

## The Gods 214

### Chapter 214: The Paranoid Die by Paranoia

Cheng Shi let out a dry laugh, sped up, and pulled out another potion—but this one shattered even faster. Worse still, the flying blade that destroyed it also pierced clean through his hand.

His left hand had been impaled by the throwing knife, its edge coated with a trace of paralytic venom.

This was a Victim with virtually flawless combat instincts.

"Where's your confidence now? Where's your trump card? If you don't show it soon, I'm going to get serious."

As he spoke, Ji Er fanned out nearly ten throwing knives in his hand, snorted with amusement, and hurled them at Cheng Shi.

Cheng Shi's gaze hardened, his pupils contracting sharply. He kicked off the ground and scrambled backward on all fours.

The whistling blades rained down where Cheng Shi had been standing, thudding into the earth in a neat line that chased the tips of his feet. Fortunately, though he was bleeding profusely, his tendons and bones were largely intact—he managed to dodge the direct stabs by scrambling back desperately.

But Ji Er didn't let up. Sneering, he advanced steadily, using his throwing knives to "wall off" Cheng Shi's escape routes, ruthlessly compressing his room to maneuver.

It wasn't until this violent struggle left Cheng Shi drenched in blood, his face turning pale from blood loss, that Ji Er stopped with evident amusement, grinding his heel into the trail of blood Cheng Shi had left behind as he clicked his tongue in wonder.

This wasn't about toying with Cheng Shi—he wanted Cheng Shi to bleed to death on his own.

He was carefully avoiding being the direct source of the lethal blow, guarding against whatever filthy curse this patient Priest might have prepared.

"Tough one, aren't you? That Blizzard Winter-Serpent venom doesn't feel great, does it? Can you still feel your left hand?"

"If you don't heal yourself soon, can you really hold on, my friend?"

After this prolonged back-and-forth, Cheng Shi truly couldn't hold out any longer. He had no choice but to play his trump card.

And so, under Ji Er's mocking, contemptuous gaze, he raised his scalpel—and drove it straight into the wound on his already-pierced left hand.

As blood sprayed and stained the ground, Cheng Shi pressed his lips together and stood up.

His color returned. And it wasn't just his complexion—his very presence seemed restored. Just like that, drenched in blood, he rose to his feet right before Ji Er's eyes.

Ji Er froze at the sight.

War Supervisor?

"What?"

"Ha ha ha ha, a War Supervisor?!"

"Are you imitating me?"

"You're copying how I stole the War Supervisor's healing power?"

"Hah—showing off your axe before Lu Ban. You can't possibly think I'd believe you now."

"Fine, let's say I believed it for a second and you got some healing out of it. But the way you're barely holding yourself together is pathetic."

"What's wrong, cat got your tongue?"

"Afraid I'll catch you lying and nullify all your healing from here on?"

"Is this your trump card, my dear teammate? Then it seems you've... gone too far."

"Clown. Clown—so you were the Clown all along!"

"Ha ha ha, now it makes sense!"

"You're a Clown, Gao San's the Acrobat—so Zhao Si, who never took Gao San's place in the ring, is probably a... Master of Trickery?"

"Which means Su Wu is most likely a Beast Tamer. No wonder that bastard kept herding rats around. Heh, hiding deep enough. Master of Deception, Master of Deception—was I deceiving him, or was he deceiving me?"

"So this is a civil war, isn't it, my friend?"

"But still..."

"Even if it's a civil war—you, a mere Clown, think you can beat me?"

"Sure, I'm a Victim. But I'll make you into the next victim!"

Ji Er's threats weren't frightening. Cheng Shi let out a cold laugh and finally spoke again after the prolonged stalemate.

"Two trials ago, I stole [Decay] and became a Wither Priest. I personally put down a charlatan of [Fate]."

He yanked the scalpel from his left hand and tossed it casually to the ground.

"Last trial, I stole [War] and became a War Supervisor. I personally sent off a Wise Man of [Folly]."

As he spoke, he produced another scalpel, spinning it between the fingers of his right hand.

"And this trial..."

Cheng Shi smirked coldly—but before he could finish, Ji Er's expression changed.

Because he had detected it: his opponent wasn't lying.

Which meant the man standing before him—this opponent named Cheng Shi—was a Clown who possessed the Lies of Yesterday talent.

Lies of Yesterday! It was actually Lies of Yesterday!

That was the SS-rank talent every deceiver dreamed of! How in the world did he even qualify to possess it?!

Ji Er had assumed Cheng Shi had merely hidden his identity—but he never expected this Clown had also concealed his score.

He had to be above twenty-four hundred points, and probably by a significant margin. Otherwise he could never have rolled this talent. Yet this bastard had introduced himself as a mere twenty-one hundred and one!

'I've seen people who hide their strength, but never someone who hides this much!'

He had to admit, this Clown was truly fortunate—having stolen the faith of [War] in the previous trial, transforming himself once again into a War Supervisor for this round.

And unfortunately, Victims despised War Supervisors—especially high-scoring ones.

Because it meant this Deathmatch Final would devolve into a "Paranoia Final." Both the Victim and the War Supervisor would be forced to constantly guess whether the opponent's current move was genuine damage or not.

In an endless spiral of suspicion, one side would eventually falter on a single misjudgment—and then it would all come crashing down. After all, no one's mental stamina was infinite.

'A victory that was supposed to be guaranteed—how did it suddenly become an evenly matched mind game?!'

'Where did it go wrong?!'

Regardless of the storm raging inside Ji Er's head, Cheng Shi's momentum only grew stronger on his end.

With every sentence, he took a bold stride forward. His left hand—fighting through the numbness and tremors—gripped a scalpel defensively before his chest while the one in his right hand itched for action.

"And this trial... whether or not you've seen through my identity, I will personally bury you. Bury you—you deceiver of [Deceit]."

The moment the words left his mouth, Cheng Shi vanished.

Just as Ji Er had lunged at him earlier, Cheng Shi disappeared from where he stood and materialized before Ji Er in the blink of an eye. The scalpel in his hand swept upward from below, hurling a streak of silver toward Ji Er's throat so fast it was nearly invisible to the naked eye.

This was his full-power strike as a maxed-out Hero of Today!

Yes—Cheng Shi, wearing the mask of a Warrior, had finally performed his Oracle Act. The very instant he plunged the scalpel into his own left hand, in the split-second before the blade sank in, he had tossed his Die of Fate onto the ground behind him.

The secret of close-up magic lies in misdirection. While Ji Er stared intently at the hand being pierced yet again, the die behind Cheng Shi rolled to its inevitable result: one.

But one was enough.

In that instant, divine power surged through Cheng Shi's body and color flooded back into his face.

He hadn't healed himself with the knife wound—it was the favor of [Fate] that had pulled him back from the edge once more.

Because he had never been a War Supervisor, nor was he still the Clown of Lies of Yesterday. He was a Warrior of [Fate]—a Hero of Today, valiant beyond measure!

And the moment he had first collapsed to the ground, he had already seized the opportunity to bury an ordinary die in the blood-soaked mud beneath his feet.

At that point, Cheng Shi hadn't yet performed his Oracle Act, so after the grueling back-and-forth, his "perfectly ordinary" self had been genuinely exhausted.

That authentic fatigue revealed not a single flaw or tell.

But his retreat in such a weary state wasn't to buy himself breathing room—it was to lure his enemy into savoring the thrill of toying with prey, drawing him unconsciously toward that spot. Toward the die trap Cheng Shi had personally buried.

Every foreshadowing planted in a script exists to serve the climax of the finale.

And so, the moment divine power filled Cheng Shi's body—the finale arrived.

That streak of silver lashed out like an electric arc, hissing as it bit toward Ji Er's throat.

But at this critical juncture—this moment when Ji Er could have killed Cheng Shi at any time—the cautious, paranoid Victim hesitated.

A torrent of thoughts flashed through his mind:

'His attack may be fast, but it's still just an ordinary thrust with no additional force behind it.'

'If he were certain he could kill me in one blow, why wouldn't he throw everything he had into it?'

'But if he can't guarantee a killing strike before I react, how does he dare launch such a desperate offensive?'

'Unless...'

'He already knew this attack wouldn't kill me?'

'He's counting on me to reflect the damage back—that's why he's being so decisive!'

'Right—his condition isn't good! He only gave himself a small cut, and it was on his left hand. His body hasn't fully recovered. So this is an attack meant to activate the War Supervisor's talent!'

'He's predicting that my reflected damage will heal him!'

'Clever War Supervisor—bold Clown, gambling with his own life!'

'You almost had me!'

Ji Er felt he had never experienced a moment of such crystalline clarity as this one. Never had his logic been so airtight, his reasoning so flawless. He felt his mastery of the game had broken through to a height that had always eluded him.

'I've seen through a twenty-four-hundred point Clown who possesses Lies of Yesterday. For the first time, I've read a player at that tier!'

'Heh. What a shame. Everyone miscalculates sometimes—but not me. Not this time.'

'I'll show you what a deceiver's cunning truly looks like.'

'I'll let the healing power on your blade flood through my entire body, and then—under the witness of that life-giving force—I'll slit your throat myself. The terror in your eyes will become your silent epitaph.'

Ji Er smiled. He resolved to end this game the same way Cheng Shi had earlier—trading wound for wound. And to add some flair to the final act, his short blade slipped from his sleeve into his grip.

But just as he grinned savagely, preparing to speak Cheng Shi's final words for him—his vision went black.

Inexplicably black.

'What happened?'

'Why did everything go dark?'

'Why now, of all moments?'

'No—redirect! Redirect the damage! I need to redirect—hm? It doesn't hurt. My neck doesn't hurt!'

'Ha ha ha—redirect successful!'

'Whatever kind of strike that was, at least I'm not dead.'

'Right, I'm not dead. So why... hasn't the light come back?'

Thud.

A headless body pitched forward and slammed into the ground. A massive head—still wearing its iron casing—arced high into the air before crashing down with a heavy thump.

One slash. Instant decapitation. Clean and absolute—as though this dead deceiver had never been a Victim capable of reflecting lethal damage.

Cheng Shi gazed down at the twitching corpse, unsurprised, and let out a contemptuous snort.

'Overthink, and you overreach.' Against someone like that, the simplest, most direct approach was always the most effective. Because...

"The paranoid always die by their own paranoia."