

## The Gods 78

Chapter 78: Actually, My Last Name is Tang

There is no doubt that [War] loves blood and fire.

But not every follower of [War] has an affinity for fire.

Most of its followers receive only half of its blessing—brutal combat power. Only a select few lucky ones are also granted the power to control flames.

And Zhao Qian was one of those select few.

His control over fire was his trump card, something he kept hidden and rarely revealed—a true ace up his sleeve.

Which is why he was so curious about how Cheng Shi knew.

“You’re a hunter, but when you lost your bow, you didn’t seem panicked, which means you have a backup plan strong enough to handle the trial.

I noticed when we were climbing the mountain, your left hand deliberately avoided the vines and only grasped the rocky edges. This indicates that your left hand’s power isn’t entirely under your control—it could probably damage wood-based things.

And when you fought Elder Cui during the ritual, your defensive stance with your left hand was more aggressive. But every time it looked like you were about to attack, nothing happened, and your right-hand punch wasn’t the follow-up. That means the original attack should’ve come from your left hand.

You’re hiding a trump card, and as a follower of [War], the answer is pretty clear...”

“Your observation skills are sharp, but what if I told you you’re wrong?” Zhao Qian raised an eyebrow with a smirk.

Cheng Shi’s eyes turned “serious” as he replied:

“Then Elder Cui will die.”

Zhao Qian’s gaze turned cold as he studied Cheng Shi, then glanced at the unconscious Cui Dingtian lying between two pieces of wood. A flicker of conflict crossed his face before he let out a sigh.

“Fine, you’re right. I do have fire.”

Zhao Qian raised his left hand, and as soon as it lifted, a layer of fine crimson flames ignited along his skin.

As expected, he wielded the power of fire!

Cheng Shi smiled knowingly and handed him the alchemy furnace.

Luckily, when it didn’t endanger his personal safety, Zhao Qian was willing to cooperate.

It seemed that he wasn’t the purely self-serving type Cheng Shi had initially suspected.

Zhao Qian shook his head with a wry smile as he took the furnace in his hand.

“What do I need to do?”

Cheng Shi’s gaze grew wild again, his eyes locked on the furnace as he said, word by word:

“Roast it. Keep roasting it until the furnace explodes!”

“?”

Everyone was dumbfounded by the statement.

Gao Yu looked completely confused.

“How are you supposed to brew a potion after the furnace blows up?”

Cheng Shi burst into laughter.

“You don’t understand. Alchemy is a mystical process. My previous experiments always failed.

It wasn’t until I experienced a furnace explosion that I realized ‘Fleeting Radiance’ needs to be exposed to enough air pressure at the moment of release to fully form.

I could never pinpoint which component of the air was the catalyst for the potion.

So, the most reliable method is to blow up the furnace!

The potion will take the form of a black paste, and the yield is about 70%. As long as we can catch enough of the paste during the explosion, we can mold it into pills, and Elder Cui’s life will be saved!”

At this point, Zhao Qian had no more doubts.

He channeled all his [War] power, summoning flames to roast the furnace.

The pressure inside the furnace slowly rose, but it would take time. While they waited, the others began collecting floating debris to build a platform in the middle of the ocean.

Tao Yi also took the opportunity to resolve her clothing issue. She used her magic to peel bark from the logs, weaving it into a tight outfit, covering her not-so-curvy figure.

As for the men... a few scraps of cloth would do. No point in being fussy.

Before long, thanks to everyone's efforts, they had built a sturdy platform from branches and driftwood.

"The surface area is enough. No need to expand it further. The pressure valve is going off—get ready, it's going to blow!"

Zhao Qian's shout brought everyone back to attention. The sight of the over-pressurized furnace emitting warning hisses had everyone on edge.

Everyone except Cheng Shi, who stood there calmly holding a ball of mud he'd casually scraped off the wood earlier, looking as confident as ever.

The key to close-up magic is misdirection.

Everything up to now had been mere setup. The real life-saving potion was the one already in his hand.

If anyone managed to catch a ball of gray ash from the explosion and mold it into a pill, it would be nothing but a failure.

The Offering to the Void couldn't store items, and Cheng Shi wouldn't allow them to hold onto something they believed to be a miracle cure. After the effect wore off, it would turn into nothing but scorched ash—completely useless.

"It's coming!"

Zhao Qian roared as he tossed the furnace high into the air.

"BOOM—"

The furnace exploded, sending ash and debris flying in all directions.

Each player scrambled to collect as much of the potion paste as they could.

Except for Cheng Shi.

Amid the flying ash, he moved swiftly, grabbed something with decisive precision, and rushed over to Cui Dingtian, shoving it into the old man's mouth.

“.....”

Gao Yu, his hands covered in soot, stared at Cheng Shi in disbelief, muttering:

“If you're that fast, why did you need someone to carry you up the mountain?”

Cheng Shi laughed but didn't answer.

Sure enough, the potion had succeeded—not only that, but it was highly effective.

Cui Dingtian felt a surge of vitality explode from his heart, spreading through his entire body as his blood circulated. All of his pain evaporated in an instant, and his pale complexion gradually flushed with color.

“Isn't this just like Prosperity of Yesteryear?”

Tao Yi looked on in disbelief as she watched Elder Cui's transformation, struggling to believe that her flesh had such potent effects.

Even Cui Dingtian himself was bewildered. As he regained consciousness, he felt as though he had returned to his younger days.

Sitting up and inspecting his body, he let out a sigh of amazement.

“Cheng, how did you do it? I...

How is this even possible?”

Cheng Shi blinked twice and smiled.

“What do you mean ‘how is it possible’? This potion just reverted your body to its peak condition—a temporary flash of vitality. How do you feel?”

Cui Dingtian, still in disbelief, examined his body and said slowly:

“Returning to my peak condition? Even so... this potion can’t be A-rank, can it?”

“A-rank? Haha, Elder Cui, you must be joking. In five days, you’ll be knocking on death’s door. If this is B-rank, I’d have to burn incense for forty days at my ancestors’ graves.”

“But... can a B-rank potion suppress the Oathbreaker’s Curse?”

“???”

“What did you just say???”

BOOM!

Cheng Shi’s mind erupted in shock.

Did he just say Oathbreaker’s Curse!?

“Elder Cui, are you an Oathbreaker!?”

Everyone was stunned. For a brief moment, silence descended once more.

Cui Dingtian nodded, his expression complex, as he looked at the utterly bewildered Cheng Shi and began telling his story.

It wasn't a particularly complicated tale.

Before the [Gods] descended, Cui Dingtian had lived an ordinary, happy life with his son.

But when They arrived and changed the world, the old man lost all contact with his son.

Determined to find him, Cui Dingtian stepped onto the path of faith and chose [Prosperity] as his patron god.

The will of [Prosperity] aligned perfectly with his goal—to unleash all his power before his death in order to find his son.

However, despite [Prosperity]'s power, the old man was still aging. Compared to other players, he had no significant advantage.

And without an advantage, he found himself struggling in the increasingly difficult trials.

So, after narrowly surviving one particularly harsh trial, he made a heart-wrenching decision.

He abandoned [Prosperity] and turned to [Decay]!

Given his deteriorating health, following [Decay] was akin to freely receiving divine power.

As for the curse that came from betraying his patron...

Well, as always, survival came first. The rest could be dealt with later.

Driven by his original obsession, he initiated the Oathbreaker's Prayer.

The trial was ultimately a success. He earned [Decay]'s favor, but he also received [Prosperity]'s curse.

It seemed his former patron understood the old man's deepest desire, so the curse bestowed upon him was:

A body that would never decay!

How absurd!

A warrior who now followed [Decay], but whose muscles would never rot, forever encased in the form of a stone-like mummy.

Even though [Decay] had not forsaken him and had granted him a powerful talent, [Prosperity]'s curse constantly suppressed his ability to fully wield [Decay]'s power.

It was a successful conversion, but a failed betrayal.

He hadn't made himself stronger; he had made himself inhuman.

And that was why he had been able to resist the void's corrosion longer than the others—because both his muscle and skin bore the will of two opposing gods.

“.....”

Everyone listened in silence, unsure how to respond.

Cui Dingtian stood up, stretched his revitalized body, and smiled bitterly.

“My muscles bear [Prosperity]’s curse, while my skin carries [Decay]’s blessing. They constantly clash and reject one another, and the conflict within my body is what causes my endless coughing. It’s not a disease—it’s the price I pay!”

So, Cheng... I have to ask you...

What kind of potion can cure this price? If you have one, I’m willing to give you everything I have in exchange.”

“.....”

Everyone turned to look at Cheng Shi, their eyes filled with suspicion and curiosity.

Tao Yi covered her mouth in shock. Gao Yu stared wide-eyed. Zhao Qian raised an eyebrow.

And Su Yida... discreetly put his hands behind his back and scraped the soot from his fingers, rolling it into a small ball, which he then tucked into his waistband.

Dammit, this has escalated.

How was I supposed to know the potion could suppress an Oathbreaker’s curse?

No one ever said anything about that!

But now that Cheng Shi thought about it, it had to be the [Deceit] power within the potion that made it work. After all, it was crafted using [Deceit]’s talent. So, was it possible that...

[Deceit] had tricked both [Prosperity] and [Decay]?

But could he say that out loud?

Cheng Shi awkwardly forced a smile, his mind racing, trying to come up with a way to keep up the charade and convince the others.

“Let’s say, hypothetically... what if Cheng Shi isn’t my real name?”

“Huh? Then what’s your real name?” Tao Yi, playing along with wide-eyed innocence, asked.

“Uh... Actually, my last name is Tang—like Tang Sanzang from Journey to the West.”