

The Gods 29

Chapter 29: The Death of Cheng Shi

It was strange—there was no sadness in Cheng Shi's eyes.

In fact, it seemed like he didn't care about Bai Ling's death at all.

He kept casting Accelerated Metabolism on himself, trying to use time magic to shake off the debuffs and control effects placed on him.

But unfortunately, real life wasn't a turn-based game. While Cheng Shi struggled, the guard didn't remain idle.

As a bard, the guard excelled at applying negative statuses to his enemies. He continued casting his spells, relentlessly squeezing the life out of Cheng Shi's already dwindling chances of survival.

Before long, Cheng Shi felt himself reaching the end of his rope. His desperate fight to stay alive ended in failure, leaving him on the brink of death, completely helpless.

The guard walked over to where Cheng Shi lay and, seeing no further resistance, sighed in disappointment:

"Creatures of the underground should stay where they belong, yet sometimes, those very worms serve a purpose. I have to admit, I both like and despise your kind—what a contradiction."

But before he could finish his monologue, the guard suddenly raised his sword and, with lightning speed, plunged it into Cheng Shi's chest without hesitation.

Not giving him even the slightest chance to fight back.

"Ssht!"

The tip of the sword pierced through Cheng Shi's heart.

His eyes shot wide open, pupils dilating sharply. He didn't last more than a few seconds before the light in his eyes faded completely.

In the last moment before his vision went dark, he saw the door across the room burst open with a loud "Bang!", and a familiar face came into view.

"Brother Cheng!?!?"

It was Ah Ming.

But he was too late.

Cheng Shi chuckled bitterly, then closed his eyes for the final time.

...

The moment Ah Ming entered the room, he was overwhelmed by the intense power of [Order]. He looked down at the bodies of his two fallen teammates, his face twisting into a crazed expression as he lunged at the stunned guard.

"I'll kill you! I'll kill you!!"

"What?! This place is under [Order]'s domain—how are you not being restrained?!"

"[Order]? I AM [Order]!"

This was clearly a blasphemous statement, yet no divine punishment fell upon Ah Ming!

His face contorted with rage as he spat out a string of maddened words, his movements swift and deadly as he appeared behind the guard in the blink of an eye.

The guard had no time to react, his face frozen in terror. He tried to scream, but before he could utter a word, a blood-soaked dagger plunged into his back.

The blade pierced through his chest with a sickening squelch.

A filthy yellow light briefly flickered on the dagger. The guard stared down at the steel protruding from his chest, coughing up a mouthful of dark blood before collapsing lifelessly to the ground, his eyes wide open in disbelief.

“Brother Cheng! I avenged you!”

Ah Ming’s voice cracked with grief as he kicked the body aside and collapsed onto the floor, completely drained of energy, his eyes vacant.

Just then, Fang Shiqing and Xu Lu burst into the room.

Ah Ming looked up at them, his eyes still glistening with unshed tears.

Xu Lu took one look at the grisly scene and paled, clinging tightly to Fang Shiqing’s sleeve.

Although she hadn’t liked Cheng Shi, seeing a fellow player dead filled her with a sense of fear and dread, as if she could be next.

Fang Shiqing surveyed the room, her gaze lingering on the bodies of Bai Ling and Cheng Shi. She bit her lip hard, her face drained of color.

“How did this happen...?”

But she quickly composed herself, closing the door behind them and turning back to Ah Ming with a serious expression.

“What happened?”

“I don’t know. I got here late... I was exploring the second floor when I heard sounds coming from this room. By the time I rushed in, Brother Cheng and Bai Ling were already...”

Ah Ming’s voice trailed off with guilt as he buried his face in his hands, tugging at his hair.

“Who’s on the bed?” Fang Shiqing asked, her gaze shifting to the figure lying on the bed. Before anyone could answer, Xu Lu’s expression shifted, and she pointed at the body in shock.

“It’s him! The man from the prophecy! He’s the one who was supposed to die!”

Fang Shiqing’s entire body stiffened, turning to stare at Xu Lu in disbelief.

Only now did she realize that the dead man on the bed was likely the missing Duke of Brookes.

Xu Lu stood there, staring at the corpse, her mind racing back to the blurry images from her prophecy. She muttered absently:

“It wasn’t one of us... it was the duke who was meant to die. But that... that Cheng guy...”

Although the prophecy hadn’t foretold the death of any players, two players were now dead.

Given the scene before them, there were only two possible explanations:

Either Cheng Shi had stumbled upon the guard committing murder, and the guard killed him to cover it up.

Or the guard had caught Cheng Shi in the act of murder, and Cheng Shi wasn't able to fight him off.

As for which was the truth...

Fang Shiqing had barely finished processing her thoughts when Xu Lu spoke up, lowering her head as she said:

"I think... it was the guard who caught Cheng Shi... killing the duke."

Fang Shiqing's expression darkened, a flash of disdain crossing her eyes as she coldly asked:

"Why do you think that?"

"He... he might have been trying to impersonate the duke... He seems like... that kind of person."

Even though Xu Lu knew it was inappropriate to say such things under the circumstances, she couldn't help but voice her suspicions.

Fang Shiqing's frown deepened, but she held back her anger.

"Sister Fang... what do we do now?" Xu Lu asked, her voice trembling slightly.

Fang Shiqing checked her watch. Nearly seven hours had passed, leaving them with just over five remaining.

"You two head outside and guard the door. As their teammates, we need to at least give them a proper send-off."

Ah Ming glanced up at Fang Shiqing, suddenly remembering that she, too, was a bard.

Bards chronicled stories, and those stories often featured a wide variety of people.

That included a wide variety of corpses.

Bards were uniquely skilled at singing funeral dirges and reciting eulogies.

Xu Lu felt that this would be a waste of valuable time, but seeing the firm look on Fang Shiqing's face, she bit her lip and silently left the room.

Ah Ming followed closely behind, his head bowed, hiding his expression.

As Fang Shiqing passed him, she patted him on the shoulder, offering a silent gesture of comfort.

Once the door closed behind them, the sorrow on Fang Shiqing's face vanished. Anger surged through her, twisting her expression into one of fury.

She opened her book and tore out a page, tossing it into the air. Instantly, the entire room froze in place, even the curtains that had been swaying in the breeze.

The room fell into complete silence, as if not even the sound of breathing existed anymore.

Then she walked over to Cheng Shi's lifeless body, looking down at where the sword had pierced through his chest.

Her lips twisted into a bitter smile.

She remembered the moment she had woken up in Cheng Shi's arms during the fog, only to realize that there was an extra note tucked in her clothing.

At the time, she had discreetly read the note while no one was watching.

The note had read:

—

“Dear Ms. Torchbearer,

Greetings, even though I’m right beside you.

But please don’t look at me, and don’t smile.

This is a cry for help from my future self.

If I die, and you happen to find me, I’d appreciate it if you could save my life.

Any healing spell will do to pull me back from the gates of hell. For the sake of the fact that I was once a Torchbearer in training, I’d be eternally grateful.

Also, when traveling in a group of three, always stay on guard.

Yours sincerely,

A humble junior.”

—

And now, lying at her feet, Cheng Shi was indeed dead.

That bastard... how could he have predicted his own death?

“How dare you trust me so much?

How could you be so certain I’d revive you?

Even after you rejected me—weren’t you afraid I’d refuse to save you too?

Damn you!”

Fang Shiqing’s brows furrowed as she cursed Cheng Shi under her breath. But no one could hear her, as the room had been silenced.

It was like a judgment in silence.

In the end, despite her frustration, she resigned herself to the situation. With a sigh, she ripped out another page from her book, crumpling it in her hand as she pressed it against Cheng Shi’s wound.

The moment the page touched the wound, it dissolved into a soft green light imbued with the power of [Life], which seeped into Cheng Shi’s body.

Slowly, Cheng Shi began to stir, his eyes blinking open as the healing light flowed through him.

“Huff— Huff— Huff— Huff—”

He breathed heavily, though no sound escaped his lips.

Watching his comical struggle for air, Fang Shiqing couldn’t help but stifle a laugh.

The fresh sensation of air filling his lungs, the familiar feeling of life coursing through his veins—Cheng Shi greedily gulped down mouthfuls of breath.

He was alive!

He was back!

The first thing he did was sit up, not even glancing at Fang Shiqing. Instead, he pulled out his pocket watch to check how much time had passed.

Seeing that it had only been about twenty minutes since he died, he let out a long sigh of relief, all the tension melting away.

He then turned to the side, looking at Bai Ling's body and the dead guard with his eyes locked wide open, and chuckled silently to himself.

Like a clown performing in a mute play.

Big Sis really came through.

Or should I say, the Torchbearers always come through!

Seeing Cheng Shi laugh to himself, completely ignoring the fact that she had just saved his life, Fang Shiqing kicked him twice in frustration.

Cheng Shi quickly got to his feet, clasping his hands together in thanks before gesturing toward Bai Ling's body.

Fang Shiqing's face darkened as she pointed to her book, her lips forming the words:

"Not wasting another page. You're a priest—heal her yourself."

Cheng Shi sighed and snapped his fingers.

With a silent snap, Bai Ling's crushed body began to restore itself, her figure slowly regaining fullness. After just a few breaths, her eyes fluttered open once more.

Time's gift—Restorative Healing.

Her clear eyes were filled with disbelief as she stared at Cheng Shi, murmuring:

"It's... real..."

Fang Shiqing caught her lip movements and turned to Cheng Shi, confused, as if to ask, "What's real?"

Cheng Shi shrugged, indicating he had no idea.

Bai Ling, seeing Cheng Shi feign ignorance, chuckled stupidly to herself.

Though the bloodstains from her injuries remained, her blood-soaked dress only added to her allure.

Now that she had been "reborn," Bai Ling seemed even more... seductive.

Fang Shiqing furrowed her brow, sensing that something wasn't right.

The aura of [Corruption] had grown stronger.

Her gaze flicked back and forth between Cheng Shi and Bai Ling, trying to figure out if something had happened between them.

But Cheng Shi kept his composure, revealing nothing.

Bai Ling, on the other hand, wasn't as good at hiding her emotions. Her gaze clung to Cheng Shi with a sickening intensity that was hard to ignore...

Who knew what she was thinking?

Naturally, Fang Shiqing had no idea what was going through Bai Ling's mind.

Because at that moment, Bai Ling's thoughts were filled with nothing but the memory of what had happened between her and Cheng Shi in that cramped wardrobe.