astonished, Bai Ling was so excited she nearly jumped, and even the normally expressionless prisoner cracked a rare smile.

Cheng Shi swiftly descended from the tree, speaking as he climbed down:

"I fell from the void and just happened to stumble upon Grand Scholar Kuwei as he was recording the final notes on the fruit.

I asked him if he would sell the petals. He refused.

So...

Things got a little unpleasant between us.

You probably already guessed, but I swear, it wasn't on purpose..."

“.....”

“.....”

“.....”

Silence fell over the group.

Cheng Shi’s story was so far-fetched that it didn’t even sound made up—it was too absurd to be fiction, especially at such a critical moment.

But...

It wasn’t completely impossible.

There are always those willing to fabricate the truth—after all, His followers certainly enjoyed doing so at times.

Bai Ling would never doubt Cheng Shi, and Cui Qiushi hadn’t even considered the possibility of deception.

Only Fang Shiqing hesitated when she saw the fruit Cheng Shi was holding.

But in the next moment, everything became clear to her.

Summoning Cheng Shi had been a spur-of-the-moment decision, a strategy born of necessity.

In other words, this trial had begun before Cheng Shi’s arrival. Based on that alone, it was logical to assume that the answer they sought—the petals—had already existed in the trial before the Clown appeared.

If the petals were real, then the fruit must also exist.

With that realization, Fang Shiqing dismissed her doubts and accepted the reality of what Cheng Shi held.

He had merely picked them, not fabricated them.

But Fang Shiqing had forgotten to account for [Fate].

Or rather, aside from the followers of [Fate], few people remembered to consider Him at every step.

And so, in this moment, a Torchbearer who had neglected [Fate] was unexpectedly favored by it.

That's just how fate works.

And so they believed.

The Torchbearers believed!

The scholars of the Void Matter Theory department had indeed preserved three petals!

Cheng Shi's earlier comment—"Let's ask them if they'll sell us the petals"—was also true. This wildly imaginative Clown had genuinely asked the grand scholar to sell the petals, and after being refused, "accidentally" killed him.

Hearing this, everyone was left in a daze.

They could almost imagine how absurd the scene must have been.

The head of a centuries-old experiment, approached by a complete stranger who had fallen from the sky, being asked whether the result of a lifetime's work was for sale...

The scene was too surreal, the outcome too shocking. The group's minds buzzed with disbelief.

They completely overlooked the grand scholar's death—or rather, no one cared how he had died. All they wanted to know was what the petals and fruit looked like.

Cheng Shi saw the anticipation in their eyes, so he carefully lifted the edge of the cloth, revealing the black and white objects wrapped inside.

The group took an eager step forward, and sure enough, inside the bundle were three slender white petals and a fist-sized black fruit.

The fruit shimmered with an inky glow, while the petals shone with a blinding, radiant white light!

The Conjugated Whispering Tree!

Five hundred years of waiting had finally yielded results.

The fruit and the three petals were the culmination of generations of scholars' pursuit of "Truth."

And now, they belonged to the Torchbearers!

Indeed, the Conjugated Whispering Tree, which had not borne fruit before Grand Scholar Kuwei, had finally bloomed and fruited before the eyes of these few.

The players, still excited, took another step forward, eager to inspect the treasures more closely, but at that moment, Cheng Shi suddenly wrapped the bundle back up, tucking it away into his robes.

Seeing this, Cui Qiushi's face darkened as he came to a realization.

Given the current situation, there was no time to relish their victory.

They needed to escape from the encirclement of the Death's Bell Knights and the pursuit of the traitors within the experimental site.

Only after they had escaped and survived until the end of the trial could they truly breathe a sigh of relief.

With that, Cui Qiushi decisively turned and headed toward the door.

"I'll go meet Ji Yue. Everyone, follow me. We might find a chance to break through!"

"Qiushi, watch your step!"

Fang Shiqing's brow furrowed as she glanced down at the walkway below. Seeing the dense mass of [Chaos] followers swarming up the floating platforms, her face filled with worry.

"There are too many of them. They've nearly taken control of the entire experimental site. If we want to escape, we'll have to rely on..."

[Laughter and Mockery] again!

Cheng Shi, we..."

Cheng Shi's face was just as grim, if not more so. He glanced at Fang Shiqing and subtly nodded.

Fang Shiqing, her emotions a mix of tension and excitement, failed to notice anything unusual about Cheng Shi. She quickly followed Cui Qiushi out of the laboratory, ready to help the embattled scholar fend off the approaching enemies.

Cui Qiushi, ever the loyal warrior, charged ahead toward the front lines.

Fang Shiqing followed closely, already flipping open her Book of Truth.

Bai Ling, originally trailing behind them, unexpectedly turned around without warning. In a swift, fluid motion, she drove a hidden dagger deep into the prisoner's stomach!

“Shhhck—”

Blood sprayed out!

The prisoner's eyes widened in shock and anger as he swung his manacled arm at Bai Ling.

But Bai Ling deftly dodged the blow, rolling sideways before positioning herself protectively in front of Cheng Shi.

With her bow drawn and aimed at the prisoner, she breathed heavily, her face tense with urgency.

“Big shot, move! He's compromised!”

Seeing Bai Ling's actions, Cheng Shi's expression darkened further.

He knew something was wrong here, but the issue wasn't the prisoner—it was the invisible threat lurking somewhere, hidden from sight... the one who had never revealed themselves...

The invisible figure watching from the shadows!

There were more than just the three of them here!