

## The Gods 121

Chapter 121: From \_\_ of \_\_

“You’re not welcoming me?”

“Should I?”

“You should.”

“I don’t.”

Cheng Shi stared at the person in front of him for a long moment, his intense expression slowly easing only when the other person shrugged, rubbed his nose, and smiled wryly. Shaking his head, Cheng Shi let out a bitter laugh.

“You look exhausted. Seems like the road ahead isn’t an easy one.”

The visitor smiled warmly.

“That’s my road, not yours.”

“The scattered state of existence, huh? Not bad. So... which version of me are you, exactly?”

Cheng Shi!”

Cheng Shi’s eyes burned with curiosity as he scrutinized the figure before him. And indeed, standing in front of him was none other than...

Cheng Shi!

Another Cheng Shi!

A Cheng Shi from—who knows when or where...

This version of Cheng Shi looked about 90% identical to the current one, but the differences were stark in their own way. His face was more weathered, and his presence more ethereal.

Time had etched deep lines into his skin, each groove carrying the weight of struggles that most could never comprehend.

A horrifying scar ran from his collarbone to behind his ear, like a grotesque centipede writhing across his neck.

His left shoulder sagged slightly, the once-perfect symmetry of his outfit ruined, leaving it wrinkled and uneven.

His right hand trembled uncontrollably, and his leg seemed to drag a bit. His entire body was riddled with imperfections—except for one thing:

His eyes.

Those eyes, despite everything, were still bright!

At this moment, those eyes, which could have been filled with lies, mockery, and sarcasm, were instead brimming with sincerity, nostalgia, memories, and tranquility.

He looked at Cheng Shi and smiled radiantly.

“If you really must ask, I’m afraid I can’t answer. Because, I don’t know where I’m from, either.

Maybe I’m your past, or maybe I’m your future.

You know how it goes. It all depends on how They define it.”

Cheng Shi's gaze sharpened.

"They sent you?"

"No, no. They no longer pay attention to me. I came here on my own."

What do you mean, They don't care about you anymore?

What do you mean, you came on your own?

How did you come here?

Did you shut off Memory, or did you cut off Time?

Seeing Cheng Shi's confusion, the other Cheng Shi laughed heartily.

"Don't think I'm that powerful. While I've built up enough courage to face Them, They are still Them, and I am not.

I simply saw a gap in Memory's archives, and I decided to jump in and take a look.

Turns out, I found you.

Haha, so it was you who caused that gap in the first place.

How amusing, so amusing! Have you come across something interesting recently? Tell me all about it. I could use a good laugh."

Watching his other self laugh until tears streamed down his face, Cheng Shi's own expression darkened.

"You came here just to laugh at me?"

"That wasn't the plan, but it is now. Hahaha!"

"You're just like Them."

"That's a low blow. You should only ask why if I weren't like Them."

"...Fair enough."

The two Cheng Shis suddenly locked eyes and, as if a switch had been flipped, burst into fits of laughter simultaneously.

The shared resonance of being the same soul, now amplified to an extreme, created a moment of perfect harmony between them. Who knew if they were laughing through the hardships or simply being carefree?

One laughed so hard he pounded the ground, while the other laughed till his voice cracked.

The laughter lasted for a long time, until finally, worn out, they both began to settle down.

Cheng Shi's initial confusion started to fade, and he began to get a clearer sense of the other version's intentions.

He wasn't here to help, nor was he here to push him forward, or even to obstruct him.

It seemed that he had merely stumbled upon some amusement and, upon further exploration, discovered that this source of amusement was his past self.

No matter how They defined things, this Cheng Shi standing before him was unmistakably himself from the distant reaches of the timeline.

How fascinating.

Meeting his “future” self.

Shaking his head with a soft laugh, Cheng Shi relaxed and plopped onto the ground, or rather, onto the void itself.

The other Cheng Shi watched him with a look of interest, his eyes full of nostalgia.

“Does it hurt?” Cheng Shi asked, glancing at the older Cheng Shi.

“Hm? You mean this?”

The older Cheng Shi touched the terrifying scar on his neck and chuckled.

There was something mischievous in his laugh.

“Got it from fighting a poison master. Not sure if you’ve met her yet, but trust me, it’s better if you don’t.”

Cheng Shi stared at his older self for a while before sighing in exasperation. “Tell the truth already.”

“Sigh, you’re no fun at all. You’ve got to learn to find humor in tough times.

Fine, fine. Don’t glare. It’s fake. I had it tattooed.

What do you think? Doesn't it make me look intimidating? You should get one too. It would save you a lot of trouble at the start of every trial."

"....."

I knew it.

When Cheng Shi first saw that playful glint in his future self's eyes, he knew the guy would start spouting nonsense.

Despite the fact that the "Master of Deception" innate trait would be disabled when they met, making everything his future self said seem true...

Seeing through himself wasn't that hard, after all.

"You didn't dress yourself up like this just to get me to feel sorry for you, did you?"

"Come on, it's just this one scar."

"And your shoulder?"

"Herrobus tore out my shoulder bones during the second Council of the Gods."

Cheng Shi raised an eyebrow. Here we go.

This was the inevitable moment where the future self couldn't help but "leak" some information.

Even though his thoughts remained the same—he didn't want to interfere too much with his past self—he still couldn't resist letting a few things slip.

It wasn't about anything else; it was just someone who had walked a rough path, feeling compassion for his past self and not wanting him to tread through the same mud again.

Cheng Shi listened quietly, not asking any more questions.

"Herrobus is the emissary of [Annihilation]. Avoid him if you can."

"This one," the older Cheng Shi pointed to his side, towards a fist-sized scar near his ribs, "was from Qin Xin. He's not a bad guy, but his fate is cursed. Avoid him as well."

"And here, you should know about this one—it's from the Ring of Death's Amusement. I haven't been able to hold a drink without spilling it in ages. That's what happens when you rely on it too much. Keep it in mind."

"And this," he pointed to his leg, "Galyosha crushed my leg. I tore off her arm and rebuilt a new one, but unfortunately, it didn't quite match.

Although I've heard that being lame is a trend for powerful people—it adds to the mystique, doesn't it?

She's a madwoman, the hand behind the fall of the Tower of Logic. Remember, stay far away from her."

"....."

The older Cheng Shi kept talking, and with every name he mentioned, his face grew darker.

By the end, a palpable killing intent radiated from his eyes, pouring out like a flood and swirling through the void. The oppressive aura made everything around him feel as though it had come to a standstill.

Even Cheng Shi himself was caught in the grip of the murderous aura, cold sweat running down his back, his face turning pale.

But after a few moments, the older Cheng Shi realized what he was doing. He smiled self-deprecatingly and reined in his terrifying presence.

“Apologies. Reflex action.”

As time marches on, we face all sorts of tragedies. I may have ventured further than most, but I’m still just an actor in this tragic play.

And as long as the performance isn’t over... I still want to give it one last try.

Sigh...

But what’s the point of talking about all this? It’s boring.”

The older Cheng Shi’s grim expression abruptly vanished, and he smiled again as he looked at Cheng Shi.

“Now, how about you? I’m curious. How did you manage to open that gap?”

Cheng Shi’s mind was swirling with the flood of information he had just received. After a long pause, he finally spoke:

“That gap wasn’t opened by me. It was...”

He was about to say [Memory], but suddenly felt like that wasn’t worth mentioning, especially since the older Cheng Shi had jumped out of [Memory]’s archives.

So, he changed his answer and spoke a name.

“Su Yida.”

“And who’s that?”

“.....”

Cheng Shi now knew for certain: this older version wasn’t from the same timeline as his potential future. As for which future this Cheng Shi came from...

Who cares?

“He’s a master of trickery... one who has never been noticed by Them.”

“Oh?” The older Cheng Shi’s tone shifted to something more contemplative, and, for once, he didn’t offer up any snarky remarks.

Silence fell between them.

Cheng Shi pursed his lips, feeling like an idiot.

He had such a golden opportunity to ask for help, and instead, he was wasting time with small talk. What was wrong with him?

Setting aside the chaotic flood of thoughts in his mind, he decided to ask seriously:

“The ranger I came with... Is she still alive?”