

The Gods 70

Chapter 70: A Trial of the Old, the Weak, and the Young

Interesting.

The seemingly carefree, talkative male actor had already lied during their initial introductions.

What made it even more intriguing was that his sentence was long, leaving many possible points where the lie could have slipped in. Cheng Shi couldn't quite pinpoint exactly what part of Su Yida's introduction was untrue, but he made a mental note to keep a close eye on him.

As Su Yida finished his introduction, the elderly man who had been coughing finally straightened up, giving everyone a pained but polite smile.

However, the smile looked strained, as if forced through discomfort.

"I apologize for taking up your time, but before we continue, I have a question:

Has anyone here ever encountered a university student named 'Cui Qiushi'?

Cough, cough... He's tall, about 1.83 meters, a bit taller than me. He's thin, has short hair—though it might have grown longer by now.

He has dark skin, and there's a burn scar on the back of his neck...

Cough, cough... His eyes resemble mine, but there's a mole under one of them. He... "

Before the old man could finish, Su Yida waved impatiently, interrupting him.

"Hold on, hold on, hold on! What are you doing, Grandpa? Searching for someone? Who is this person, your grandson?"

The old man shook his head and coughed violently again before straightening up once more, his face full of apology.

“I’m terribly sorry. My body isn’t what it used to be.

He’s my son. I just want to know if he’s still alive, if he’s safe. I’ve been searching for him for a long time but haven’t found him yet.”

Your son?

Cheng Shi looked at the old man, surprised.

Judging by his appearance, he had to be at least seventy. If his son was a university student, that meant he had fathered him in his fifties or later.

No wonder, in a world as chaotic as this, he was still desperately searching for his son. Having a child so late in life must have made him dote on him endlessly.

“Wait, Grandpa, you’re seventy or eighty years old, and your son is still in university?”

The old man didn’t seem bothered by Su Yida’s incredulity. He simply nodded continuously, coughing as he explained:

“Yes. Qiushi was an excellent student. He got into Nanjiang University of Science and Technology...”

“...Come on, none of that matters now. Who cares which university he got into? There are no universities left.

I guarantee no one here has seen him. Think about it—there are 12 billion people on Earth, and we only match with 6 per trial. If anyone’s seen him, it’d be a miracle. Besides, for all you know, he might be...”

Perhaps realizing that speculating about the man's son being dead was too cruel, Su Yida stopped himself mid-sentence, swallowing his words.

"Apologies for wasting everyone's time. My name is Cui Dingtian. I follow [Decay] and have a Ladder score of 1677."

[Decay]!

The old man mentioned his faith outright.

Everyone exchanged surprised glances, and Cheng Shi quickly scanned their faces. He noticed that only Tao Yi's expression flickered with a hint of something unnatural for a brief moment.

Oh boy, things are about to get interesting.

She's a follower of [Prosperity]!

Su Yida was also taken aback for a moment:

"Wait, Grandpa, you just... blurted that out?"

Tao Yi follows [Life]; aren't you afraid she'll..."

"Sigh, I'm already at death's door. What's there to hide?"

You can see the state of my body. I'm just trying to live one day at a time. All I want is to know what happened to Qiushi before I die."

Cough, cough... But don't worry, everyone. I've still got some strength left and can be of use.

If I become a burden later, don't hesitate to leave me behind. It's just how things are now."

Cui Dingtian's words were sincere, and it was clear he wasn't lying.

But as Cheng Shi observed this man who was truly "decaying," he couldn't help but frown.

At Cui Dingtian's age and condition, his power as a follower of [Decay] should have been at its peak. In fact, his strength in [Decay] likely far outweighed any of the younger participants. But why did he appear so weak?

Something feels off.

"We need to pick up the pace. The rain's getting heavier," said the man who had initially pointed out that their personal storage had been sealed.

He shifted his attention away from the old man and started wringing out the water from his clothes.

"Zhao Qian, follower of [Civilization], Hunter, 1937 points."

So, he's a hunter after all!

Cheng Shi smiled to himself, mentally patting himself on the back. But there was something about Zhao Qian's gaze that made him uneasy.

This hunter seemed particularly interested in the old man. There was a flicker in his eyes, as if hiding some unspoken truth.

Had he found his prey?

Or perhaps... had he encountered Cui Qiushi?

As Cheng Shi mulled over the dynamic between the old man and the hunter, the boy who had been quietly standing by finally spoke up.

“Gao Yu, follower of [Civilization], Mage, 1721 points.”

Another Mage?

Is today Mage Club day?

Cheng Shi chuckled internally.

The young mage already looked a bit baby-faced, and his voice still carried a hint of youthful immaturity.

He couldn't be very old.

“High schooler?” Cheng Shi teased with a grin.

Gao Yu froze, his face stiffening as he turned away, muttering:

“There's no such thing as high school anymore. I'm almost 18.”

“Oh, so a high schooler.”

“.....”

Gao Yu shot Cheng Shi a look of exasperation, clearly finding the older man's teasing tiresome.

Cheng Shi just grinned wider.

Ah, kids these days.

But... this trial is shaping up to be quite the mix. We've got the elderly, the young, and the...

Well, who's the "weak" one, I wonder...

"Cough, cough. Cheng Shi, follower of [Life], Priest, 1501 points.

It's an honor to meet you all, esteemed veterans."

Cheng Shi beamed, as if truly honored to be matched with a group of 1700- and 1800-point bigshots.

Upon hearing that Cheng Shi was a priest, the frowns that had been etched on the others' faces started to soften.

Finally, a priest in this survival trial.

Though Cheng Shi's score was on the low side, it was still better than having no priest at all.

Just as Cheng Shi finished introducing himself, a flash of light illuminated the distant sky, followed shortly by a deafening thunderclap.

"Boom—"

Bolts of lightning danced wildly through the pitch-black clouds, like dragons playing in the storm.

The rain intensified, the downpour becoming heavier by the second.

“It seems the first disaster is related to the rain. It could be a flood or a landslide. We should perform our rituals quickly and then decide whether we should head up the mountain or down.”

They were currently positioned halfway up a mountain. If the disaster was a flood, heading to the peak would be the safest choice.

But if it were a landslide, the valley below would be the safer bet.

The choice would impact the difficulty of survival, potentially deciding their fates.

They had to be careful.

After Zhao Qian’s suggestion, no one moved—except for Su Yida.

He glanced awkwardly at everyone, then turned and quietly walked away, his expression constrained.

As soon as he turned his back, Cheng Shi chuckled to himself.

Interesting. I’ve run into a fellow trickster.

Su Yida wasn’t a follower of [Existence]—he was clearly a follower of [Void]!

A Mage of Deceit, a master of trickery!

Of the six players here, only Cheng Shi, Tao Yi, and Cui Dingtian had conflicting faiths. The rest of them had no reason to keep anything secret.

[Memory] followers offer a memory in their ritual, regardless of whose memory it is. [Time] followers must perform their rituals with precision and punctuality.

Neither of these required secrecy.

Personal privacy? Ritual preference?

In an urgent survival trial like this, none of that mattered.

Even the [Prosperity] follower hadn't tried to sneak away for their rituals. So why would a supposed [Existence] follower need to leave?

No wonder Su Yida's introduction had been full of lies!

Because a [Deceit] ritual demands deceit.

Whether you deceive your enemies or your allies depends on your profession and talent.

It's almost laughable—[Existence] rituals don't even rely on physical objects. But all [Void] rituals require praying to a specific divine symbol.

Su Yida likely left to hide his true mask.

For [Deceit] followers without the "Lies of Yesterday" talent, figuring out how to conceal their faith has always been a tricky problem.

Most [Deceit] followers I've encountered pretend to be [Fate] followers because all they need is a fake die, and the rest can be covered with a silver tongue.

Then, when nobody's looking, they can quietly swap their prayer focus to the hidden mask.

It's rare to see someone like Su Yida pretending to be a follower of [Existence].

And as the saying goes: the more you say, the more you slip up.

Most [Deceit] followers speak very little and always aim their words directly at the heart of the deception.

Using verbosity to mask his true intentions and divert attention was a clever move. But the risk was high—he needed to keep tight control over himself.

After all, such tactics could be mentally and emotionally draining.

Back to the rituals.

This fellow trickster probably had some sneaky trick up his sleeve, which is why he was being so cautious.

Now I'm even more intrigued.