

The Gods 129

Chapter 129: You Do Your Thing, I'll Play My Game—No Interference

Cheng Shi had deceived himself.

After stepping onto the path of fate and becoming a follower of [Deceit], he had always pondered one question.

Since [Memory] was the opposing faith, and it enjoyed recording everything truthfully, what would happen if he encountered one of [Memory]'s followers? How could he deceive them?

It was easier with players ranked lower than himself, but if they had higher scores...

It was unimaginable what kind of abilities He might grant to His followers to expose lies.

So the answer was clear: it would be difficult.

Deceiving a follower of [Memory] was not an easy task.

However...

What if the approach was different?

Since all they cared about was the truth of memory, could there be a way where, if he altered the memory itself, it would count as successfully deceiving them?

Cheng Shi had considered this possibility early on and started preparing for it.

During previous Wishing Trials, he made several wishes at different times, with only one goal for each trial:

To obtain a book on psychology.

This simple request resulted in relatively easy trials, and before long, Cheng Shi became an “expert” well-versed in psychological texts.

With enough accumulated knowledge, a transformation occurred.

He performed a small operation on himself.

A hypnosis surgery.

He recorded several of his most indistinguishable memories, altered the cause-and-effect of those memories, and hypnotized himself into believing that the rewritten memories were the actual truth.

Just like the test Cheng Shi had just conducted.

It was true that the old man had never given Cheng Shi advice on work, but he also had never been around to feel pride in Cheng Shi finding a job!

Because the old man had passed away before Cheng Shi even found his first job!

He had raised Cheng Shi but hadn't lived to see him stand on his own two feet!

This fact had always been a deep regret for Cheng Shi, so he rewrote this part of his memory, fooling himself into thinking that the old man had passed away contentedly.

While this could deceive enemies, it also deceived Cheng Shi himself. Under the influence of the hypnosis, he had even forgotten the original truth.

But this introduced a new problem.

How would he know if someone had tampered with his memories, disguised themselves as him, or impersonated the old man he remembered?

This new problem, however, was far easier to solve than the last one.

Every hypnosis eventually ends.

So Cheng Shi set up a trigger word to break his hypnosis.

And the trigger word? It was none other than the altered memory itself.

When someone repeated the corrupted memory back to him, the hypnosis would shatter!

So when the "Older Cheng Shi" said, "You should remember his smile when he found out you had a job, not some vague advice," Cheng Shi's heart broke.

His hypnosis ended.

So...

The old man had passed away before I found that job.

He worked so hard to raise me, yet he never got to see me graduate, never got to see me make it on my own.

Hah, isn't that just fate!

But even with this backup plan, there was still a fatal issue:

How could he ensure that the person trying to read his memories would say the altered memory out loud, thus triggering the end of the hypnosis?

This led Cheng Shi to revise his hypnosis scheme.

He added a self-suggestion.

Whenever he suspected someone had tampered with his memories, his instinctive tests would always revolve around these altered memories.

Thus, he now carried three versions of his memories.

The first was the true history. The other two? Lies. One that deceived himself, and one used to test others.

The first was the truth, while the latter two were both false.

The logic seemed airtight.

But even then, there was still a flaw.

Because the act of altering memories could itself be remembered.

It, too, could be read.

However, this level of deception was beyond what Cheng Shi could manage alone.

So, he sought the help of a "person."

He entrusted the execution of the hypnosis surgery to someone else.

Fool's Lips!

That deceptive mouth was more than happy to oblige when it heard it had a chance to fool a follower of [Memory].

It hypnotized him.

As a result, in Cheng Shi's memory, all that remained were fragments of him quietly reading psychology books.

And for a follower of [Deceit] looking to hone their craft, wouldn't learning some psychology be perfectly reasonable?

With all of this in mind, the deception was finally exposed, turning the tables on the trickster!

Cheng Shi lifted his head, staring coldly at Zhen Xin, and let out a mirthless laugh.

"You want to know?"

"Mm-hmm~"

"Heh, I'm not telling you."

"....."

Zhen Xin's playful smile froze. She blinked in disbelief, staring at Cheng Shi dumbfounded, the confusion on her face almost identical to the expression Cheng Shi had when he was caught off guard in the void earlier.

Her stiff eyes seemed to say:

“You’re such a dog!”

The exchange between two [Deceit] followers ended before it even began.

But Zhen Xin didn’t stay frustrated for long. After a brief pause, she seemed to realize something and nodded in sudden understanding.

“You’re hurting, huh? I see, that’s what this is.

How sad, to even deceive yourself.

Looks like you’re even more pitiful than I saw in your memories.

But it’s okay. No family means no burdens. In this game, being alone... isn’t so bad.”

Her attempt at comfort only darkened Cheng Shi’s expression further. He grimaced and shot back:

“Is that so? Well then, I wish you a life without burdens.”

“Oh dear~

No need to be so polite. I already have none.”

“.....”

Two peas in a pod, neither able to outdo the other.

Zhen Xin's personality was clearly more playful than Shaman's, but seeing her wearing Shaman's appearance made Cheng Shi feel like a wolf was hiding under the skin of a sheep.

The disconnect between appearance and personality was unnerving.

"Enough. I've already seen through your disguise. Your 'Illusory Dream of Something from Nothing' no longer works. There's no need to keep pretending."

Cheng Shi's sharp eyes scanned Zhen Xin up and down.

Zhen Xin suppressed a giggle, amused.

"No disguise here. This is my true form. What do you think? Pretty, right?"

And the body? You've held it before. How did it feel?"

"....." Cheng Shi was taken aback, his mind momentarily stalling. "Impossible. You're using your original appearance—how did you fool the townspeople?"

"Oh, that. Well, Shaman was a pretty introverted girl. No one really paid much attention to her, so... I just acted it out."

"She..."

"Dead. Why, are you sad? Don't be. I'm prettier than her.

Don't believe me?

Too bad, I didn't keep any photos of her.

I'm not a follower of [Death], you know. I don't have that weird hobby of taking photos of my victims for keepsakes...

But there's one thing I'm curious about—are you actually into women?"

With that, Zhen Xin stepped closer, raising Cheng Shi's hand and slowly guiding it along her arm towards her chest.

The scene felt strangely familiar.

Her eyes filled with feigned shyness, her lips pressed together in nervousness, and her flushed face carried a teasing hint of playfulness. She whispered in a sweet, seductive tone:

"Dear guest, there may not be any beautiful scenery here, but there are... beautiful people."

Her hand guided his until it was nearly resting atop her ample chest.

But just at that moment—

Cheng Shi's lips curled into a mischievous smirk. Without flinching, he grabbed her—full-on grabbed her!

Firmly and completely!

The force of his grip was so strong that the soft fabric of her dress couldn't contain what spilled out between his fingers.

"!?"

Zhen Xin's playful expression froze. Her face darkened as her mind struggled to process what had just happened.

Looking at her tense, brooding face, as if she were trying to figure out where she went wrong, Cheng Shi couldn't help but laugh.

"Weren't you the one who asked me to touch you?"

Why aren't you smiling?

Not to your liking?

How about I use the other hand?"

As he said this, Cheng Shi let go with his left hand, only to grab again with his right.

Now both hands were in play.

"Heh, I underestimated you."

Zhen Xin didn't back away. Instead, she curiously studied Cheng Shi's face, as if trying to read something in his expression.

Cheng Shi laughed heartily and suddenly pulled her into his arms.

"What, thinking I'm looking for some 'winner's reward' here?"

Never mind that the Fate's Judgment hasn't even started yet. Little Cheng Shi, you don't seriously think that just because you've seen through my illusion, I'm powerless against you, do you?"

"Oh, you're definitely powerful. How could a Chosen One not be?"

But you do your thing, and I'll play my game. We won't get in each other's way."

As Cheng Shi spoke, his hands began to wander across her back, just as they had in Shaman's house earlier. His palm found its way back to...

her spine.

"You..."

"Boom—"

Without warning, a deafening thunderclap exploded in his arms.

Before Zhen Xin could finish her sentence, a blinding bolt of plasma engulfed her, reducing her body to scorched remains.

Cheng Shi was flung backward by the force of the explosion, tumbling across the giant hands of the corpse before he managed to regain his balance.

His arms were smeared with blood and charred flesh, and across from him lay the smoldering remnants of Zhen Xin.

Brushing the dirt off his clothes, Cheng Shi stood up, glanced at her lifeless remains, and sneered.

"Now we're even."