

## The Gods 275

Chapter 275: A World-Saving Divine Envoy, or a Reckless Madman?

The Old Patriarch spoke while studying every face. Only when he felt that these outsiders appeared composed and unsurprised — as if the Mushroom-Footed People's plight was nothing unexpected — did he continue, a tremor of excitement in his voice:

"But we bear no resentment! Because He is merciful!

We have always known that one day He would forgive us and bring the entire tribe back to the rainforest on the surface.

And we have waited far, far too long for that day. The endless waiting has drained us. Generation after generation has lived and atoned here, yet no divine oracle has ever come — until today...

Until today!"

The Old Patriarch's composure crumbled. He could no longer contain his wild conjecture and longing. His eyes blazed as he fixed them on Hong Lin, red-rimmed and trembling with every word:

"Until today — when you arrived!

You are the first outsider in centuries! You are our kin, sheltered by [Prosperity]! You are the messenger who brings His oracle of forgiveness..."

Three sentences. The Patriarch's voice shifted from fervent excitement to tentative hope, then to fragile caution.

Each line carried less conviction than the last — because he'd been waiting for Hong Lin to respond. Even the slightest encouraging smile would have sufficed. But this [Prosperity] Chosen One, brow tightly knit, had absolutely no idea how to answer him.

And so the "envoy's" silence terrified the Old Patriarch.

He didn't know if Hong Lin was the divine messenger he'd been waiting for. But he knew he didn't have many years left to wait.

So on this day — the first time in centuries that an outsider had set foot in their tribe — he moistened his eyes, trembled from head to toe, and asked in a voice that was half prayer, half plea:

"Are... you?"

'So these Mushroom-Footed People think we're divine envoys sent to liberate them. No wonder they were so warm from the start. No wonder they kept steering the conversation toward tribal history...'

Hong Lin's expression was complicated. She couldn't answer the question. She didn't even want her own Chosen One title, let alone claim to be some ethereal "divine envoy."

As for the other teammates: Zuo Qiu was scribbling furiously. The hunter had closed his eyes. The puppet remained silent.

In this settlement packed with wretched souls aching for [Prosperity], it was [Silence] that arrived before [Prosperity] itself.

The Mushroom-Footed People in the room had been strung tight with anticipation, waiting for a verdict. What they received instead was the descent of silence.

Who could fail to understand?

They were cut off from the world — not from intelligence. The silence had already delivered the answer: this outsider, the first to enter their tribe in centuries, was not His envoy.

If so, then the so-called oracle of forgiveness had never descended upon the Mushroom-Footed settlement.

The spark of hope in the tribespeople's hearts guttered and died. The ripples on their hearts' lake were smothered by cold mist, frozen solid in an instant. One by one, they stared at the speechless strangers with faces that crumbled from disbelief into desolation and despair.

The Old Patriarch was no different.

He grew frantic — but couldn't control the panic.

And now, panic had curdled into disappointment.

The result the Mushroom-Footed People had waited centuries for still seemed impossibly far away. The young tribesman behind him finally broke down, weeping openly.

Sobs of anguish. Howls of helplessness.

But just as this meeting of hope was collapsing into a scene of despair — just as the light in the Old Patriarch's eyes was fading to nothing — a Fate Weaver who "excelled at mending destinies" suddenly stepped forward. He moved in front of Hong Lin, and with the warmest smile imaginable, addressed the Old Patriarch:

"All things grow — flourish and prosper.

Our great patron, [Prosperity], has long felt your devout repentance. And so He has sent the two of us to bestow upon you a new divine oracle.

The silence just now was your final test.

When hope vanished, you did not grow resentful. You did not lash out at these unfamiliar outsiders. You did not abandon yourselves or forsake your faith. And so — you have passed.

Children of His — raise your heads. Tell me: what is your name?"

The Old Patriarch's body jolted as if struck by lightning. He looked up at Cheng Shi in utter disbelief, eyes brimming with shock and wonder — clearly thinking: why was this person speaking, and not the woman beside him who radiated [Prosperity]?

But within a heartbeat, he understood. Because though the "young man" speaking bore no [Prosperity] aura, he now held aloft a sprig bursting with the vigorous breath of life!

The Old Patriarch — and every tribesperson behind him — stared with eyes blown wide. Because on that tender shoot, they beheld supreme, unmistakable [Prosperity]!

The Baptism of New Life!

At some point, Cheng Shi had produced the Baptism of New Life and was cradling it in his palm. He now looked the very image of a "salvation-bringing bodhisattva" — one hand extended before him, the other clasping the "jade vase and willow branch." If this tableau had appeared in the pre-game real world, any passing tourist who didn't look too closely would probably bow to him.

The Old Patriarch didn't know what a "bodhisattva" was. All he knew was that the person standing before him blazed with radiance from head to toe, exuding an unmistakable aura of divinity!

'They... truly are divine envoys!'

'The silence... it was all a test!?!?'

The Old Patriarch was stunned. The Old Patriarch had an epiphany. The Old Patriarch believed!

His body shook uncontrollably. Tears of joy streamed down his face. He turned, exchanged a single look with the young tribespeople whose wailing had abruptly ceased, and immediately prostrated himself on the ground. Through sobs of pure elation, he cried:

"Aluweni! Your devoted servant's name is Aluweni!"

Praise [Prosperity]!

Praise [Prosperity]!!

I knew it — He would never abandon us!!

Praise [Prosperity]!!!"

Hearing the commotion from inside the Patriarch's home, the eavesdropping tribespeople outside prostrated as well. Their ecstatic cries echoed like an avalanche across the settlement:

"Praise [Prosperity]!"

The Mushroom-Footed People cheered with abandon. But inside the room, the players' hearts were encased in ice.

"..."

'What has this Fate Weaver teammate just done?'

The cold-faced hunter's jaw hit the floor again. An inexplicable gleam flashed through Zuo Qiu's eyes. The Puppet Master's puppet — its master stunned beyond control — collapsed to the ground in a sitting position. They all gawked at Cheng Shi, searching for an explanation.

And Hong Lin — standing right beside him — was gripping his arm so hard the bones creaked, hissing furiously under her breath:

"Have you lost your mind!? We're not divine envoys! We don't have any oracle!"

Cheng Shi's arm was screaming under Big Cat's vice grip, but he didn't dare let it show. He could only swallow his tears, maintaining the warm smile plastered across his face.

Without moving his lips, he whispered back:

"Don't forget the trial's objective — a prairie fire! A fire that burns the plains!

I'm setting the blaze right now! Stop squeezing — my arm's about to snap!"

"!!???"

The stupefied Hong Lin automatically ignored the "sis" that had slipped from Cheng Shi's mouth. She jolted awake with a flash of sudden clarity. Her death grip on his arm released instantly as a forgotten memory surged to the front of her mind — the trial's mandate:

'In the silence of the night, ignite a fire that burns the plains.'

'So the hope in the hearts of these Mushroom-Footed People, hidden deep within the Sighing Forest — that's the dying embers?'

'Their flame was about to gutter out. But Cheng Shi... seems to have reignited it.'

'But the problem is — his fire... is fake!'

'It's forgiveness conjured from thin air!'

'He's insane!'

At this moment, a single thought consumed Hong Lin's entire brain:

'No wonder he managed to out-trick Zhen Yi. Because this man is clearly a lie-spewing, damn-the-consequences madman!'

