

The Gods 282

Chapter 282: Le Le'er and the History of Garuda

The journey through the spatial corridor was too boring to recount. Skipping ahead.

After reaching the other side, the five players huddled together and began advancing.

They had no idea which section of the Sighing Forest they'd landed in, but the Old Patriarch had mentioned that carrying the Desolate Lamp would attract Eposka. So they simply had to walk and wait.

This time, however, the historian couldn't stay on point. Hong Lin took the lead with a freshly stripped wooden spear, the Puppet Master's puppet guarded the rear, and the hunter served as the team's eyes from the center. As for the other two...

Sheltered by their three guardians, they'd already launched into an enthusiastic chat.

"Poop Scooper, tell us more [Prosperity] gossip, will you?"

Cheng Shi was practically draped over Zuo Qiu's shoulder, all eager warmth.

"What more is there? Didn't I finish yesterday?"

"Hardly! You only covered one of His kids. Didn't you say He had four children? Tell us about all of them!"

"I already said — the History School has no reliable information on the two eldest. As for the last one... at your level, you shouldn't be unfamiliar."

"Le Le'er, right? I know her."

Zuo Qiu nodded: "Correct. The Mother Tree of Fear — Le Le'er. Our colleagues once found records about Her in the tribal secret histories of the southwestern rainforest. But the contents are classified..."

"Baldie, swap out! Poop Scooper says he wants to take point!"

"But I suppose they're not entirely unshareable..." Zuo Qiu hastily clamped a hand over Cheng Shi's mouth. "You can't bully an honest man like this."

"Honest man?" Cheng Shi let out a laugh. "An honest man doesn't crack 2,300 points. Come on — we're all telling ghost stories here. Stop playing fox. Talk, old friend. I'll trade you an interesting memory."

"Really?" At the prospect of memory-collecting, Zuo Qiu's eyes lit up instantly.

"Really. But only if what you share is worth something."

Zuo Qiu nodded, gathered his thoughts, and began:

"Le Le'er was the Mother of Prosperity's youngest daughter, granted the divine name 'The Joyous Flourishing Branch.' She was one of Her Envoys.

Legend has it that from the moment Le Le'er was born from the Mother Tree, Her heart knew no fear. She grew wild and free, sheltering the entire rainforest — until one day [Prosperity] summoned Her again. She warned that fearing nothing was the beginning of calamity, and sent Le Le'er away from the rainforest to find her own fear.

Le Le'er departed cheerfully. First, She summoned countless subjects upon the lands She protected, listening to what they feared. Upon learning that all Her people feared death, She traveled to the distant Void and sought audience with a true God."

Cheng Shi arched an eyebrow and cut in: "[Death]!"

"Correct — [Death]. But [Death] did not receive Le Le'er personally, though He did not slight Her either.

He had His Envoy — the 'Butcher of Bones' — Garuda..."

"Wait, what? The Butcher of... Bones?" Cheng Shi blinked, certain he'd misheard. "That's not... a divine name, is it?"

Zuo Qiu nodded: "Indeed. 'Butcher of Bones' is [Death]'s most trusted Envoy — the servant god who has followed Him the longest. The divine name was bestowed by [Death] personally."

"..."

'Truly magnificent, that lord of Yours. So You were already showcasing Your universe-shaking naming skills back in those days!!!'

"Is there a problem?"

"None whatsoever. Please continue."

Zuo Qiu gave the inexplicably amused Cheng Shi a quizzical glance and pressed on:

"He had Garuda receive Le Le'er. What happened next, no mortal can say. But the rainforest tribe's records state this:

Le Le'er accepted Garuda's suggestion and ventured into the Sea of Desire to search for fear. Then, at Garuda's further urging, She leapt in.

But not everyone who can swim survives the Sea of Desire. Le Le'er was clearly deceived. Her own desires dragged Her under, and She fell — degraded into the Mother Tree of Fear, a being that could only absorb the cosmos's terrors!

She did find fear. But by then, it no longer mattered.

And because of this, the relationship between [Prosperity] and [Death] was never amicable again."

At this point, the smile vanished from Cheng Shi's face.

'False!'

'A lie!'

He didn't mean the rainforest tribe's recorded history was wrong. He meant Zuo Qiu himself — at the end of this historical account — had told a lie!

The historian had concealed the real history and fed him a falsehood!

'Interesting. What's he playing at?'

Cheng Shi gave him a loaded glance, then casually feigned disinterest: "That's it?"

"Mm. History may seem vast and endless, but in truth it's fleeting.

Millions of years of stories, once committed to paper, fill no more than a few inches of pages. By the time they reach our lips, they're barely a moment's idle chatter.

So yes — that's it."

Zuo Qiu smiled wistfully, then turned: "Well then — time for your interesting memory, isn't it?"

Cheng Shi flashed a radiant grin and answered instantly: "I'm an orphan."

"?"

The statement caught everyone off guard — not just Zuo Qiu, but the eavesdroppers at the front and rear. Jiang Wumei the Dream Peeping Ranger in particular caught Cheng Shi's smile and suddenly felt that the man had long since made peace with his past.

Fair enough. When the entire world no longer existed, what was left to hold onto?

Zuo Qiu needed several seconds to realize this was the entirety of Cheng Shi's "interesting memory." His jaw dropped: "That's it?"

Cheng Shi nodded with perfect candor: "That's it. Not exciting enough?"

"..." Zuo Qiu's face darkened. "Riveting... truly riveting. You really are an orphan."

"..."

'That better not be an insult!'

Between the two men's banter, the group changed direction several times over the next few hours, trudging through the forest. Even after the dark sun had passed its zenith, they'd found no trace of Eposka.

Given that nighttime wasn't safe and they lacked a reliable way to camp, they turned around and began heading back via a different route.

But they hadn't gone far when — from one side — the Sighing Sorrow Tide came crashing toward them like a collapsing mountain.

At the same moment, deep within the roiling mist, a pair of eyes blazing with blue fire snapped open — cold and ravenous — and fixed upon the group.

Hong Lin and the hunter detected the anomaly first. They whipped around — and watched those blue eyes "rise from the earth" out of the mist, climbing higher and higher, until they had to crane their necks to near-breaking before the thing finally stopped.

Everyone's expressions tightened. Hearts pounded in unison.

'How is it that big!?'

But shock aside, their battlefield reflexes were razor-sharp.

The Druid immediately produced the Baptism of New Life. The hunter drew his bow and nocked an arrow. The Puppet Master stepped forward, her mature puppet taking position at the vanguard. The historian flipped open his history book, readying a [Memory] verse.

The freeloader — no, the Hero of Today — ducked behind everyone and assumed a battle stance. Put charitably, he was guarding the team's rear. Put bluntly, he was letting his teammates go first so he could assess before committing.

Hong Lin frowned, sprinkled the Baptism of New Life across the group, then asked without looking back:

"How's fate looking?"

Cheng Shi blinked, then answered with maximum ambiguity: "Not bad?"

But somehow, that "not bad" translated in Hong Lin's ears to "guaranteed win." She let out a booming laugh, instantly shifting from defense to attack. Under her stunned teammates' gaze, she hurled herself forward in a flying tackle.

Mid-leap into the Sighing Sorrow Tide, her body began transforming violently again. But this time what landed wasn't the two-story Dense Forest Spotted Leopard. It was a tower-like, massively muscular... bear!

A colossal beast with golden fur — and a war helmet on its head!

"Holy sh—"

Cheng Shi stared up at this definitely non-normal creature and finally understood why the [Prosperity] Chosen One always sauntered around with hand-stripped wooden spears like they were props. Because she was never a spear-wielding warrior!

She really did fight with claws. Not cat claws — bear claws!

'Good lord, what IS that thing!!??'

"The Royal Bear Spirit — [Prosperity]'s personal guard, the servant of tribal warfare. Baldie has... gotten even stronger."

"?"

Cheng Shi was finding this historian increasingly peculiar. He watched the charging golden bear and asked offhandedly: "You seem to know a lot about her?"

"Not really. Just hearsay."

Every Chosen One is an idol to low-level players like us. Gathering a bit of extra intel for motivation never hurts. Of course, you're different, Fate Weaver — you and she are both top-tier players. You're the ones we gather intel about."

Cheng Shi frowned but didn't respond.

Zuo Qiu paused, then continued: "The reason a Chosen One is a Chosen One isn't merely divine recognition. They're extraordinary in their own right."

Some excel at management. Some are master strategists. Some are brilliant schemers. Some are expert calculators. But she's different..."

"Different how?" This time it wasn't Cheng Shi — the hunter couldn't help himself.

"She fights. Extremely well.

[War]'s warriors may bear the title 'Vanguard Heroes,' but that doesn't mean they all actually storm the front lines. Among them hide commanders disguised behind other identities, and cunning tacticians orchestrating from the rear.

But the person before you — she is the real thing. A genuine charge-first, never-lost Druid!

She's never been the smartest player. But she is the most formidable fighter and the most fearless attacker.

Peak players have a saying that circulates among them:

'If Baldie is the spearhead, no formation stands.'

That should tell you everything."

The instant the words left his mouth, two earth-shaking roars erupted from deep within the mist.

"ROAAAAR—"

"ROAAAAR!!!"