

## **The Gods 177**

Chapter 177: The Mantis Stalks the Cicada, But the Oriole Lies in Wait?

Cheng Shi lied. Clearly, he had told an outrageously unreliable lie.

But that's the beauty of the art of deception.

In certain situations, the more absurd the lie, the more it resembles the truth.

Cheng Shi understood this well, and so, he deceived the five people present, fabricating out of thin air an experimental result that the Tower of Logic had waited over five hundred years for, but never obtained...

The Offering to the Void, after sacrificing the trust of five people, had finally given Cheng Shi the best possible feedback.

The fruit that the Conjugated Whispering Tree never bore and the flowers that never bloomed appeared in his hands as if by magic.

Cheng Shi had rewritten the script of a trial that should have yielded nothing.

He had delivered a shocking reversal for the Torchbearers, who came seeking the petals.

However!

There was still a flaw in his script.

In his design, all five of the new and old "Torchbearers" were supposed to witness this moment together for the Offering to the Void to fully activate.

So, when only four people appeared at the entrance, Cheng Shi had a moment of panic.

But during that brief moment of panic, he thought of someone else!

Mo Wu!

The Source of Calamity that he had wounded wouldn't just leave things unresolved.

If Mo Wu had been patient enough to hide among the players for four days to get to the petals, it meant he was determined to obtain them.

So, when the others appeared, wasn't it possible that he might have come as well?

Using his filthy [Chaos] abilities to confuse everyone's perceptions, hiding his presence just as he had when he fled in disgrace, making himself invisible once again?

Could he have snuck in with the rest of the group and arrived here together with them!?

But why hadn't [Laughter and Mockery] revealed him?

Just as this doubt formed in Cheng Shi's mind, the answer followed.

Because...

That was likely part of the fun too, wasn't it?

Indeed, this seemed exactly like the kind of plot his Patron would enjoy.

Cheng Shi was inwardly exasperated—his success was thanks to his Patron, but his worry was also because of Him.

But there was no turning back now, so his only option was to gamble once more.

Not that he wanted to gamble, but at this point, he had no choice.

This was his one and only trump card to reverse the outcome.

If more of the lunatics saw through his ploy, these [Chaos] followers wouldn't sit idly by, waiting to be fooled like regular people.

No one knew what twisted thoughts might be running through their minds.

So, in this small space at the top of the lab, with his four teammates standing before him, this was Cheng Shi's only chance to change the outcome!

Thus...

The play began.

According to the script he had written, Cheng Shi put on his performance—when he turned to hide the bundle behind his back, he deliberately revealed a small portion of it, allowing everyone to see what he was holding.

And when he felt that the yarn ball and tissue paper wrapped in the clothes had transformed into the actual fruit and petals, he knew he had won the bet!

There was indeed someone else in this room, someone invisible to everyone else!

And that person was very likely the Source of Calamity!

He was wary of Cheng Shi's thunderous power and cautious of the number of teammates around him.

That's why he hadn't taken action yet—he was waiting for the right opportunity.

And so was Cheng Shi.

Though it appeared as if he were displaying the fruit, his attention wasn't focused on his teammates at all.

His eyes and ears were alert, scanning the room, waiting to give the Source of Calamity a surprise attack the moment he made his move.

But to his surprise, Bai Ling acted faster than he expected.

And her target wasn't the Source of Calamity, but the prisoner—a person Cheng Shi hadn't even suspected!

But hadn't the Master of Deceit assured Cheng Shi that the prisoner had never told a lie?

Wait!

Hold on!

Never told a lie!?

Could that also mean...

Cheng Shi's eyes widened in shock as he quickly took a step back, clutching the scalpel in his hand.

[Chaos]!

He's also part of [Chaos]!

Damn it, I've been careless—too careless.

Who said there couldn't be two [Chaos] followers in one game?

Who said a [Chaos] follower couldn't disguise themselves as a [Silence] bard?

They're not just good at disguising themselves—they can constantly alter everyone's perception, ensuring no one can see through their true identity!

So there wasn't just a Source of Calamity here—there was also a Discordant Bard!

The prisoner's speed-enhancing song wasn't a [Silence] melody at all—it was a Howl of Chaos!

Was his score real?

Was his name real?

What about everything he heard and the promises he made—were they real?

Probably not!

And what about the Oath Mask, which Cheng Shi had thought had already locked in its testimony—had it also been nullified?

Damn it, I've been played!

I should've seen this coming!

How could a true follower of [Silence] be represented by a rusted horn?

They don't even speak!

My Patron had already hinted at the truth:

Rusted!

Out of tune!

He's a Discordant Bard!

What [Silence] follower would be curious enough to blow their own horn in [Laughter and Mockery]?

So, the prayer about being "tired of loneliness" was probably a lie too!

The supposed companions weren't the orderly "Fang Shiqings" of the world, but rather the "Mo Wus" who reveled in sowing confusion!

I've been blinded by useful information!

The prisoner didn't know Fang Shiqing and the others were Torchbearers, so he concocted what he believed was a "reasonable" prayer.

But I knew Fang Shiqing and the others were Torchbearers, unknown to the [Gods], and I still ignored that detail!

Careless! I was too careless!

No—maybe it wasn't just carelessness. Perhaps the influence of [Chaos] had muddled my thoughts.

All my assessments and judgments about the prisoner had fallen into the pit of [Chaos], becoming disorderly and meaningless.

Cheng Shi's face darkened with realization as he stared at the prisoner, his expression growing heavier.

The "teammate" who was now bleeding from Bai Ling's stab wound wasn't just some low-level Discordant Bard—he was a high-ranking player on par with Mo Wu!

And judging by his current appearance, it seemed like even Mo Wu had been fooled by him!

Impressive!

He let a fellow [Chaos] follower take the fall, all in exchange for a perfect cover!

This guy's a master!

And not just any master—he's a master of manipulation, skilled at playing with people's hearts!

"Interesting..."

The Torchbearers really have some tricks up their sleeves.

I'm curious—how did this little bird figure me out?"

The prisoner finally broke the silence.

He unshackled the chains on his wrists, casually tossing them to the ground. Then, rubbing his wrists, he looked playfully at Bai Ling and Cheng Shi.

“A 2400-point Clown, hmm, not bad.

But you were too careless.

You should know, once people are aware that you’re a Clown, your tricks may no longer work.

Not everyone is a fool.

Especially... those of us who are watched by Him.

However, your performance was still quite captivating—worthy of some praise.”

With that, the prisoner began clapping.

Clap Clap Clap!

“I truly didn’t expect an experiment that had been going on for centuries to have no result.

And yet, the real result was a Clown fabricating something out of thin air using [Deceit].

Quite a wild idea, but your plan was too rushed.

Your Torchbearer companions trust you, so they instinctively overlooked some rough details.

But there will always be people who aren’t fooled. A Clown’s illusions will eventually be seen through by those attentive enough.

But fortunately, you encountered me!

If I hadn't altered my own perception, believed your lie, and influenced the Source of Calamity to also believe it, then perhaps...

The white flower and black fruit in your hands would still just be a pile of trash.

Ha!

Hand them over. Surrender them, and I'll let you live.

History is funny like that.

All the records say that the followers of [Chaos] took the fruit. And now, as it turns out, they were right.

They just didn't expect that the one to take the fruit and petals...

Would be me."