

The Gods 18

Chapter 18: Seven Days Flew By, and the Trial Has Come Once Again

As the title suggests.

Over the course of seven days, Xie Yang, fueled by some promise he had received from the Prophet girl, happily took on an A-rank weapon trial on Cheng Shi's behalf.

In fact, Cheng Shi had no real need for a weapon. What he wanted was a few gold pocket watches.

But Xie Yang believed that a gold watch wasn't nearly as valuable as a bottle of Prosperity of Yesteryear, so he insisted on getting a weapon for Cheng Shi instead.

Seeing how stubborn Xie Yang was—almost as if he had a death wish—Cheng Shi relented and casually mentioned a mage's weapon for him to retrieve.

Xie Yang had been stunned when he learned that Cheng Shi needed a mage's weapon.

"Wait, you're a mage?"

"Do I not look like one?"

"I thought you were an assassin. You're really good at hiding."

"..."

Luckily, Xie Yang didn't die in the trial, but he was severely injured.

Cheng Shi tried to persuade him to ask for the Prosperity of Yesteryear back, but Xie Yang flatly refused the suggestion—and even borrowed another bottle on top of it.

In the end, Cheng Shi got the weapon, but he was down another bottle of potion.

“Best of luck with your love life,” Cheng Shi said, his expression complicated.

“Thanks.”

Xie Yang was genuinely grateful.

Cheng Shi was genuinely annoyed.

If it weren't for the fact that you're a decent chat companion, I wouldn't give a damn about your ridiculous romance.

Still, it wasn't all bad. At least it provided some amusement.

In this world, keeping a relaxed mindset was the most important thing.

Time flew by quickly, and before Cheng Shi knew it, new trial information appeared before his eyes.

He hadn't entered a trial in a week, so he was in good form.

[Special Trial (Eternal Night's Labyrinth [Memory]) has begun]

[Matching teammates (1/6)]

[Trial Objective: In the tangled web of memories, a way out can always be found... but only if the night does not end (12-hour time limit)]

“Shit!”

Cheng Shi froze for a moment before bursting out in curses.

It was a trial for the opposing faith—this was basically a death sentence!

[Matching successful (6/6), entering trial]

In a state of utter disbelief, his vision once again faded to darkness.

...

“Sir? Sir?”

The sounds of lively chatter filled his ears, mixed with the clinking of glasses and the occasional burst of laughter.

Was he in... a tavern?

Cheng Shi opened his eyes and realized he was sitting at a round table, along with five other people, all of whom were slumped over, asleep. He was the first to wake up.

He glanced down at his clothes—his collar and shirt were soaked.

Fortunately, it wasn't vomit. It looked like someone had spilled alcohol on him while he was asleep. His clothes reeked of booze.

“Sir, would you like more drinks?” a black-clad waiter asked, standing by the table with a tray, awaiting Cheng Shi's instructions.

More drinks? Everyone was already this drunk—who'd want more? Were they planning to take a bath in it?

“No, thanks,” Cheng Shi waved the waiter off, watching as he bowed and left. The others at the table began to stir as well.

“Where are we? A tavern?”

“Ugh, my head...”

“Ahh, my clothes are dirty!”

“Shanira sheep’s blood wine, a favorite among the Blizzar Plains nomads. In the mid-[Era of Civilization], there was a small kingdom called Belus south of the Stormwind Mountains where this wine was popular.”

“Glug glug glug... ah, good stuff!”

“...”

As Cheng Shi watched his teammates react in various ways, his face darkened.

Three men, three women—clearly, there were a few slackers in this group.

“Are any of you high-rankers?” the bespectacled young man who had spoken earlier began quickly surveying the room. His eyes paused briefly on Cheng Shi and the woman who had just explained the history of the tavern. He eventually addressed the latter.

“Fang Shiqing, [Civilization], Bard, Ladder Rank 2047. Good morning, everyone.”

The [Civilization] Bard named Fang Shiqing pulled out a white handkerchief from somewhere and began gracefully wiping the wine stains from her white shirt and black tie. She adjusted her black-rimmed glasses and nodded politely to everyone at the table.

Cheng Shi quickly made a mental note of her appearance: long curly hair, round black glasses, delicate features... and she had a sort of teacher-like vibe.

Specifically, an English teacher vibe.

The bespectacled young man sitting beside her looked stunned, his mouth slightly agape.

“A 2000-point game?” Seeing everyone looking at him, the young man hurriedly introduced himself, fumbling a bit. “Ah Ming, Ming as in ‘remember’, [Civilization], Assassin, Ladder Rank 1717.”

As soon as the boy finished speaking, Cheng Shi’s brow furrowed.

He was lying.

Whether he was hiding his path or fabricating his score, Cheng Shi couldn’t be sure. It didn’t seem necessary to lie about one’s class, and there wasn’t really a reason to either.

But his nervous demeanor didn’t match that of an assassin.

Aren’t assassins supposed to be... more composed?

Cheng Shi suddenly thought of Song Yawen. He shrugged it off—maybe being quirky was all the rage among assassins these days.

“Hey, brother?”

Lost in thought, Cheng Shi was startled by Ah Ming calling out to him.

He blinked, realizing that the introductions had been going in reverse order, and Ah Ming was seated directly to his left.

Was it already his turn?

Cheng Shi composed himself and introduced himself with a bright smile:

“Cheng Shi, [Existence], Priest, Ladder Rank 1501.”

As soon as he finished speaking, he noticed that one of the women across the table frowned slightly.

Oh? This was getting interesting.

“1500?” Ah Ming’s eyes widened in even greater surprise as he glanced between Fang Shiqing and Cheng Shi, looking shocked. “Another 500-point difference?”

“Another?” Cheng Shi chuckled.

“Last week’s trial also had a 500-point gap. It was really tough, nearly got me killed.”

“But you survived, didn’t you?”

Ah Ming forced a chuckle, but his expression remained grim. “Pure luck, that’s all.”

Introductions continued, and the next turn belonged to the middle-aged man seated to Cheng Shi’s right, who had been massaging his head the entire time.

The man had shoulder-length messy hair and was wearing a fur-lined jacket despite the warm weather. His gaze was lethargic, and he looked somewhat disheveled.

“Huang Bo, [Chaos], Bard, Ladder Rank 1998.”

[Chaos]! The opposing path to [Civilization]!

Things were about to get interesting.

Cheng Shi glanced at Fang Shiqing and Ah Ming’s expressions, but they only gave Huang Bo a brief look with no special reaction.

On the other hand, Huang Bo continued ruffling his hair without even lifting his head, seemingly unconcerned by the presence of enemies in the group.

“Another 2000-pointer?”

“Another Bard?” The woman across from Cheng Shi exclaimed in surprise, quickly covering her mouth after realizing she had spoken too loudly.

This woman was the same one who had frowned earlier when Cheng Shi introduced himself.

“Is this a singing contest or something?” The other woman, who had been guzzling her drink, leaned her elbow on the table, lazily swaying her bottle. Her tongue quickly flicked across her lips as she smirked.

“Call me Bai Ling, or just Birdie. [Descent], Hunter. My ladder score’s too low to mention. I’ll just follow whatever you big brothers and sisters say.”

She took another long swig of her drink, completely indifferent to the wine spilling onto her black satin dress, which clung to her chest, highlighting her curvy silhouette.

“I’m really good at following orders~”

[Corruption].

Cheng Shi didn't even need to look—he could tell just by her scent that the girl wearing a choker was a [Corruption] Hunter, a sensory predator.

They excelled at indulging their desires and leading their prey down the same path, manipulating their targets' minds and emotions, letting them revel in hedonism, and ultimately breaking their will to resist.

Judging by her appearance, this girl was probably an expert in carnal indulgence. Yet, Cheng Shi noted that she hadn't lied—her ladder score was indeed quite low.

Low score, yet she was matched in this trial.

She had some skills.

Ah Ming, the assassin, looked rather uncomfortable in front of her. Huang Bo continued scratching his head, while Fang Shiqing observed with interest. However, the last female player at the table showed clear signs of disdain.

Cheng Shi turned his attention to the final female player. She had delicate features and glasses, giving her a presentable, dignified appearance—except for the fact that she kept avoiding Cheng Shi's gaze.

“Xu Lu, [Void], Bard, Ladder Rank 1643.”

“?”

The moment her girlish, lilting voice came out, Cheng Shi momentarily shuddered before sneaking a quick glance at Bai Ling, trying to hide the uncontrollable twitch in the corners of his mouth.

Look at that—what a coincidence.

The only Prophet at the table was someone he knew. Xu Lu was most likely the girl that Xie Yang, the lovesick puppy, had been chasing after.

Tsk, tsk, a [Fate] follower, huh? Well, tough luck—I'm a [Time] follower in this round.

In other words, I'm the wolf here!

Sluurp.

Cheng Shi wanted to laugh but couldn't afford to be too obvious. He knew Xu Lu was probably sizing him up as well, trying to figure out if he was the same "neighbor" she had heard about from Xie Yang.

Indeed, Xu Lu was paying close attention to Cheng Shi. As she stole glances at him, she recalled the things Xie Yang had said about him.

"There's a mage named Cheng Shi living on the rooftop across from mine. Doesn't look like much—kind of chubby, total nerd. He asked me for help for a long time, so I felt sorry for him and ran an A-rank weapon trial for him, got him a weapon."

"Don't be fooled by his appearance, though. He's pretty loyal and knows how to show gratitude. He even gave me an A-rank healing potion..."

"That potion wasn't something he got from a dungeon, though. He definitely picked it up during one of his trials. No way it's worth more than the weapon I got for him."

"My score's higher, so I've got more tricks up my sleeve. I didn't need it, so I gave it to you. Keep it for emergencies. It's not the best, but it'll do. No need to thank me."

Clearly, this Cheng Shi in front of her didn't match Xie Yang's description at all. For one, this guy wasn't ugly. Actually, he was kind of cute.

Also, he was a Priest.

Which didn't match the description of a mage at all.

Everyone knows that class is the hardest thing to fake.

So, maybe it was just a coincidence in names?

The only thing she didn't know for sure was whether he followed [Memory] or its opposing path...
[Time].