

## The Gods 263

Chapter 263: Brother Mouth, You!!!!!!

As everyone knows, gossip is the true ladder of human progress.

Driven by this melon-eating mentality, the group seemed to forget they were in a [Prosperity] trial set underground. Every last one of them stared at Cheng Shi, desperate to know what morally depraved, psychologically twisted saga had transpired between this unlucky soul and Zhen Yi.

Cheng Shi couldn't afford to let this "inquisitive" atmosphere continue. He gave a light cough and forcefully changed the subject:

"The Sighing Forest is full of dangers. The Sighing Sorrow Tide could hit at any time. Shouldn't we start moving and look for the [Prosperity] trial target — one that shouldn't exist underground in the first place?"

It was a perfectly reasonable and relevant suggestion. But no one responded. Hong Lin even shook her head with a grin:

"No rush. I think everyone agrees — finding the target can wait. Why don't you first tell us about you and Zhen Yi?"

Cheng Shi's face went blank.

The historian nodded vigorously in agreement, even pulling out his history book and fixing Cheng Shi with an expectant stare.

"..."

'What kind of legitimate "historian" is this!?'

Seeing this, Hong Lin laughed even harder:

"Don't be shy! Everyone here has been burned by Zhen Yi to some degree — well, maybe not everyone. At least this stinking bird definitely has.

Honestly? I've taken my fair share of losses at her hands too.

Just think of this as a support group. Sharing your scam experience helps us understand how the trickster operates — which in turn helps us fight back. Right?"

"..."

'A support group!? Give me a break. I have nothing to share. I can hardly tell you that all the gossip you want to hear was fabricated by yours truly...'

"Hm? You can't say?" Hong Lin's smile faded as her eyes suddenly sharpened. She looked in Cheng Shi's direction and abruptly raised her wooden spear. "Interesting. This kind of harmless gossip — sharing it would just give everyone a laugh. If you're hiding even this... now I'm really curious. What exactly are you hiding?

Or rather — is it really your experience with Zhen Yi that you're trying to conceal?

That trickster has never gone out of her way to 'introduce' someone this publicly before. The fact that she broke pattern to do so... well, it makes you think.

Tell me — is it possible that this trickster has no new flame at all? That she was actually creating a new identity for herself!?

Maybe you ARE the trickster!

Zhen Yi!?"

The instant the words dropped, a whistling spear shot toward Cheng Shi's head.

Cheng Shi's eyes narrowed. He tilted his body slightly and sidestepped the blow.

He could tell the [Prosperity] Chosen One had been genuinely traumatized by Zhen Yi. She triple-checked anything remotely connected to the woman. But her logic wasn't wrong — if he were in her position, he'd also be wondering whether he was being scammed again.

Besides, the strike was more probing than attacking. Almost no real force behind it. Not a prelude to all-out hostility.

'But I gotta say, sis — you're a bit gun-shy at this point.'

'What on earth did Zhen Yi do to you to make you this paranoid?'

And it wasn't just Hong Lin. Every single person present had grown visibly wary. By the look of things, if Cheng Shi didn't defend himself fast, he'd become the target of everyone's arrows — transformed into the "real" Zhen Yi.

Watching the situation spiral toward disaster before the trial had barely begun, Cheng Shi was cursing internally. But there was nothing he could do except frantically weave new lies in his head, trying to weather the storm.

And right in the middle of his frantic brainstorming — that attention-seeking mouth decided to butt in without warning.

"Hee~ what a shame — you found me out!"

"!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!"

One sentence. The entire scene detonated!

Detonated in the hair-standing-on-end sense!

Cheng Shi's brain went white with a deafening "BUZZ—." He didn't even remember to scold Brother Mouth first. It felt like a bolt of lightning had struck the crown of his skull, sending plasma surging unreasonably from the top of his head to the soles of his feet. His entire body went numb and he froze solid.

If Hong Lin had thrown another spear right now — even the most half-hearted, powerless toss imaginable — it probably could have nailed Cheng Shi to the spot for good.

But would she?

She would not!

Because her reaction was even more extreme than Cheng Shi's!

Before the Fool's Lips had even finished the full sentence — when only that first "Hee~" had escaped — her entire body seized up reflexively. Her pupils contracted to pinpoints. Her mind erupted with the roar of a thousand thunderbolts, ringing and buzzing.

She hadn't actually believed Cheng Shi was Zhen Yi. She'd merely thought he might not be simple and wanted to test him. She never expected the test to actually produce a Zhen Yi!

He was actually Zhen Yi!?

'It sounds like her. Way too much like her!'

'No — not just "like." It's identical. That punchable tone of voice is practically inimitable!'

'And probably no one in the world would dare try.'

Hong Lin's expression darkened visibly. She clenched both fists and immediately began scanning in all directions.

The others were in no better shape.

Featherhead's legs locked together as both hands plunged into his feathered cloak, gripping something for dear life.

The historian full-body flinched. His history book slipped from his hands and hit the ground as he scrambled backward on all fours.

The cold-faced assassin's eyes went wide. He melted behind a tree without a sound.

The Puppet Master's mature puppet snapped into a defensive stance, shielding its master's body at the speed of reflex.

Everyone was stunned. Every single person was shocked into stupor.

But no one was more stupefied than Cheng Shi himself!

Because he'd just realized that this trial had barely started and the sky had already fallen — and it had been "blabbed" into collapse by a single mouth.

'What do I do!? What do I do!? What do I DO!?!'

'SAVE ME! SAVE ME! SAVE ME!'

Just as this [Prosperity] trial was about to transform into [War], Cheng Shi's brain went into overdrive — thoughts spinning at maximum velocity — and in a flash of sudden inspiration, he actually found a way to reverse the catastrophe!

Effortlessly, he turned to face the furious Hong Lin. He squeezed out a harmless, wouldn't-hurt-a-fly smile — as if that sentence had absolutely nothing to do with him — then spread his hands and said:

"See? That's exactly why that lunatic goes around badmouthing me and trying to get revenge.

And that — is my story with her."

"?????????????"

If the scene a moment ago had been filled with sheer terror, the scene right now was filled with utter befuddlement.

Everyone stared at Cheng Shi in disbelief, every last one trying to determine whether this was a genuine explanation or a brand-new form of trickery.

Hong Lin's brow was furrowed to the breaking point. She fixed Cheng Shi with a grave stare, equally incredulous:

"You... aren't Zhen Yi?"

"No!" Cheng Shi answered at the speed of light.

He was terrified that if he hesitated for even one second, Brother Mouth would follow up with a cheerful "Yes I am," and then he'd truly have no way to explain himself.

"What you're saying is... you once impersonated that trickster?"