

The Gods 276

Chapter 276: See? He Even Has to Thank Us

"Aluweni, as children of the same God, we are equals. There is no hierarchy between us. You need not do this, and you must not.

Rise. His trials are not yet over. A harder road still awaits you."

The overwhelmed Mushroom-Footed People stopped crying instantly and scrambled to their feet.

In their eyes, at this moment, nothing in the entire world mattered more than earning [Prosperity]'s forgiveness. They stood ramrod-straight like soldiers awaiting inspection, eyes brimming with anticipation and anxiety as they watched Cheng Shi, waiting for the divine envoy to bestow the next trial.

The Old Patriarch even retreated several steps, attempting to usher him to the center of the room.

Cheng Shi smiled and declined, then returned the Baptism of New Life to its rightful owner.

It wasn't that he didn't want to keep "embezzling" it — he was simply afraid that an item not belonging to him might behave unexpectedly in his hands and blow his cover. So he swiftly handed the sprig back to Hong Lin.

Hong Lin's expression shifted again as she accepted it. She knew she had no choice now.

The trial's target was almost certainly the Mushroom-Footed tribe before them. Whether the "dying embers" referred to the hope in their hearts or the continued existence of their settlement couldn't be determined yet — but it no longer mattered.

Because they'd already made their choice.

Between the others' passivity and Cheng Shi's hyperactivity, everyone had been swept into his con. They could only close their eyes and follow the Fate Weaver's rhythm. There was no other way.

Though she would have preferred completing the trial as a bystander — touching no historical cause and effect — what was done was done. Overthinking was pointless. So she swallowed her reservations and began playing support.

She released a surge of potent [Prosperity] power, maximizing the Baptism of New Life's activation, intensifying the [Prosperity] glow filling the room.

This alone was a reassurance pill for every Mushroom-Footed Person present.

'Praise [Prosperity] — only a true divine envoy could wield such power!'

Seeing this, Cheng Shi gave Hong Lin a grateful, appreciative smile. His eyes said it all: 'Nice follow-through, sis!'

Hong Lin's mouth twitched. Utterly helpless.

She desperately wanted to ask Cheng Shi what his plan was. But the honest truth was that Cheng Shi had no plan either.

He'd simply seen infinite despair and a death wish in the Old Patriarch's eyes — and in that instant wondered whether the Mushroom-Footed People's hope might be the dying embers. There'd been no time to consult the team. He'd thought nothing through and just... went on stage.

But the script wasn't written yet. The next act would be tricky.

Not that this posed a problem for a practiced liar. Especially not a clown accustomed to performing under the spotlight.

Cheng Shi gave the room a measured once-over, then spoke with the utmost solemnity:

"He has set five trials for you. When all five are cleared, you will have earned the right to go home.

The silence just now was the first trial: steadfastness in the face of despair!

His children must never abandon their faith, even in the darkest hour. And you succeeded. Your devotion was witnessed by all. I shall instruct the scribe to record every detail, and the next time I hold audience with Him, I shall report everything."

"..."

The teammates were numb.

'He's even covering for everyone's odd behavior while maintaining the act...'

'Scribe?'

'I'm a scribe now?'

Zuo Qiu's mouth twitched. Suppressing a grin, he gave Cheng Shi a cooperative nod.

Hong Lin had to fight for a long moment against the urge to roll her eyes. She mentally cursed Cheng Shi sideways.

""The next time I hold audience with Him"? Aren't you laying it on a bit thick?'

'Have you ever met Him?'

She'd only been summoned twice in her life, with no idea when the next would come. And here Cheng Shi was, talking like he could drop in for tea whenever he pleased.

'Even for lies, shouldn't you show some restraint?'

But while the players found it preposterous, these words rang in the Mushroom-Footed People's ears like sacred bells that would never stop echoing!

Standing before them was an envoy who could meet with Him at will!

Learning this, the tribespeople's expressions grew even more devout, their posture even more humble.

The Old Patriarch bowed his head, trembling with anxious joy:

'So He has set five trials for us — and we've already passed the first!'

'Does this mean that if we clear the other four, the sentence our tribe has borne for centuries will be lifted!?''

'We've finally lived to see the day of forgiveness!'

'What boundless divine grace! What immeasurable mercy!'

'In this moment, what is there to do but praise Him?'

After much deliberation, the Old Patriarch looked up at Cheng Shi with absolute reverence:

"Praise [Prosperity]. Praise the divine envoy.

It is you who brought His forgiveness to our tribe. It is you who gave us renewed hope for redemption.

The entire tribe shall remember your grace for eternity. Generations shall sing of your name. We praise you!

Forgive my presumption — how should we address you, honored messenger?"

'See? He even has to thank us.'

"..."

Every player in the room was struck speechless. Even Cheng Shi was a touch embarrassed by the adulation. But his eyes spun quickly, and after two small coughs, he said:

"Ahem. You may call me... Baldie."

The instant the words dropped — the divine envoy launched into the air... no wait, the divine envoy collapsed.

His legs buckled and he toppled sideways to the ground.

"Ba-Baldie?"

The Old Patriarch had barely processed the divine envoy's improbable name when the envoy crumpled. He rushed forward in alarm to help him up — only to find the great messenger rubbing his rear with a sheepish grin:

"It's nothing, nothing. Just been standing too long. Not quite used to this human vessel. No cause for concern."

'Ah, of course. How could His divine envoy have a physical body? This is merely a temporary mortal shell the messenger inhabits.'

The Old Patriarch nodded in sudden enlightenment and stepped back. Cheng Shi chuckled awkwardly and returned to his spot, then glanced behind him at the fire-eyed Hong Lin. Without moving his lips, he whispered:

"Sis, one more kick and you'll blow our cover! I just complimented your awareness and you immediately sabotage me — can you act or can't you!?"

Hong Lin's temple veins throbbed. Through gnashing teeth: "Why did you use MY name?"

"Sis, you're the [Prosperity] Chosen One. Should I have used mine instead?"

"I'm a Chosen One, not a divine envoy!"

"The Mushroom-Footed People don't know that. What's wrong with borrowing your name?"

"You're creating trouble for ME! 'Never entangle yourself in history's cause and effect' — you've never heard that!? Use your own name!"

'?'

'What kind of argument is that?'

'I used yours PRECISELY because I don't want cause and effect sticking to me. What did you think?'

But that was absolutely unsayable. So Cheng Shi furrowed his brow, feigned a mistake, and murmured:

"What's said is said. What else can we do? Not saying anything would've been worse. If there's a problem, hold it in. After they leave, I'll let you... kick me again!"

"..."

Hong Lin's furious expression cycled through several transformations before she finally exhaled sharply and swallowed her rage.

Seeing that the Chosen One was settled, Cheng Shi silently offered a devout prayer:

'Praise [Fate] — You who have taught everyone the virtue of patience.'

The Old Patriarch — his thoughts consumed by his tribe — waited until the two envoys finished their hushed exchange, then asked with trepidation:

"Lord Baldie, may I ask — what is the next trial He has ordained?"