

The Gods 30

Chapter 30: Detective Cheng Shi

Time rewinds to the wardrobe.

At that moment, Cheng Shi had silently whispered, “Don’t panic. Let’s take him down!” and then patted Bai Ling on the shoulder.

Just when Bai Ling thought this was a veiled attempt at reassurance, a small vial of potion slipped from Cheng Shi’s fingers and landed right between her chest.

She blinked in surprise and looked down.

The small vial had a clear label on it that read:

—

Potion Name: Scorn of the Dead.

Drink this, and as long as the potion’s effect lasts, you will not truly die.

—

Bai Ling looked up in shock, only to see Cheng Shi already beginning the countdown.

Without wasting a second, in the final moments before they charged out, she drank the potion.

We all know how the battle ended: she did indeed die.

But now, she was alive once more.

It hadn't been a joke to send her charging into danger—Cheng Shi had not betrayed her trust.

As for why Bai Ling had trusted Cheng Shi so much...

Even she probably couldn't explain it clearly.

Maybe it was because he had never once viewed her—someone so “easy to target”—with any lecherous intent.

Seeing Bai Ling shakily stand up from the floor, Cheng Shi finally felt the last bits of tension leave his body.

He mentally thanked his former teammates, who were far away but had helped him add credibility to Scorn of the Dead through their collective belief.

Cheng Shi's faith talent, [Offering to the Void], couldn't store fabricated items—it only allowed him to use them in the moment.

But this talent had a prerequisite: it required recognition from others.

The concept of “recognition” was interesting. Through many trials, Cheng Shi had learned that he needed at least five people (excluding himself) to believe in what he had created to meet the requirement.

As luck would have it, that number matched the usual size of a trial team.

At the time in the wardrobe, Cheng Shi didn't have the means to get others to recognize a new item, so he had no choice but to mark an old standard—Scorn of the Dead.

It was a gamble, betting that his teammates wouldn't realize something was off with the potion. But Cheng Shi wasn't without confidence.

In his calculations, there were at least three or four teammates who wouldn't question the details of such things.

Adding Bai Ling into the mix made five.

And as it turned out, Cheng Shi had won the gamble once again.

Though his dice always seemed to land on 1, he had a knack for being lucky in other ways.

Fang Shiqing, seeing that both of them were unharmed, visibly relaxed. She glanced at Cheng Shi with a serious expression, clearly expecting an explanation.

Cheng Shi's face grew solemn as he looked toward the door.

Fang Shiqing immediately understood, recalling the message on Cheng Shi's note: When traveling in a group of three, always stay on guard.

Given the circumstances in the fog, the only "third party" at that moment besides her and Cheng Shi had been...

Ah Ming!

"Ah Ming is the problem?"

Cheng Shi's lips curled into a slight smirk as he silently mouthed back:

"Ah Ming may not have a problem... but whether that's really 'Ah Ming' is another question."

"WHAT?!"

Both Fang Shiqing and Bai Ling's faces paled, shaking their heads in disbelief.

Fang Shiqing frowned. "But his heartstrings haven't changed. Are you sure?"

Bai Ling looked equally confused and added:

"Big shot, his attitude toward me has been the same as always... no changes at all..."

Despite their reservations, Bai Ling still trusted Cheng Shi's judgment.

If someone had been compromised, the first priority was to ensure stability within the group.

Cheng Shi shook his head, saying no more. He simply gestured for them to prepare—they were going to catch someone.

Whether Ah Ming was truly Ah Ming or not, as an agile assassin, it would be difficult to capture him without raising suspicion.

It would be hard with just Cheng Shi and Bai Ling, but with Fang Shiqing on their side...

It became much easier.

Cheng Shi sidled up to Fang Shiqing, practically clinging to her like a child seeking protection. Fang Shiqing glared at him for a long moment before sighing and pulling a golden page from her book.

An S-rank talent: Eternal Prison.

As soon as Cheng Shi saw it, his face brightened. He could feel the overpowering [Time] energy emanating from the page.

It was a skill left behind by a Time Walker.

Fang Shiqing's heart ached as she held the page, but she begrudgingly walked toward the door with it. Before going out, she glanced back at Cheng Shi and mouthed:

"You better make it up to me."

Cheng Shi nodded solemnly.

Seeing his agreement, Fang Shiqing swiftly opened the door. Without giving Ah Ming a chance to react, she slapped the page onto his shoulder.

"Boom!"

A surge of [Time] energy exploded outward, instantly binding Ah Ming in place before he could even move.

His eyes widened in shock as he stammered:

"Sister Fang! You...!"

Xu Lu, who had been nearby, jumped back in surprise. She instinctively pulled a small dagger from her sleeve, looking at Fang Shiqing with a mixture of fear and confusion.

"Sister Fang, what's going on?"

Before Fang Shiqing could answer, things took an even stranger turn.

Cheng Shi and Bai Ling, who had apparently been dead just moments ago, walked out of the room completely unscathed.

Well, not entirely unscathed—their clothes were a bit wrinkled.

“You two...!!??”

Xu Lu’s jaw dropped, her mind spinning with a whirlwind of conspiracy theories.

The most ridiculous one was that Fang Shiqing had struck some kind of deal with Cheng Shi, and together they were planning to kill her.

Seeing Xu Lu’s fear, Fang Shiqing shook her head apologetically, then gestured for her to listen to Cheng Shi’s explanation.

As soon as Cheng Shi stepped out of the room, he pulled an arrow of desire from Bai Ling’s quiver and jabbed it into Ah Ming’s shoulder.

“Shkt!”

“Brother Cheng!? You’re not dead? What are you doing? Bai Ling, you’re alive too? What... what’s going on?”

Ah Ming’s eyes darted back and forth in confusion as he looked at everyone around him.

Cheng Shi gave him a cryptic smile.

“Sorry to disappoint you, but I’m not dead. That must be a real letdown for you, huh?”

Ah Ming froze for a moment, then his expression darkened.

“Brother Cheng, what are you implying? I would never want anything to happen to my teammates! Are you saying I tried to kill you? I avenged you by killing that guard!”

“Oh, you avenged me? Bravo, bravo. Let’s give you a round of applause.” Cheng Shi clapped, his smile widening. “You’re right—you did arrive just a moment too late. Otherwise, you might have been able to save us.”

“Exactly! This is all a misunderstanding. Sister Fang, let me go. We’re running out of time.”

Fang Shiqing ignored him, her guard still up, watching for anyone approaching.

Cheng Shi shook his head, clearly done wasting time.

“You’re not Ah Ming, are you?”

Ah Ming stiffened, then suddenly burst into laughter.

“Brother Cheng, what are you talking about? If I’m not Ah Ming, then who am I?

You’ve forgotten? We came here together from the fog room, then split up per Sister Fang’s orders for the investigation. After that, I avenged you two by killing the guard.

Have you lost your memory?”

“I haven’t lost my memory, but you can stop pretending. Huang Bo,” Cheng Shi said calmly.

“!!??”

“Who? Huang Bo?” Fang Shiqing gasped, immediately activating one of her talents to scan Ah Ming’s identity. As expected, the results didn’t show anything unusual—he was still Ah Ming.

“Cheng Shi, are you sure? He’s Huang Bo?”

Ah Ming gave a bitter laugh.

“Brother Cheng, what are you saying? Huang Bo is still behind, hasn’t caught up yet. The Memory Gate is still open. How could I be Huang Bo?”

Cheng Shi smiled, continuing:

“How do you know he hasn’t caught up?”

“.....” Ah Ming’s face darkened, and he quickly explained, “I mean, when we arrived at the duke’s manor, he was still behind.”

“Yes, that’s correct. And if I’m right, the Memory Gate is indeed still open. Someone’s been left behind, and they haven’t come through yet.

But the one left behind isn’t Huang Bo—it’s you.

The real Huang Bo is standing right in front of me.”

Ah Ming’s frustration boiled over. His face twisted with rage as he roared:

“Cheng Shi, what are you playing at? I’ve saved you multiple times, and now you’re accusing me of being Huang Bo?! If you have evidence, show it! How can you claim I’m Huang Bo without proof?”

Fang Shiqing hesitated, her expression wavering as she looked toward Cheng Shi for clarification. But Cheng Shi calmly retrieved a small vial of potion, twisting the cap off as he spoke:

“Oh, there’s plenty of evidence.

For example, an assassin who claims they couldn’t escape during the fog;

Or, the fact that the dwarves in the servant’s quarters didn’t die at the hands of a single person—they killed each other. That’s not how [Order] works; it’s more like [Chaos].

Or how someone killed the duke, yet it wasn’t the guard having an affair, nor was it Bai Ling and me, and yet the killer was nowhere to be found.

And lastly, someone who clearly has the ‘Finger Key’ talent, which allows them to open doors quickly, chose to kick down the door instead, wasting precious time.”

With every point Cheng Shi made, Ah Ming’s face grew darker, while the jaws of their teammates dropped lower.

By the time Cheng Shi finished opening the vial, a wide grin had spread across his face.

“But it doesn’t matter anymore. In my hand is a potion called Truth of Confession, the favorite interrogation tool of Executioners from the Grand Tribunal. One drop, and you’ll spill everything. As an assassin of [Order], I’m sure you’re familiar with it.”

With that, Cheng Shi tipped the vial over, preparing to pour it onto Ah Ming’s head.

But before the liquid could escape the bottle, Ah Ming’s laughter echoed through the room.

“Heh... heh heh...

HAHAHAHA!!

Cheng Shi!

Well done!

You're impressive."

That smile... it was the same as Huang Bo's the first time they had met.

Exactly the same.