

The Gods 127

Chapter 127: I Do Miss the Past, But Have You Had Enough of This Act?

“Now, I’m very curious—what will you choose?”

The older Cheng Shi stood by with a smile, quietly waiting for Cheng Shi’s answer.

The Fate’s Judgment didn’t offer preset choices. Once the player believed they had pieced together the threads of fate, the decision point would appear, but it was up to the player to define the choices.

It felt like a video game reaching 90% completion, where the player was suddenly presented with branching paths for future events.

But instead of given options, you had to fill in the blanks yourself.

If the option you submitted aligned with the clues of the trial, it would be validated as a legitimate choice and presented to all players, automatically receiving one vote.

However, if your choice didn’t match the trial’s clues, your vote would fail, you’d lose the right to participate in the decision, and you’d essentially forfeit any points in this round.

The option with the most votes would determine the next stage of the trial, and fate would unfold along the path dictated by that choice.

History, reality—it didn’t matter. In His trial, He had the final say.

And not only that, those who failed might suffer a little twist of fate for standing on the wrong side.

Seeing Cheng Shi frown, struggling to make a decision, the older Cheng Shi chuckled and shook his head:

“The innocent, ignorant townspeople, being used as experiment subjects;

The 'Divine Envoy,' both the puppeteer behind the scenes and the protector ensuring the town's survival;

Zangier, the one who orchestrated all of this, only to fail with the awakening of [Eternal Sun] and be abandoned by the Council of Scholars;

And the Council of Scholars, who helplessly watch from the shadows as their experiment teeters on the brink of collapse.

And let's not forget an extra option:

The unfortunate travelers, captured by the Tower of Logic, brainwashed by alchemical techniques, and thrown into this nightmare...

Fate's choices must align with the trial's theme. Since the truth revolves around false gods, the party deserving redemption must be one entangled with these false gods.

These five options—all of them could be the answer."

He smirked. "To be honest, you don't need to agonize over this.

After all, this is just a trial. Perhaps...

It doesn't change anything."

Cheng Shi raised an eyebrow at that, smirking back.

What if it does?

"You seem awfully invested in what I'll choose."

“Oh no, not at all. I’m just here to... enjoy the show.”

“...”

Knew it.

Cheng Shi sighed and asked in return:

“What do you think I should choose?”

“You shouldn’t ask me. I’m just here for the entertainment, not to take responsibility.”

“If nothing changes, what responsibility do you need to bear?”

“Influencing your choice might displease Him.”

“Heh, you’re me, and I’m you. How could I influence myself? So why don’t you give me a suggestion that would please Him?”

The older Cheng Shi blinked, momentarily surprised, then said:

“You really want to know?”

Cheng Shi meant to nod, but whether it was from standing too long or from thinking too hard, he suddenly felt a wave of dizziness. His knees buckled, and he nearly toppled off the platform formed by the giant corpse’s hands.

The older Cheng Shi reacted quickly, grabbing his arm just in time.

“You’re weak.”

“No big deal, probably just after-effects from the Sage of Life’s resurrection spell. I don’t think my body has completely recovered yet.”

Cheng Shi gripped the older Cheng Shi’s arm to steady himself and quickly cast a healing spell on himself.

“Now, tell me—give me some advice. You’ve already helped me find the answers; why stop now?”

The older Cheng Shi frowned slightly, eyeing Cheng Shi with a hint of suspicion.

“There’s something off about you. This isn’t like you... or rather, this isn’t like me.”

Cheng Shi let out a bitter laugh.

“Even the strongest people get tired sometimes. Normally, I make all the decisions on my own. But for once, I’ve found something faint, something intangible to lean on...

It reminds me of when I used to ask the old man for advice while I was job hunting...”

Upon hearing this, the older Cheng Shi’s expression darkened instantly.

But soon after, he smiled again.

“Being cautious is good, but a bit late. If I were fake, I wouldn’t have revealed all these truths to you earlier.”

The older Cheng Shi paused for a moment, then added, “The old man never gave me advice when I was job hunting...”

I found the job myself. I only told him after I'd already secured it.

What you should remember is not some vague advice, but the smile on his face when he found out you had a job.”

“After all this information overload, you still kept your guard up. I'm impressed.”

The older Cheng Shi shook his head with a smile, as if recalling his own sly past.

Cheng Shi chuckled along.

“I just thought everything was going too smoothly. It felt strange, so I'm sorry, it was instinct.”

“No need to apologize. I'd be disappointed if you hadn't tested me.”

“Alright then, stop with the serious face. I'm you, and you're me. Now give me some advice—useful advice!”

“Our principle is that we must never—”

Cheng Shi cut him off, staring into his eyes, emphasizing each word seriously: “Just this once.”

“...”

The older Cheng Shi smiled.

“You're smarter than I was. More flexible too.

Fine, since you insist, here's my advice:

Zangier."

Cheng Shi's pupils contracted, his brow furrowing in disbelief as he repeated the name:

"Zangier?"

"That's right. Redeem him, and perhaps he can escape his state of life force depletion and regain control of the experiment.

And that would mean that the authority of [Birth] and [Corruption] will continue to be stolen.

If, one day, the experiment succeeds...

A mortal stealing the [Gods]' authority would be the greatest entertainment of all."

Cheng Shi understood now.

The older Cheng Shi's plan was still aimed at pleasing the Patron.

Cheng Shi nodded thoughtfully.

"You really are His follower."

"Who else would I be?"

So, what do you think of my suggestion?"

“I see your angle...

But didn't you say, 'This is just a trial, and perhaps it won't change anything'?"

“When the grand finale is about to unfold, and He turns His gaze toward this place—who can say for certain that the outcome won't change?"

“But this is a trial of [Fate]..."

“Who told you that [Fate] doesn't enjoy a bit of fun?"

“?"

Cheng Shi froze.

Does [Fate] enjoy fun?

Or is it just my suffering that He enjoys?

He chuckled bitterly, rubbing his face to relax his muscles. Then he flashed a textbook-perfect grin at the older Cheng Shi.

“My teammates... I assume they're under your control?"

“Except for the Sage of Life, who's currently 'bonding' with Zangier, yes, you could say that.

Do you want someone dead?

Or perhaps... Someone caught your eye?

I think that little bard girl is quite nice—better than the Wind-Tamer Ranger. Maybe... give it some thought?”

The older Cheng Shi teased, smiling mischievously.

Cheng Shi smiled too, but as he kept smiling, the joy in his smile gradually faded away.

“By the way, I don’t think I ever mentioned that I lost a teammate. How did you know?”

Even if I entered with one fewer player, how could you be sure he didn’t just... not come?”

The older Cheng Shi didn’t seem surprised by the question. He smirked and replied playfully:

“Starting again, are we?”

Very well, I’ll tell you.

As the counterpart to [Memory], I’ve developed a few tricks over the years from our constant sparring.

So knowing what happened here... wasn’t difficult.”

Cheng Shi feigned a look of realization.

“Oh~ I see.

So does that mean you can also use this method to access my memories?”

“?”

The older Cheng Shi hadn't expected to be led into this trap. He laughed but answered confidently:

"I don't need to. All I have to do is reflect on everything I've experienced, and I'll know what's in your past.

Because I'm you, and you're me.

I remember our loneliness, our pain, being adopted by the old man, our second chance at life, and I also remember—"

"Enough!"

Cheng Shi roughly cut him off, once again smiling.

But this time, the smile held no warmth, no sense of shared understanding—only cold sarcasm and detachment.

"Have you had enough of this act?"

Because I'm getting... bored."

"?"

The older Cheng Shi was stunned, confused as he looked at Cheng Shi, frowning as if trying to figure something out.

Cheng Shi's lips curled into a mocking smile as he clapped his hands slowly, tauntingly:

"Clap, clap, clap—

What a dazzling performance, a flawless disguise.

You almost had me fooled.

Impressive, really.

But just like He said...

In an unscripted performance like this, there are always little mistakes that the actor doesn't notice.

But don't worry—the audience sees them.

Let me tell you where you went wrong.

But first, how should I address you?

Shaman?

Qin Chaoge?

The killer we've been searching for?

Or perhaps..."

Cheng Shi's face darkened as he dropped his smile entirely, glaring at the "older Cheng Shi" with cold, calculating eyes. He pronounced a name slowly and deliberately:

"Zhen Xin?"

