

## The Gods 114

### Chapter 114: Shaman

Shaman's house was not far from the bar, which explained how she had spotted him entering from outside.

After walking with her for only a short while, Cheng Shi found himself standing in front of a modest little courtyard tucked away in a quiet alley.

"Residents of Far Dusk Town never have to worry about housing. The Administrative Office gathers the town's craftsmen to build new homes for the pregnant tour assistants.

But Shaman hasn't... isn't eligible yet. This house belonged to my mother."

Cheng Shi followed her into the courtyard, taking a curious look around at the small but tidy yard. Casually, he asked:

"And where is your mother now?"

"She... committed the sin of blasphemy... She's gone."

Cheng Shi was surprised. Rather than apologizing, he leaned in, intrigued, and asked another question:

"From what I know, the families of blasphemers are usually also considered blasphemers, and when punishment comes, the whole family dies. Why are you still alive?"

"Shaman is not a blasphemer!"

For the first time, a rare spark of defiance flashed in the young woman's eyes. She glared at Cheng Shi, seemingly ready to offer a stronger rebuttal.

But her moment of boldness didn't last long. As quickly as it came, it dissolved, and she shrank back like a turtle retreating into its shell.

Her face turned pale again as she rushed forward, grabbing Cheng Shi's hand desperately.

"Please don't leave... I beg you."

Cheng Shi didn't move, waiting for her explanation.

After a long internal struggle, Shaman finally lowered her head and spoke:

"One night, my mother went out to meet with some friends. That was when she encountered divine retribution.

I was still young back then, waiting for her at home all night. But it wasn't her who came back—it was the town guards.

They told me that my mother had been punished for blasphemy and that this house would be mine until I became a mother myself. After that, no new home would be built for me."

Hearing this, Cheng Shi nodded thoughtfully.

Now it made sense.

Based on his observations from the previous night, no one in the homes where the night crows landed had survived.

If what Shaman said was true, then it was plausible.

Her mother had gone out for a casual gathering with friends, but met the killer instead, dying in someone else's home.

Young Shaman had escaped the fate that befell her mother.

“Let go. I’m not leaving,” Cheng Shi said as he gently freed his hand from her grip. He then began to look around the small courtyard.

There wasn’t much to see. The yard was sparsely furnished, except for a birdcage near the entrance to the house, suggesting that Shaman kept some small pets.

“You keep birds?” Cheng Shi asked, smiling as he touched the birdcage.

“No, Shaman doesn’t keep them...

This is food for the Sun-Spot Finch. They’re the most common birds in Far Dusk Town and often land in people’s courtyards.

Leaving food out can attract them, which makes the courtyard feel livelier.”

Bird food... to attract finches?

Cheng Shi chuckled, imagining Shaman sitting in the yard, entertaining herself by playing with the birds.

A lonely little girl growing up with birds as her companions—it was oddly heartwarming.

After circling the yard and finding nothing of particular interest, Cheng Shi finally stepped inside her house.

Shaman, still blushing, followed behind him and quietly closed the door.

“Alright, tell me—what should I do?”

Cheng Shi stood in the living room, casually inspecting the furnishings while asking his question.

“You... you...”

Shaman was visibly trembling. She stood frozen by the door, clutching the hem of her dress, utterly at a loss.

Judging by how stiff the atmosphere was, it almost seemed like this was Cheng Shi’s home, not hers.

“Looks like you don’t have much experience. Fine, I’ll take the lead.”

Without warning, Cheng Shi whirled around, darted toward Shaman, and with a swift motion, tore her dress apart.

Shaman let out a startled cry, instinctively crossing her arms over her chest and stepping back.

In the dim light from the crack in the door, Cheng Shi’s sharp gaze swept over her body.

Once he was sure she wasn’t hiding anything underneath her undergarments, he took another step, pinning her against the door.

Shaman’s body trembled uncontrollably from fear and nervousness. She opened her mouth, wanting to say something, but her mind went completely blank.

Cheng Shi wrapped an arm roughly around her waist and pressed a small surgical blade, hidden up his sleeve, against her spine.

His expression suddenly turned cold, and his voice dropped to a chilling tone. The fiery passion he had displayed moments before vanished, replaced by an icy demeanor.

“Tell me. Who are you, really?”

Shaman didn't respond.

Or perhaps she didn't hear him.

The timid girl, lost in some overwhelming emotion, didn't even register Cheng Shi's question.

Growing impatient, Cheng Shi frowned and raised his voice.

"This is your last chance. Who are you?"

This time, Shaman heard him. She froze, her wide, confused eyes staring up at him, as if she couldn't believe what she had just heard.

This charming and witty gentleman from the surface world, who was now holding her close, was asking... what?

Who am I?

Aren't I Shaman?

Her eyes filled with confusion and uncertainty, to the point where even her earlier nervousness began to fade.

As she looked into Cheng Shi's grim expression, her heart sank from joy to fear.

She realized now—he didn't like her. Everything from before had been fake, like a soap bubble floating in the air, ready to pop with a single touch.

Tears welled up in her innocent, watery eyes, brimming with sadness and disappointment.

Cheng Shi observed her reaction, his frown deepening.

It didn't seem like she was acting.

Could I have been wrong about her?

He began to reflect on the moment they had shared in his room earlier.

Back then, when their arms had intertwined and their hands had clasped, Cheng Shi had sensed something unusual about this girl.

It wasn't her reactions that had seemed off—it was her vitals. Cheng Shi wasn't a doctor, but he knew a little bit about pulse reading.

Despite Shaman's flushed cheeks and obvious shyness, and even though she was so nervous she was sweating, her heartbeat had remained unnervingly calm and steady.

From that moment, Cheng Shi knew Shaman wasn't as simple as she seemed.

And here again, despite the surge of emotions, her heartbeat remained steady.

Yet, the confusion and hurt in her eyes were almost too real. So real that Cheng Shi found it hard to believe she could be hiding anything.

Could there really be such a perfect actor in this world?

At that moment, Cheng Shi was almost willing to accept the idea that this steady heartbeat was a unique trait of this motherless girl.

Still, he decided to take one last precaution.

“You have no ill intent toward me, do you?”

Shaman’s face was pale, her teeth clenched tight as she fought to hold back her tears. Instead of answering, she stubbornly turned her head away.

Her heartbeat remained unchanged.

Alright, fine. If that’s the case, there’s no point wasting more time.

With a swift chop to the neck, Cheng Shi knocked the nearly sobbing Shaman unconscious. He then pulled a large bag of gray powder from his storage space and dumped a generous amount into her nose.

It was Nightmare Powder.

Just a tiny bit could plunge a grown man into vivid, terrifying dreams, from which they couldn’t wake until the drug wore off.

The amount Cheng Shi gave Shaman could knock out ten strong men for three days straight.

That would give him more than enough time to deal with everything else before this girl with the miraculously steady heartbeat woke up.

As for where he got the powder...

Don’t ask. Let’s just say he “found” it.

He tossed Shaman onto her bed and thoroughly searched every corner of the room. When he was sure there was nothing suspicious, he shook his head in disappointment and walked out.

The moment he stepped outside, he saw Qin Chaoge standing by the gate with a teasing smirk on her face, mockingly clicking her tongue at him.

“What’s the matter? Can’t go through with it?”

If you’re suspicious of her, you should’ve dealt with it earlier—kill her and be done with it.”

To emphasize her point, she mimed slitting her throat with a finger.

Cheng Shi chuckled, thinking to himself, A lawful [War] follower trying to play this game with me?

“You want to do it?”

Qin Chaoge rolled her eyes. “I don’t suspect her.”

“Ah, I see.”

“Alright then, I’ll handle it.”

With that, Cheng Shi nonchalantly spun around and flung the surgical blade in his hand toward the room.

There was a soft thud as the blade pierced flesh, and then all fell silent.

“You!?”

Qin Chaoge hadn’t expected Cheng Shi to actually follow through. Furious, she grabbed him by the collar.

Cheng Shi caught her hand, smiling calmly.

“What’s the matter? Weren’t you the one who suggested I kill her?”

“I—”

“Hmm? Don’t tell me... you like girls?”

“I like your mother!”

With a growl, Qin Chaoe flung Cheng Shi out of the courtyard and stormed into the house.

She needed to check if Cheng Shi had really done it. Had he truly killed someone in cold blood, with no regard for human life?

Of course, Cheng Shi hadn’t dealt a fatal blow. The surgical blade was embedded in Shaman’s right shoulder—a non-lethal wound.

He had just been frustrated at not finding the answers he was looking for and decided to mess with the lawful bard’s façade of ruthlessness.

She acts all tough, but she’s really just a good person at heart.

Cheng Shi dusted himself off as he got up, then called back into the courtyard:

“Trying to be my stepdad, huh? Too bad you’re a bit too late for that.”

“Cheng Shi!”

“Stop yelling. I’m outta here. Bye.”

With a wave, Cheng Shi left the courtyard.