

The Gods 1371

Chapter 1371: Audience Meeting - Changing Roles

Those behind the scenes have the conveniences of being behind the scenes.

Since the venue had a stage and a curtain, there was naturally a backdoor. That invisible curtain was like a monitor. With a shift in his thoughts, Cheng Shi switched his perspective deep into the Audience Ground, observing the "corpse" that had taken a fall.

The corpse had already resurrected and sat up.

Rubbing his neck, Du Qiyu sat in the void without saying a word. He looked up at the heights, seeming to be waiting for someone's arrival.

Cheng Shi's lips curled up. He tentatively pulled the curtain a bit. Indeed, through the gap between the two invisible curtains, he saw the figure standing before the curtain!

Of course, one could walk from the backstage to the front stage, and Du Qiyu was completely unaware of this.

That meant that right at this moment, as long as Cheng Shi pulled open the curtain and walked out, he could appear right in front of the Beast Tamer and question him about his real identity.

However, he was in no rush to step out. Instead, he waited for a while, observing that Du Qiyu harbored no other ambitions and was earnestly waiting for Yu Xi's arrival. Only then did he confirm that the other party was not a schemer and at least held true "trust" in Yu Xi.

Although the source of this trust was very odd, Cheng Shi felt it was enough. With a smile, he transformed into Yu Xi, pulled open the curtain, and stepped out.

The real Yu Xi instantly took the stage.

In a place unseen by the audience, the lead actor quietly swapped identities.

A pair of long, slender arms broke into Du Qiyu's line of sight first, followed by a bamboo-pole-like body and that familiar pure-white Mask. The Beast Tamer noticed Yu Xi's arrival immediately. A trace of faint astonishment flashed across his face, but his body reacted swiftly, standing up at once. With an expression of joy and profound respect, he bowed deeply in Cheng Shi's direction and greeted,

"Praise be to the great Lord Yu Xi. You arrived much faster than I imagined."

Cheng Shi took a step forward, letting out a soft chuckle but not responding verbally. Instead, he wantonly scrutinized his "childhood acquaintance" before him, and the more he looked, the more he felt something was off with the other party's identity.

He didn't speak, simply staring fixedly at the Beast Tamer, exerting a silent pressure.

In the silent void, at the very bottom of the Audience Meeting, this sense of oppression was magnified manifold. Even though Du Qiyu didn't seem afraid of Yu Xi, he couldn't help but slowly retreat half a step.

Seeing that Yu Xi hadn't spoken for a long time, Du Qiyu cautiously lifted his head and asked tentatively, "My Lord?"

Cheng Shi glanced over the other party's eyes, feeling that he had seen this Xiao Qi's gaze somewhere before. Could the person playing Du Qiyu be an acquaintance of his?

But who would roleplay as a perverted Beast Tamer, and what was the purpose of the act?

Cheng Shi knew he had to speak. Prolonged silence would only arouse the other party's suspicion. Rolling his eyes slightly, he looked up at the Audience Ground above and spoke in a low, echoing voice:

"Trying to be clever, are we? Who told you that I would definitely come?"

"?"

But haven't you already come?

Du Qiyu froze for a moment, his pair of eyes blinking rapidly. He felt that the Lord Yu Xi today was... very strange.

Not like him at all.

But this was, after all, the Audience Ground of Deceit. He couldn't be sure if the Herald was being constrained by some rules or currently under the watchful gaze of the master of this place, Deceit. Thus, he could only play along, explaining earnestly:

"You saw my emblem, recognized my identity, spared my life, and kicked me down into the void. Wasn't that a signal for me to wait for you here?"

Are you here..."

Du Qiyu sneakily glanced around the area, then followed Yu Xi's line of sight to shoot a look upward, asking silently, "Is it inconvenient to talk?"

"!"

Emblem!

What emblem?

When he heard that word, a flash of light suddenly illuminated Cheng Shi's mind!

Flame emblem? Fire Passer Proof!?

He was actually a Torchbearer!?

Cheng Shi's pupils shrank, suddenly realizing everything.

No, it should be said that this person absolutely had to be a Torchbearer. Otherwise, Long Jing would never have let him off. But who among the Torchbearers could he be?

Cheng Shi closely observed those blinking eyes, feeling they were increasingly familiar. He frantically recalled all the Torchbearers he had crossed paths with and pondered which of them could possibly have a connection with Xiao Qi.

After thinking left and right, he actually thought of one!

Xie Yang!

This neighbor of his had broken free from Xiao Qi's Cage and joined the Torchbearers. Could Du Qiyu be Xie Yang?

He didn't look like him.

Moreover, how could a follower of War participate in an Audience Meeting of Deceit?

Did Xie Yang break his oath? No, that didn't seem likely.

Cheng Shi closely observed Du Qiyu's eyes. He felt that although there was resolve in those eyes, it wasn't the same kind of "stubbornness" as Xie Yang's. Furthermore, the occasional nimbleness that flashed within those eyes didn't quite seem like a man's...

A woman?

Cheng Shi's brows furrowed even deeper.

While Yu Xi was scrutinizing Du Qiyu, the confused Du Qiyu was also observing Yu Xi. He didn't doubt Yu Xi's identity; after all, no one would dare to come here at this time to impersonate the Herald. He just didn't understand why Yu Xi kept staring at him fixedly, as if trying to discern something from his person.

But soon enough, Du Qiyu figured it out himself.

He let out an "Oh!" in sudden realization, gingerly pointed at their surroundings, and asked in a hushed whisper, "My Lord... can I speak here?"

Cheng Shi paused. He hadn't expected that before he could even think of an excuse to urge the other to say something, the person actually had words waiting to be spoken.

Can speak, of course he can.

He let out an amused snort and nodded, "Feel free to speak."

Du Qiyu let out a breath of relief. He had thought it was inconvenient to communicate here, hence why the Herald remained silent. Seeing Yu Xi nod, he quickly explained:

"My Lord, I know you are the Flame of Hope!"

"???"

Wait, bro, who am I?

The Flame of Hope?

Cheng Shi was dumbfounded.

Why didn't I know I was the Flame of Hope?

Du Qiyu was very tense. Even though he had received permission, he remained constantly vigilant of their surroundings, covering his mouth and whispering:

"Before I came, Sister Yue gave me a heads-up. She said that if I ever ran into trouble at the Audience Meeting, I just had to say I am your person—that is, Yu Xi's person.

I asked her why, but she refused to say. Only after I pestered her for a long time did she finally tell me: You are actually Yu Xi!

My Lord, you deceived us so thoroughly..."

The last sentence was both a complaint and carried a hint of pleasant surprise. The clear, melodious voice held a few traces of familiarity.

".....?"

Did I deceive them?

Cheng Shi blinked rapidly, feeling as though an immense scapegoat had just crashed upon his head.

Someone who could be called 'Sister Yue' by a Torchbearer was highly likely to be his old friend, the Fire Seeker Ji Yue. But why would Ji Yue claim that Yu Xi was the Flame of Hope?

Who in the world started this rumor?

Given Ji Yue's Truth-oriented brain, if she hadn't verified it, she would absolutely never make empty claims. Yet, she had never seen Yu Xi, so where on earth could she...

Wait a minute!

She had never seen Yu Xi, but she HAD seen the Flame of Hope!

A Fire Seeker of the Torchbearers could naturally meet the Flame of Hope. Could this rumor have originated from the Flame of Hope itself?

What was He doing, helping build momentum for His identity?

Shaping Himself into the Deity who shelters the Torchbearers?

Hiss—thinking about it this way, it wasn't impossible.

Having figured everything out, Cheng Shi remained stunned for a long while before shaking his head with a chuckle.

No wonder this Du Qiyu was so bold, daring to announce his affiliations directly at the Audience Meeting. Turns out, he had nothing to fear.

And no wonder he and Long Jing could cooperate so well together. Two muddle-headed fools who only had a half-baked understanding of each other. If even one of them knew a little bit more, today's performance wouldn't have reached this point.

Indeed, in the Era of Void, anything could happen, especially on the stage of Deceit.

What a delightfully muddled clown circus.

Chapter 1372: Audience Meeting - Bai Ling

The one who was muddle-headed was the Joker still up above dealing with the other frauds, not the Yu Xi standing in front of Du Qiyu right now.

Cheng Shi looked at his old acquaintance with a complex gaze, having already remembered who the other party was.

That familiar, melodious tone and slightly mischievous, complaining look could only appear on one person simultaneously. And coincidentally, this person was also a Hunter.

Except, the person Cheng Shi knew was not the Beast Tamer Hunter of Fraud, but the Sensory Stalker Hunter of Corruption!

Indeed, Cheng Shi recognized her. The person pretending to be Du Qiyu in front of him was none other than the broken little bird he had once saved: Bai Ling!

For a moment, Cheng Shi's thoughts were pulled back to past trials.

When he first met Bai Ling, she was still a low-ranking weakling, and he was just a carefree fraud. When they met the second time, she had joined the Torchbearers and found her own convictions, while he had pushed open the door of Fixed Destiny and set foot on the path returning to Fate.

Now was their third encounter.

She had actually become a follower of Fraud, even fighting her way into the top ten to reach the Audience Meeting. As for him... he had already become the fulcrum of the world, the core of the Fear Faction, and the Lord Yu Xi in the eyes of all these frauds.

But in front of an old friend, why did he still need to wear a Mask?

Cheng Shi laughed self-deprecatingly, raised his hand to take off the Mask, shed his Chaos Acting disguise, and revealed his true, original self to his friend.

This action was not an intentional exposure of Yu Xi's identity. Rather, Cheng Shi knew that to learn something from Bai Ling's mouth, the identity of a Fate Weaver was far more useful than any Lord Yu Xi or Flame of Hope!

And sure enough!

When Yu Xi shed his disguise, revealing Cheng Shi's face underneath, the Du Qiyu who had just been trying to cozy up to the Flame of Hope instantly widened his eyes. In his pinpoint-sized pupils, countless emotions flashed by in an instant: joy, excitement, shock, bewilderment, and even a trace of fear.

He visibly wanted to say something, but after that flash of fear, Du Qiyu directly covered his mouth, turned his head, and ran backward.

He seemed very afraid to see Cheng Shi.

Seeing this, Cheng Shi became even more certain that Bai Ling's identity in Fraud was absolutely not simple. However, he didn't take any action to stop her, but merely said in a faint, echoing voice:

"Halt."

These two words, like an immobilization spell, forcefully froze a Beast Tamer—who could fight back and forth with the eighth-ranked Master of Trickery—in place.

Du Qiyu froze stiff, trembling all over. He didn't dare turn back, nor did he dare to move any further.

Looking at that rigid posture, Cheng Shi let out a sigh:

"Is this how you greet an old friend?"

Who taught you to meet people wearing a Mask?"

"..."

The figure trembled again, not making a sound.

Seeing this, Cheng Shi had no choice but to lift his leg on the spot, creating some sounds of clothing rustling.

Upon hearing the suspected approach, the figure trembled even more violently. No longer caring to disguise his voice, an agonized plea rang out in that familiar, clear tone: "Don't come over here!"

It really was her!

Cheng Shi laughed:

"Alright, I won't go over. Then you come here.

I remember Sensory Stalkers love hunting the covetous desires of others the most. Why have you started alienating others instead now?

Is it because you broke your oath?"

"..."

The figure gradually stopped trembling. Perhaps knowing she couldn't escape the Fate Weaver's grasp, she gradually accepted her fate and turned around.

And during the process of turning around, Xiao Qi's appearance peeled away like silk threads, and a resolute, weather-beaten, beautiful face appeared in Cheng Shi's line of sight.

She was no longer wearing that seductive satin long dress, but a stylish tactical combat outfit. A longbow was slung across her back, and both the bowstring and the bow body were stained with blood.

Her flowing long hair was no longer left draped down, but tied up in a high ponytail behind her head, looking uninhibited and valiant.

Cheng Shi examined the friend before him with slight astonishment, feeling that Bai Ling no longer looked like Birdie, but more like a soaring eagle.

"You..."

He had wanted to say something to praise her transformation, but the words reached his lips and were swallowed back down.

The resoluteness on her face was Bai Ling's medal. She had already proven herself and needed no praise from others.

And comparing her present to her past, there was absolutely no reason to belittle her. Regardless of whose choice or whose helplessness it was, she was a good person, and she had remained consistent in this regard from beginning to end.

That was enough.

So Cheng Shi smiled. Looking at Bai Ling, his face filled with a smile as he teased: "The Bai Ling I knew wasn't like this. What, just because I lied to you earlier, I'm no longer worthy of being a Beast Tamer's friend?"

Bai Ling pursed her lips, staring straight at Cheng Shi. Shaking her head with a complex expression, she said: "It's me who's unworthy."

"Speak properly."

"..." Bai Ling's expression was very conflicted. Clearly, it wasn't that she didn't want to speak properly, but that some 'person' wasn't letting her.

Noticing this, Cheng Shi frowned slightly. Seeming to think of something, he raised an eyebrow and probed: "The Fun God?"

Bai Ling's face instantly went pale. She pursed her lips tightly, refusing to utter a sound.

Seeing this, Cheng Shi understood in his heart. Rolling his eyes slightly, he beckoned to Bai Ling:

"I know you must have experienced a lot and have misgivings in your heart. But since you have already reached this point, having come to the Fun God's Audience Meeting, you cannot just approach Him in devotion; you must also advance with Him in Will.

Think about it. If He truly didn't want me to know what you know, why would He let me meet you here?

This is His Audience Meeting. With a shift in the void, even if I knew you were here, I couldn't possibly walk up to you.

Therefore, whatever gag order He placed on you before, by this point in time, it has already passed.

Tell me what you know, Bai Ling. This information might be very useful to me right now.

I am facing a crisis, and I cannot let go of a single clue or piece of information."

Bai Ling was no longer the Bai Ling of the past. She was no longer the low-ranking weakling, the Birdie who had to cling to others' legs to clear trials. She was already a peak fraud, a top ten of Fraud who could step into the Audience Meeting.

She immediately heard that everything Cheng Shi said was false, twisted logic, aimed solely at "tricking" her into telling what she knew.

But these were matters the Deity Himself had forbidden her from speaking of, so how could she dare to say them casually?

But today... she still spoke.

Not because she believed Cheng Shi's nonsense, but because the Fate Weaver said he was facing a crisis and this information could help him.

Therefore, Bai Ling held back nothing.

"I... deceived you."

"?" Cheng Shi paused. "What?"

Bai Ling lowered her head guiltily, "I said, I deceived you."

"When? The Du Qiyu from just now?"

"No, much earlier.

In the Sinking Land beside the Sea of Desire, I... saw you."

...

Chapter 1373: Audience Meeting - The Past

The Sinking Land?

Cheng Shi frowned, beginning to sift through his Memories.

The only time he had gone to the Sinking Land was during that trial of Corruption. Through a historical resonance with Keinlaur, he witnessed the truth behind the splintering of Order, and also obtained the containers of Corruption and Prosperity.

But Cheng Shi clearly remembered that at the Sinking Land back then, aside from Keinlaur, Lid Yara, and the dying Le Le'er, there was no one else present.

So how could Bai Ling claim to have seen him?

Could she have hidden somewhere at the time?

Cheng Shi looked at Bai Ling again, his puzzled gaze circling her face. When a casual glance fell upon the longbow on her back, a flash of realization crossed his mind, and his eyes widened abruptly.

Bai Ling might not have hidden at all. She had met him openly and generously!

It was just that he hadn't realized she had been there at the time, because back then he still thought Bai Ling was a Sensory Stalker, not some Beast Tamer following Fraud!

If he had known earlier that she had changed her Faith, perhaps he would have discovered some clues!

That sparrow!

Did a sparrow once land on the Mother Tree of Fear beside the Sea of Desire?

At the time, Cheng Shi had thought it was a hallucination induced by the desires of the Sea of Desire. He had even asked Brother Mouth for verification, but that damned Brother Mouth had just scolded him, and the matter was left unresolved.

Thinking back on it now, that sparrow was likely the beast of the Beast Tamer in front of him!

Seeing the change in Cheng Shi's expression, Bai Ling knew the clever Fate Weaver had guessed everything. She nodded and admitted:

"Yes, that was me."

It was you?

Cheng Shi paused. "That wasn't your beast?"

Bai Ling shook her head, finally forcing a smile. "No, that was me. Even though the Benefactor repeatedly warned me not to go in person to avoid blowing my cover, I couldn't hold back.

At the time, I had only recently become a Beast Tamer, and my beast-taming abilities were limited. I was afraid that if something went wrong in the middle, I wouldn't be able to save the show in time, so I risked going myself..."

As she spoke, Bai Ling transformed, turning into that familiar bird right before Cheng Shi's eyes.

Cheng Shi's gaze narrowed slightly:

"So it is this sparrow. You have the ability to transform?"

"..."

Bai Ling transformed back into a human in a second. Looking at Cheng Shi with a strange expression, she said faintly:

"Yes, I can transform into my own beasts.

But... this isn't a sparrow, this is a lark!

To think I spent so long living in fear, terrified that you'd recognize me and I would violate the Benefactor's instructions. Turns out, boss, you don't even know what a lark looks like..."

"???"

Cheng Shi choked.

Ah, this... this was a lark?

Of course he recognized it—didn't it look exactly like a sparrow?

Cheng Shi's lips twitched slightly, silently paying a faint tribute to Silence.

With words having reached this point, Cheng Shi understood Bai Ling's intentions. Back then in the Sinking Land, this little lark both didn't want him to recognize her and wanted him to recognize her. Otherwise, with a Beast Tamer's transformation ability, she wouldn't have transformed into a lark that could expose her identity.

However, Cheng Shi didn't know what a lark looked like at all, so an encounter was muddled away just like that.

But hearing this, Cheng Shi still frowned. He was very concerned about what the instructions Bai Ling spoke of were.

Bai Ling also knew that the key to this conversation lay in information, so she quickly explained clearly how she had converted to Fraud and what task the Fun God had assigned her.

"My task was to..."

Take advantage of the Mother Tree of Fear's dying moments to bring the Corruption container to you.

But I couldn't tell you any of this."

"!!!!!"

Cheng Shi's expression instantly grew solemn. As expected, the Fun God was the unseen hand pushing things behind the scenes in this matter.

Having already learned a lot, Cheng Shi wasn't shocked, for he had already obtained many containers. He was merely curious about where the Corruption container in Bai Ling's hands had come from. That was, after all, Tria's container.

Bai Ling pursed her lips and lowered her head, saying:

"Tria... He has always been with me."

"?" Cheng Shi was stunned. "What do you mean 'with you'?"

Bai Ling smiled bitterly, her tone incredibly complex:

"From the moment the Gods descended and the Faith Game began, I encountered Him at the Path Starting Point.

I didn't know that the tokens of the Gods couldn't speak. I thought everyone was the same, that we would all receive guidance from a deity, so I approached Him.

At the time, I didn't know who He was. It was only later, when I met Frau... the Benefactor, that I learned I could encounter Tria at the Path Starting Point because that Mercy Lord was running for His life at the time.

He fled in a panic, and seeking a trace of a similar aura, crashed into my Path Starting Point."

"?"

This time Cheng Shi was truly shocked. A Servant God, running for His life when the Gods descended? Who was He hiding from?

Could it be...

Cheng Shi's eyelids twitched. He looked at Bai Ling and saw her nod. "That's right. He was evading the Benefactor's pursuit."

As expected, it was the Fun God!

Cheng Shi's expression became exquisitely complex: "Why would the Fun God pursue Tria?"

As soon as he asked the question, Cheng Shi shut his mouth, realizing he had asked a completely pointless question. The answer was obvious.

For Corruption!

From Drasilco being "imprisoned" in That Dream My Nightmare, it could be seen that the Fun God was sparing no effort in utilizing the Envoys of Corruption to explore the Sea of Desire. He was very interested in Corruption.

In fact, he couldn't blame the Fun God. Having learned enough of the universe's truths, wasn't Cheng Shi himself very interested in Corruption?!

He knew Corruption was the nexus of the universe's secrets. He had even thought about playing the god cards in his hand, letting them enter the Sea of Desire to explore. Such a thought practically aligned perfectly with the Fun God's.

"So before the Faith Game descended, the Fun God had already targeted the Sea of Desire.

At that time, Aph Ros was imprisoned by Time in Dolgod, and Drasilco had already 'fallen into the net'. Only Tria was left outside, so He wanted to capture this Mercy Lord?"

"Yes," Bai Ling nodded, confirming Cheng Shi's guess.

Cheng Shi didn't stop talking. He thought and sorted out his thoughts simultaneously, "Since Tria had already escaped disaster at the Path Starting Point, how was He caught?"

Because you changed your Faith to the Fun God?

A fleeing Tria would absolutely never want to get close to the Fun God, so why did you choose to approach Him?

You..."

Cheng Shi seemed to have guessed something. He examined the Bai Ling before him with a complex gaze and let out a sigh. "You recovered your memories, saw me in the trial, and so you went to ask the Fun God for help, right?"

"..."

Bai Ling trembled all over. She raised her head, meeting that complex gaze, and suddenly broke into a brilliant smile.

She nodded forcefully, finally snuffing out the nervousness and inner turmoil she had buried in her heart for so long right then and there.

This was the reason she had never dared to meet Cheng Shi's eyes. In that trial concerning the bitter fruits of fate, Cheng Shi had used the gift of Memory to make the Torchbearers forget him. But because of the Flame of Hope's intervention, Bai Ling had recovered her memories.

That terrified her intensely. She feared she couldn't protect those memories. If anyone rummaged through her mind, Cheng Shi's existence would be exposed. So, after immense struggle, she Prayed to Fraud to discard those memories.

Fraud granted her an audience, and naturally, found Tria upon her person.

Bai Ling would never forget the scene of her Audience with God back then. Those star-like eyes with high-tilted corners looked at her with brimful joy, asking her what she needed—He could satisfy anything.

And when Bai Ling stated she wanted to forget those memories once again, Fraud burst into hearty laughter.

He said:

"It seems Fixed Destiny has returned to the right path, even attracting the followers of Corruption.

But blind evasion is not a solution. Since you fear you cannot protect them, then I shall give you the power to protect them."

Saying that, under Fraud's guidance, the helpless Bai Ling completed her Oathbreaking on the spot, falling into Fraud's embrace and becoming a Beast Tamer.

And Tria...

"What about Tria?" Cheng Shi's gaze focused. He really wanted to know what progress the Fun God had made in exploring the Sea of Desire after finding Tria.

However, Bai Ling recounted an ending for the Servant God that he had never expected.

"The Benefactor killed Him on the spot, right in front of me."

"!!!"

...

Chapter 1374: Audience Meeting — Layout

"The Benefactor said:"

"Let me cut open your compassion and see if the kindness inside is actually what I think it is."

"And then he personally killed the unarguing and unspeaking Tria..."

"That was also the first time I knew of the existence of the Faith Container. That dazzling [Corruption] container just fell in front of me."

"The Benefactor let me take it away and told me to deliver this container into your hands at the right time."

"And then came the matter of the Sinking Land."

"..."

Cheng Shi was stupefied.

Just killed directly like that?

Although the moment he heard Tria was on Bai Ling's body, Cheng Shi guessed that Tria's death would be related to the Fun God, he entirely did not expect the Fun God to act directly.

Good news, his good brother Aph Ros's commission was completed, he found the murderer.

Bad news, the murderer was his direct superior, this case would likely become an unsolved, unjust mystery...

Cheng Shi frowned, filled with extreme doubt. "He only said this one sentence, nothing else?"

Bai Ling shook her head:

"No, unless the Benefactor erased my memory. Otherwise, I missed absolutely nothing."

"But I think since He made me remember this sentence, there was no need to erase anything else, otherwise simply waving me away before doing those things would be the same."

"I've never understood why He would kill Tria in front of me. Even though Tria was indeed a subordinate of [Corruption], the other party had never done evil, or even shown up much."

"For a very long time after that, I thought it was the Benefactor's beating on me, wanting me to maintain the devotion of my faith, until I saw you here again..."

"I only realized then that these words weren't spoken for me to hear at all."

"Now I understand. Big shot, you were right. When you were able to find me here, it meant His gag order had passed."

"..."

Cheng Shi of course knew that these words were exactly what the Fun God wanted Bai Ling to bring to him, but the problem was that knowing these trivial details didn't help with his current situation at all, and it even made his mind more confused.

What exactly did Tria's death represent?

This must be very important, otherwise it wouldn't be worth the Fun God laying out a plan across half a year, leaving this clue until the Audience Meeting to be revealed.

Cheng Shi's expression changed, his brows locked tight, but he still couldn't think of an answer.

Seeing Cheng Shi so solemn, Bai Ling asked nervously, "Can these things... be of help?"

Cheng Shi smoothed out his brow and smiled, nodding. "Yes, they helped a lot."

Bai Ling's face lit up with joy, and she finally breathed a sigh of relief.

"That's good, that's good. Then what else can I do?"

"Big shot, I am very strong now and I can help. My tamed beasts are also very strong, they..."

"Wait, wait, wait." Cheng Shi smiled and interrupted Bai Ling's words, asking curiously, "Let's put aside the matter of helping. Tell me about your Beast Tamer identity. Why did you play Xiao Qi?"

"Xiao Qi is Du Qiyu. He has some ties with me. Don't be nervous, he and I aren't friends."

"I broadly guessed some of the process. Xie Yang... you should know him, right?"

Bai Ling never dreamed of hearing the name "Xie Yang" from Cheng Shi's mouth!

Of course she knew him! That Gap Light Iron Thorn was precisely pulled into the Torchbearers by her!

"You know Xie Yang?"

Cheng Shi couldn't help but smile. "Yes, he's my neighbor."

"..." Bai Ling froze, blinking her eyes. "This world is really small."

"Yes, this world is really small, so why did you play Xiao Qi?"

Speaking of Du Qiyu, Bai Ling's eyes immediately became cold and fierce, like a vicious beast waiting to hunt.

"Fishing!"

"I was fishing!"

"Perhaps the previous me was too weak; I didn't feel too much of the suffocating and despairing malice of this world. But as I became able to see through the lies of others, I found that some people simply don't deserve to be called human."

"They walk in the world wearing human skin, like man-eating demons. Using the talents bestowed by the gods, they not only harvest the lives of innocent players, but also crush the dignity of ordinary people."

"They are either crazy or insane, calling it beautifully 'embracing the game and enjoying the apocalypse,' not knowing that they are merely indulging their beastly hearts. They are not [Corruption], but they are worse than [Corruption]!"

"The Torchbearers are resolved to save the world, wanting to reshape a brand-new world. But whenever I think that there are still so many rotten people in this world, I feel that they are not worthy of reaching that brand-new world. Even the path leading to the brand-new world, they are not worthy of stepping on!"

"Passing the fire is to hold fast to the beautiful, but blindly holding fast is useless. The rotting cloudy wind will continuously harass the flame in the darkness, and I don't want to be a wall against the wind, I only want to be the knife scraping the sore, returning a clean slate to the new world!"

Bai Ling spoke sonorously and forcefully. The determination in her eyes and her clenched fists fully expressed her experiences.

Cheng Shi nodded; he understood.

"So you played the role of an extremely evil character, even proclaiming yourself the opposite of passing the fire, to attract people with similar foul tastes, and then took them out?"

"Yes!"

"I used to be a follower of [Corruption]. I best understand the confluence of desires, so naturally, I know how to find these scum."

"The City Breakers used this method to punish many evil people; they got what they deserved."

"But I don't think this is any great merit. Compared to Sister Qing and the others' perseverance, I am just a person who indulges in my desires."

Despite saying so, Bai Ling smiled very happily. There was not a shred of falsehood in this smile. Obviously, she was deeply proud of this "work".

Cheng Shi sized up the little bird in front of him who seemed to be shining brightly, and nodded with a smile:

"Everyone has desires. You being able to protect that glimmer of light in your heart while satisfying your desires is very good, but..."

"Forget it, I won't say more. Just be yourself."

Bai Ling froze for a moment, then understood Cheng Shi's meaning, and said with an incomparably firm gaze:

"I know, big shot. I will never set up the name of 'evil' for myself or the Torchbearers with that arrow named 'good'."

Hearing these words, Cheng Shi raised an eyebrow. "Good awareness. Who taught you that? Fang Shiqing?"

"It was President Qin."

Qin Xin?

It made sense, because Qin Xin himself was exactly such a person.

When the [War] of a world brought to the world not the flames of war, but the fire of holding onto beauty, how fortunate was this world!

"I understand."

Cheng Shi said with a serious expression, "The Path of Fire Passing is long, and the road ahead is still rugged."

"I am not a Torchbearer, and I have no position to ask you to do anything. So I'll say it again: be yourself!"

"This is the principle I realized from so many sufferings."

"You probably can't help with the matters on my end, and favoring one person isn't the meaning of passing the fire either."

"Go back. Keep walking in the direction you think is right, keep walking, until you see the light on the other shore."

"But remember, it is not that you found the light, but the heavily scarred you who brought that glimmer of light to the other shore."

Cheng Shi's tone was deep and full of sighs. Bai Ling originally thought her experiences were rich enough, but hearing these words, that kind of heaviness that struck directly at the soul felt as if someone was shouldering the weight of the entire world.

She had many doubts, but she didn't ask, because the big shot told her to go back.

So she had to go back.

But before leaving, she really couldn't hold back and asked a small question.

"Big... Cheng Shi, are you really the Flame of Hope?"

Cheng Shi froze for a moment, then gave a bright smile:

"Yes."

"You are too."

"Every one of us is the Flame of Hope for this world."

...

Chapter 1375: Audience Meeting — Behind the Scenes

Everyone has their own path; Cheng Shi did not arrange for Bai Ling to do anything.

After sending off the little bird, who looked back three times with every step, he returned to behind the scenes once again, switching his perspective back to that absurd Audience Meeting.

But at this time, Long Jing had already finished all of Yu Xi's performance, coaxing out the memories that could most touch people's hearts from every swindler.

Logically speaking, completing a task according to the Herald's request at the Audience Meeting, even if one had doubts, they shouldn't be angry.

But when Cheng Shi turned his gaze to the venue again, he saw the swindlers in the venue staring at the figure on the first platform with indignation and twisted expressions!

Even when Cheng Shi followed their line of sight, his face twitched fiercely a few times.

Because the person standing there at this time was no longer that slender, bizarre, and mysterious Lord Yu Xi, but had turned into...

Himself!

Not Long Jing himself, but Cheng Shi. Yu Xi had turned into Cheng Shi!

"!!??"

Seeing this scene, how could Cheng Shi not know that the damned Long Jing had unexpectedly put on a blame-shifting act? At the final curtain call of Yu Xi, he actively exposed his 'true' identity, pushing him to the cusp of the storm.

And that wasn't all. He even provocatively said to the few remaining people below:

"Thank you all for your secrets. See you next time."

Saying that, 'Cheng Shi' gracefully exited the stage. He directly raised his arms horizontally and leaned back at the edge of the platform, falling backwards into the bottomless void beneath his feet.

"!"

"*!"

"*!"

How could the swindlers be willing to accept this!

This wasn't some trial; this was the Audience Meeting, the gathering place of the smartest swindlers. Being toyed with like this by a tail-ender—if word got out, who among those present would still have the face to call themselves followers of [Deceit]?

At this rate, they would really become followers of [Fate]!

Especially the naked Mask Number Four. He had swayed back and forth for the entire 'examination' choosing between Long Jing and Yu Xi opposite him. In the end, you tell me the other party was neither, but Cheng Shi, that Fate Weaver who once had rumors with Zhen Yi!

Good, good, good, no wonder you could have rumors with Zhen Yi!

You deserve it!

Truly bad luck!

Number Four couldn't endure it at all. He plunged straight down, vowing to catch this Fate Weaver who had played a trick on him!

The others followed closely behind, all chasing in the direction where 'Cheng Shi' fell.

It wasn't just driven by anger. Don't forget, no matter how much they were deceived, swindlers were still shrewd. They were deeply afraid that this Fate Weaver who tricked everyone had found the real opportunity for an audience, using a gorgeous curtain call to slip away and see the Benefactor. So each and every one of them didn't dare to be negligent and decisively followed.

But what they didn't expect was that the moment the Audience Ground was completely cleared, a figure quietly climbed back up onto the platform from the shadows of the first platform. Facing the empty venue, he bowed in tribute and smiled for a curtain call.

Cheng Shi took a closer look. If this person wasn't Long Jing, who else could it be!

What a fine Acrobat!

Not only did he play all the swindlers for fools in just a few short minutes, he also tricked them all right off the stage, leaving only himself under the spotlight.

President Gong was ultimately the uncrowned king ranked second. When Zhen Xin was absent, he was the biggest star on the stage of [Deceit]!

Seeing this, Cheng Shi didn't even want to pursue the matter of Long Jing shifting the blame to him just now. After all, Fate Weavers didn't have much of a good reputation to begin with. If worse comes to worst, he would just shift the blame onto Zhen Yi later.

He shook his head and laughed, thinking in his heart that if a behind-the-scenes mastermind could really show up to present an award for President Gong's wonderful performance right now, it would be a fine tale, a classic scene.

But what a pity, the identity of Yu Xi wouldn't do.

Long Jing knew the inside story about Yu Xi. If he went out at this time, it would only make Long Jing feel that shifting the blame just now wasn't in vain.

If the Fun God could come and join in the fun, that would be great...

But this was only a fantasy. After all, Cheng Shi still didn't understand what intention the Fun God had in sending him behind the scenes.

Just as he was thinking, a sudden change occurred in the venue in front of the curtain.

The perspective shifted back to Long Jing.

Long Jing had never thought that there would be any other existence in the venue. After performing for so long without any movement from the Benefactor, he even thought the so-called Audience Meeting was nothing but a scam.

Of course, for other faiths, this definitely wasn't a scam. But for the Fun God...

If the audience with God that the swindlers had looked forward to for a year was just an illusion, wasn't that precisely a hearty and incisive display of the will of [Deceit]?

So Long Jing had already convinced himself and accepted this fact. This return to the stage was just giving himself a ceremonial curtain call.

Regardless, deceiving a crowd of swindlers on the stage of the Audience Meeting was indeed very satisfying. No wonder Zhen Yi always wanted to pull off something big!

Something big was indeed thrilling.

And no wonder Cheng Shi always liked to play Yu Xi. Oh, no, wait, he wasn't playing, he really was Yu Xi...

Long Jing's mouth twitched, getting ready to exit the stage. But right at this moment, a pair of eyes suddenly opened in the sky above the empty venue!

That pair of starry eyes with dim starlight and slight spirals suddenly opened, frowned slightly, then blinked. Casting a gaze down upon Long Jing on the first platform, a faint voice spoke:

"Long Jing, as the winner of the Audience Meeting... What reward do you want?"

"!!!"

Long Jing's footsteps stopped abruptly. His whole body trembled as he jerked his head up in disbelief.

So the Audience Meeting really was a competition?

The Acrobat was dumbfounded. He blinked frantically, thinking about everything in front of him, and actually thought he had auditory hallucinations.

He rubbed his eyes and looked up at the pair of eyes above again. When he confirmed that the high-tilted corners of the eyes really belonged to the Fun God, he was both shocked and delighted, saying:

"Praise the great God of [Deceit]. Your downward gaze is already the supreme reward for me. Your devout follower dares not have any other thoughts."

Long Jing was after all a clever little devil. Seizing the opportunity, he fiercely brown-nosed in a big way.

He thought to himself: 'I am so devout, the reward for this audience with God is definitely going to shock me to death!'

However, the Fun God was not some deity who could be fooled by fake devotion with just a few random words. He sneered, nodded, and said:

"Very well, then step down."

"?????"

Long Jing's face collapsed in a second.

This isn't right, Lord Benefactor! The script for the winner shouldn't be written like this! The script for the devout shouldn't be written like this either!!

Why just step down?

Shouldn't you be moved by my devotion and bestow something upon me?

You being so blunt and decisive makes me look very much like a clown!

Long Jing grew anxious. His body didn't move, holding his head half down, glancing upward as he said:
"Um... Lord Benefactor, the Audience Meeting just ends like this?"

The starry eyes blinked twice: "Otherwise?"

"But there are still people who haven't come. The Magician, the Clown... they are all your followers, yet they haven't stepped onto this stage yet."

"Are you thinking for their sake?" That pair of eyes looked as if they were smiling yet not smiling.

"Uh... not at all." Feeling that the Benefactor's tone was a bit strange, Long Jing instantly changed his tune. "I am thinking about how to help you punish these blasphemers. To not even attend the Audience Meeting shows they have already strayed far from devotion."

The starry eyes sneered twice, the corners of the eyes tilting high as He said: "Then are you exactly belittling their devotion, or praising your own devotion?"

Long Jing originally didn't want to bring himself into it, but he was also afraid the Fun God would take the opportunity to dismiss him. So he could only bite the bullet and say:

"Both."

"Good, I understand. Next time they seek an audience with me, I will punish them, and tell them that you are the model of devotion."

"???"

No, what the hell?

Fun God, you want me dead!

Long Jing was numb. If those two swindlers knew about this, how could they not guess what had happened?

It was already hard enough to survive among the Jokers. Lord Benefactor, have some pity, go find that real clown!

Long Jing's face twitched. He lowered his head, neither speaking nor exiting the stage, clearly waiting for his 'reward'.

And that pair of starry eyes simply hung high in the sky just like that, staring at Long Jing. Like him, neither speaking nor leaving, clearly showing no intention of giving a reward.

One person and one god were just deadlocked like this, like a pair of clowns.

And the other clown who had personally directed this scene was currently hiding behind the scenes, frantically holding back his laughter.

No wonder the Fun God always liked to tease the clowns; clowns were indeed funny.

Chapter 1376: Audience Meeting — The Audience

That's right, all of this was directed by Cheng Shi.

Those starry eyes that opened above the Audience Ground weren't the true [Deceit], but merely the eyes of a puppet!

The moment those eyes opened, Cheng Shi also thought the Fun God had descended. But soon he discovered an anomaly, because the timing of these eyes appearing was too coincidental—exactly when he wanted the Fun God to make an appearance.

Moreover, the starlight in these eyes was no longer dazzling. This was clearly the image of the Outer God from the False Curtain Call, not the true eyes of [Void]. So Cheng Shi sensed the abnormality immediately and frowned slightly.

Then an even more absurd thing occurred. The pair of eyes that had just descended outside also frowned slightly.

The sharp-witted Cheng Shi noticed this detail. He froze entirely, and then a crazy idea arose in his mind.

Could it be that he... could control those eyes of a deity?

Even Cheng Shi was startled by this absurd thought. He blinked, but unexpectedly, the pair of eyes in front of the curtain also blinked.

"!!!"

When enough coincidences collide, it is definitely no longer a coincidence. So Cheng Shi tried to softly say a sentence. He said:

"Long Jing, as the winner of the Audience Meeting... What reward do you want?"

And then, Director Cheng went online!

He was already extremely certain that he could control that pair of starry eyes outside. Although he still didn't know whether this was the Fun God repeating his words, or a prankish perk given to the person behind the scenes, in short, Cheng Shi was having a lot of fun.

Looking at the unhappy Long Jing in front of the stage, Cheng Shi became even happier.

However, simple teasing was not Cheng Shi's original intention. Since there was such an opportunity, Cheng Shi could totally do more operations. He could even use the fake Fun God as a means to guide Long Jing into helping him ask those difficult-to-speak questions, grandly and openly guessing the Fun God's will to see exactly where He wanted to lead the world.

Thus, the eyes to the Audience Ground blinked lightly again, the spirals reversed like a flow, and said playfully:

"Time has always been precious."

"Although I am not like [Time] who has no time at all, I cannot waste time here either."

"Since you want a reward so much, fine, just answer one question of mine first."

Long Jing instantly perked up. "Lord Benefactor, what question?"

"Where do you think the future of this world lies?"

Long Jing froze, and without a second of hesitation said: "Isn't it with Cheng Shi?"

"?"

The spirals in the eyes paused for a moment, and the high-tilted corners instantly flattened.

Seeing his Benefactor change like this, Long Jing hurriedly lowered his head and said, "Is it not, Lord Benefactor?"

"..." It was, but it was nonsense.

Cheng Shi was helpless, and could only change his method to guide: "Then where do you think my future lies?"

"You?" Long Jing was completely dumbfounded. How could a mortal like him presume to discuss the future of a true god?

Actually, it wasn't that he hadn't thought about it. In the Joker Society, Cheng Shi had explicitly said he wanted to do a blood exchange for the gods. Did this so-called blood exchange include [Deceit]? No one mentioned it at the time, and they tacitly skipped over it.

After all, everyone present was a follower of [Deceit], and this topic was a bit awkward to bring up.

But since the Benefactor had asked up to this point, could it be... that the Fun God really would be replaced?

Then who would it be?

Zhen Xin or Cheng Shi? It couldn't possibly be himself?

Long Jing loved to show off, but he had even more self-knowledge. An Acrobat whose information lagged so far behind could never become the pillar of the troupe, and naturally couldn't inherit the 'great lineage' to hold up a piece of the sky.

But this didn't stop his guesses and imagination. Based on the facts, he felt Zhen Xin was more suitable. As for Cheng Shi... this world seemed to have a position more suited for him.

Long Jing had never told anyone that when he sat on that Divine Throne from the Corpse Field of Gods, the feeling in that instant told him that this Divine Throne didn't belong to just anyone, it only belonged to Cheng Shi.

He didn't know whether that was an influence from the twisted will of the gods' corpses, or some other hallucination, but he really did have such a thought before.

And after learning of the existence of [Origin], he had also thought, only [Origin] could fight against [Origin]!

And Cheng Shi was also the fixed destiny of this world. If the future of the world lay with him, how could he not become an... [Origin]?

But these thoughts were too crazy, so crazy that he couldn't find a single person to share them with.

It was precisely because of this that Long Jing couldn't help but wonder if the Lord Benefactor's question today was aimed exactly at his inner thoughts?

Then what attitude did He hold towards the fact that He Himself was 'about to be subjected to a blood exchange'?

Long Jing fell silent for a moment. He didn't answer the Fun God's question, but instead emboldened himself to ask a question back. He raised his head, his gaze somewhat solemn as he said:

"Lord Benefactor, does this world still have a future?"

"..."

The scene went completely silent. After a long while, the spirals in those eyes spun faster and faster, replying faintly:

"That depends on how you define the future."

"The world certainly possesses a future, but the future I see may not necessarily be the future you want to see."

"Your question is very good. Don't ask it again next time."

"..."

"..."

For a time, the entire void plunged into a dead silence.

Including Cheng Shi behind the scenes. He froze stiffly in place, entirely devoid of movement.

Because that answer just now did not come from his mouth. But rather, the true Fun God had taken over control of the puppet eyes and answered Long Jing's question!

[Deceit] had descended!

Right in the script directed by Cheng Shi, He quietly replaced the role that originally belonged to Him.

At this moment, Cheng Shi was extremely at a loss.

Every muscle in his body was tensing, trying hard to control his body from trembling. He grit his teeth, not knowing what kind of expression to make for a moment. His gaze was also erratic, not daring to look straight through the curtain at that pair of starry eyes he hadn't seen for a long time.

He clearly had countless questions to ask the Fun God, but when the Fun God showed up, he incredibly wanted to leave here, leave the Audience Ground, leave the Void, and even leave this world, just to escape that impending eye contact.

He didn't know where that single glance would lead him. He only thought that if there were a bit more time, that would be great; he could grasp more information, gain more strength, and be more prepared to face all this.

But now, the clown seemed not yet ready.

Unfortunately, fate was cruel. It wasn't just [Time], the entire world lacked time.

Those eyes finally cast a sidelong glance over. The moment the deity's gaze collided with the mortal's gaze...

"Buzz—"

The Universe instantly quieted down.

Countless colors, things, miscellaneous thoughts, and existences receded like the tide, turning into specks of starlight, annihilating at the edge of the void. The entire universe seemed to be left with only pure emptiness and darkness, as well as the sole light source hanging high in the sky.

The eyes of [Void]!

One person and one god quietly looked at each other, both speechless.

...

Chapter 1377: Audience Meeting — [Deceit]

The starlight was still dim, but the spirals were still mysteriously spinning.

Cheng Shi originally didn't want to look into that pair of eyes, but he couldn't help looking, and this one look revealed a problem.

The Fun God's eyes weren't like this. His eyes were painted with shining starlight, like a host of stars rising together, bright and dazzling. But now, those starlights were all extinguished. This was a characteristic only Outer Gods had; it shouldn't appear in the eyes of [Deceit]!

Could it be that He really is an Outer God!?

At that moment, Cheng Shi was indeed scared by himself. His body suddenly trembled, once again recalling that despair-inducing False Curtain Call.

Sensing the fluctuations in His follower's state of mind, the corners of [Deceit]'s eyes tilted slightly up, as He snickered and said:

"It seems that change left an indelible shadow in your heart."

"...?"

It would have been fine if this wasn't mentioned, but as the instigator, how dare you say these things in front of the victim, and even laugh!

Do you have a heart!?

Oh, I forgot, you don't, because you simply aren't human!

Cheng Shi grew angry. He gnashed his teeth and looked at that pair of starry eyes that were smiling playfully as usual, saying word by word: "Is it funny?"

[Deceit] nodded, not feeling there was any problem with this:

"The appearance and outer garment of tragedy is often comedy, and comedy is of course funny.

However, no matter how funny a story is, it is not as funny as the people in the story. It is mainly because the clown is comical, so the script he performs is also quite interesting."

Hearing these words, Cheng Shi was so angry he wanted to curse people. Unfortunately, the other party wasn't human and couldn't be targeted, so he could only clench his fists tight and squeeze out a few words from between his gritted teeth:

"Since you like that story so much, why not make it real?"

Is it because reality is funnier than the change?"

"..."

[Deceit] fell silent. The mysteriously spinning spirals spun slower and slower, and the high-tilted corners of the eyes gradually smoothed out. He gazed down at His follower and sighed faintly:

"Of course the story of the change is more interesting; reality is extremely boring.

It's a pity that the change was [Fate]'s choice. I hate [Fate], and there is no reason to let Him have His way.

Moreover, I originally don't like to laugh, so naturally I chose the more boring reality."

You don't like to laugh?

Listen to these words, can you even hold back from laughing yourself?

Cheng Shi was truly angered to the point of laughing. Other people were helpless with a rebellious child; why did he end up with a rebellious 'parent'?

But speaking of [Fate]...

Cheng Shi's gaze condensed, and he asked in a deep voice, "Where did you hide [Fate]?"

The spirals in [Deceit]'s eyes paused, and the look in the eyes looking at Cheng Shi instantly changed. He looked as if He was smiling yet not smiling, saying:

"Yo, it's only been a few days since you saw Him, and you miss Him this much?"

Then if I told you that there will never be a day when you two meet again, won't you shed little pearls?"

"???"

Although being spoken to so sarcastically was very infuriating, what did the Fun God mean by 'never a day when you two meet again' in His words?

Cheng Shi instinctively felt something was wrong. His brows sank tightly, and he asked again, "Where is [Fate]?"

[Deceit] spoke evasively of other things:

"This is my Audience Meeting. I advise a certain clown to speak and act cautiously. Grandly discussing [Fate] in front of me is very likely to incur the sin of blaspheming a god.

Although He is my only twin god in [Void], sharing the same path doesn't mean having a similar stance.

He and I are currently enemies. Oh no, foes. If you provoke me again with His divine name, do you believe that even if I lock you up, He won't be able to save you?"

"I don't believe it."

Cheng Shi sneered, breaking the pot because it was already cracked.

After getting through the initial apprehension, nervousness, and conflicted feelings, Cheng Shi finally recovered a trace of composure. Amidst his bewilderment of seeking an audience with [Deceit], he recalled his identity as the fixed destiny, and even straightened his back a bit.

No matter what the Fun God wanted to do, in short, He wasn't preparing to destroy the world, nor could He cast aside the fixed destiny to complete His plan. So right now, his identity was the 'highest in the Universe'!

Since it was like this, what the hell was there to fear Him for!

For a time, Cheng Shi was extremely tough. He pointed at his own chest and said 'arrogantly':

"Lock me up, lock me up right now.

Whoever doesn't lock me up is a clown."

"?"

The corners of [Deceit]'s eyes that had just pulled up flattened out again. He cast a sidelong glance at His follower and sneered again:

"I've seen quite a few clowns fighting to break out of prison, but a clown fighting to be a prisoner, you really are the first.

No wonder you are the fixed destiny.

Ha, don't rush, I will lock you up eventually. But not now, because the current clown hasn't yet been squeezed dry of the fun on him."

"Didn't you say you don't like to laugh? What do you still want fun for?" Cheng Shi's tone was full of sarcasm, just like his Benefactor.

But [Deceit] didn't care at all:

"A god's life is too bitter and needs adjustment. You are not a god, so naturally you wouldn't understand.

Only when you truly become a deity will you need fun like me."

"..."

Every word was a sharp verbal sparring.

Cheng Shi could hear that every one of the Fun God's words seemed to have profound meaning, but he just couldn't figure out exactly what these profound meanings represented.

He felt that the Fun God descending here was obviously to say something to him. The problem was that the other party simply refused to speak clearly, insisting on playing the riddler routine just like [Fate]. Exactly who in this world likes riddlers!?

It could be seen that there was a reason [Fate] was annoying to people.

Cheng Shi felt upset and frustrated listening to this. He didn't want every sentence to be deflected by [Deceit] with Tai Chi, nor did he want every question to go completely unanswered. But the other party refused to say this, and refused to say that. He could only persuade himself that it was the Fun God fearing that His will would pollute him, thereby causing the fixed destiny to deviate and no longer be the fixed destiny.

Besides this, he couldn't think of any other way to excuse the Fun God...

No matter what, the Fear Faction was definitely walking on the path of saving the world. Perhaps the world-saving calculated by the deities, the world-saving speculated by Wei Mu, and the world-saving he imagined were three entirely different things, but this didn't hinder Cheng Shi from being able to determine the Fun God's stance.

As long as He was still standing behind him, then his courage to walk towards the road ahead would remain.

However, at this very moment, Cheng Shi also had a knot in his heart.

He needed to untie this knot in order to continue moving forward following [Deceit]'s guidance.

After being silent for a long while, Cheng Shi raised his head again and got straight to the point, asking the confusion in his heart:

"Why did you kill Him?"

[Deceit] blinked, asking in confusion: "Who?"

"Don't play dumb!"

Lord Benefactor, You can see what I'm thinking in my heart, and You still wouldn't know who?

Do you insist that I say it out loud?

Fine, then I'll say it. Why did you kill the Clown, why did you kill Cheng Shi, why did you kill the other me!?"

With every 'why', his voice was raised a degree, seemingly venting the emotions in his heart. Cheng Shi was very uncomprehending. He learned from Zhang Jizu that the Clown swapped from that world still died. It was that world's [Death] Zhang Jizu who blocked a death for Him.

Now he didn't even know where the other party was, so naturally he also couldn't understand [Deceit]'s attitude.

Since He wanted to preserve this world and push the Clown to save it, why was He so cold-blooded and so cruel to the Clown of that world?

Cheng Shi looked straight into those eyes, determined to get an answer, while [Deceit] snickered, looking at His follower and asked back:

"You feel that killing him was cruelty towards him?"

Cheng Shi frowned slightly, his emotions interrupted. "Is it not?"

[Deceit] shook His head and gave a mocking smile:

"Without deeply experiencing it, one does not know its bitterness.

You are far more cruel than I am.

Sure enough, only someone who is even more ruthless to themselves has the possibility of gaining insight into the true future.

It's a pity that those ones you cannot see.

He didn't die, but his life is worse than death."

...

Chapter 1378: Audience Meeting — Misfortune

"You are fortunate, and I am also fortunate, or rather, the whole world is fortunate."

"But the fortunate find it hard to see the misfortune of others. Do you think that Clown who inherited the authority of [Deceit] truly wanted to live?"

"!!!"

The impact of these words on Cheng Shi was undoubtedly huge.

Since Old Jia left, living became the only obsession in Cheng Shi's heart.

Perhaps it should be 'living well'.

But today, when the gods have descended, the word 'well' is too difficult. Just living has already exhausted all his strength.

Therefore, Cheng Shi's unique wish was to live. And because of this, he believed that all Cheng Shis—no matter which world, no matter which starry sky—their wishes should be consistent; all of them wanted to live.

But a single sentence from the Fun God directly woke Cheng Shi up, making him realize that perhaps not all Cheng Shis were like himself, always holding fast to Old Jia's final request, wanting to live well.

Cheng Shi and Cheng Shi were also different!

Putting oneself into the perspective of that [Deceit] Cheng Shi: when he personally retrieved the 'answer' from the Real Universe and brought the world toward the future he hoped for, only to find that

future was nothing but a delayed destruction, and the Universe would eventually collapse and fall apart...

What would he think?

The gods fell because of him, the future was hopeless because of him, the world collapsed because of him, friends blamed themselves because of him. Even Old Jia... even this affection that only existed in his memories could at most exist for another few decades, and then vanish like smoke and disperse like clouds, with everything returning to nothingness!

Is this what he desired? No!

Is this what he expected? No!

But this was what he pushed for, the 'sin' he personally created!

At such a dead end, plagued by remorse, did he really still want to live?

No... perhaps death was the only release. Otherwise, he wouldn't have swapped with Old Zhang, coming to this world to seek his so-called atonement!

So from the moment he chose atonement, he had already chosen death, and had personally 'killed' himself.

His self in the False Curtain Call failed to discover [Deceit] Cheng Shi's thoughts, but [Deceit] discovered it. Because he was not only him, but even more so 'Him'. Don't forget, what that Cheng Shi inherited was the authority of [Deceit]!

Rather than saying [Deceit] killed Cheng Shi, it was better to say [Deceit] killed [Deceit]!

He saw His exhaustion, saw His bitterness, saw His remorse, saw His despair, so He mercifully bestowed release upon Him.

[Deceit] Cheng Shi should have been released, yet [Death] Zhang Jizu taking His place in death allowed Him to survive again.

At this time, no matter where He was, He bore the despair of an entire world, and also bore the agonizing pain of losing a close friend.

Thinking like this, he really was fortunate.

Thinking of this, Cheng Shi froze in place, his heart boiling to the extreme, unable to calm down for a long time.

Heartbreak, agony, desolation, pity... For a time, countless emotions intertwined and surged. This uncontrollable empathy gradually evolved into a deep resentment of fate, and an aversion towards [Origin]!

All the tragedy originated from this Creator's experiment, yet the power of the experimental creatures simply could not shake it in the slightest.

This kind of despair surged into his heart once more, making Cheng Shi clench his fists tight, veins bulging.

And at this time, the eyes in the void smiled self-deprecatingly, murmuring in a voice Cheng Shi couldn't hear:

"Very despairing, isn't it.

When I learned all of this, I was even more in despair than you.

The Fear Faction?

Heh, where is there any Fear Faction in this world? It's nothing but a group of despair-filled creatures forcing themselves to be calm, deceiving themselves as well as others, using the guise of fear, dragging legs that can't be moved, and gritting their teeth to crawl forward.

Now I have already crawled up to here. The rest..."

Cheng Shi seemingly felt something. He focused his gaze and raised his head, only to see that pair of eyes switch expression in a second, blinking playfully and smiling:

"Let's not talk about these boring things, let's talk about something interesting.

How does it feel to hide behind the scenes and overlook the whole situation?"

"..."

Cheng Shi was ultimately a mortal. Without the help of external forces, he couldn't achieve a completely smooth emotional transition. He choked up a bit and didn't speak.

[Deceit] continued with a smile:

"I see you really enjoy this joy of sitting deep behind the scenes. Hmm, you really are the chosen one."

Cheng Shi fundamentally didn't want to talk about any behind-the-scenes or front-stage. At this very moment, he only wanted to know what the Fun God's World Saving Plan was, and whether His so-called world-saving could truly save this world.

Was He... really going to build an [Origin] for this world?

Cheng Shi took a deep breath and asked slowly:

"What exactly is your plan, Lord Benefactor!"

It's already come to this time, do you still intend to hide it from me?

How can a fixed destiny who knows nothing cooperate with you to save this world!?"

"The world cannot be saved."

The smile in [Deceit]'s eyes gradually solidified, and the spirals no longer spun mysteriously. He looked into the depths of the void with neither joy nor sorrow, saying faintly, "I also want to know what my plan is, but who can tell me?"

I began laying out my plans from the beginning of the era, calculating everything from behind the scenes. But in the end, someone told me that all of this was just a pipe dream; this world simply has no future. If you were me, what would you do?

Heh, the fake is ultimately fake, just like how you could control that pair of puppet eyes to summon my follower, but once I personally descend, everything of yours will eventually be seized by me...

The tragedies of countless universes have only taught me one truth: [Origin] cannot be defeated!

You think [He] sits high above the Real Universe ignoring everything, seemingly only wanting an experimental result. But actually, any anomalous factor that could possibly affect this Creator's experiment will be erased by [Him] one by one.

[War], you, and your little cat friend are all living examples.

[He] will not allow a problem to appear in any petri dish, much less let a problem appear in the entire experimental environment. Only when one out of countless petri dishes can present the true result to [Him] will this suffocating experiment truly come to an end.

It's a pity, there is probably no world that can wait until that time, because someone told me that [He] is also racing against time, and [Origin]'s time is also running out..."

Speaking up to here, [Deceit] cast a faint glance at Cheng Shi. "But I don't believe it."

"???"

Cheng Shi was dumbfounded listening to this.

What did that mean?

[Origin] also had no time?

No, where exactly did the Universe's time go? Who stole it? How come no one has time!

These things the Fun God said were too terrifying. In the next sentence, aren't you going to tell me that [Time] is [Origin]?

They were too similar, weren't they?

Although the amount of information in [Deceit]'s words was huge, Cheng Shi sharp-wittedly caught some details. He frowned tightly, staring intensely at [Deceit] and asked:

"You keep saying someone told you, someone told you..."

I am very curious, exactly who under this Starry Sky knows more than you?

Is it that [Time] without time, or that [Fate] imprisoned by you?

[Time] once told me that 'the road ahead is blocked' is [Fate]'s assertion. Since you run completely counter to [Fate], why have you started believing [Fate] at this time?

Or is it that [Time] finally deduced that that road also leads nowhere, and we only need to wait for death?

Since everyone is fighting for time, Lord Benefactor, shouldn't we also save some time?

Exactly what misgivings do you have that you cannot tell me these answers? Is it because your final plan still requires sacrificing the fixed destiny, and you're afraid I'll desert on the eve of battle?"

"..." That pair of eyes said with neither joy nor sorrow, "Then will you run?"

This question undoubtedly pronounced the clown's death sentence.

Cheng Shi paused, and finally felt relieved.

Sure enough, his guess was right. The fixed destiny could not escape death.

Since it was like this...

"If their future is as beautiful as I have imagined it to be..." He hooked up the corner of his mouth, full of longing. "I will not run."

"But if even fighting to the death cannot leave a piece of pure land for my friends..."

Cheng Shi clenched his fists tight, his gaze resolute. "Then my death will only be the next smear of blood-colored mockery!"

...

Chapter 1379: Audience Meeting — Bad News

"Very good. When you have enough courage to bear everything, you will have the right to know the answer."

[Deceit] smiled slightly, His eyes becoming profound. He cast His eyes down at Cheng Shi and asked in an unprecedentedly serious tone, "Are you ready?"

These few short words were like bullets shooting straight into the space between Cheng Shi's eyebrows, making his whole body stiffen and freeze in place.

He only felt that the surrounding void was congealing. That almost tangible pressure instantly wrapped him up so he couldn't move, making him feel so powerless that it was as if he was about to face a cruel torture where he was entirely at the mercy of others.

Cheng Shi's heartbeat suddenly sped up. Unsettled and anxious, he even felt his mouth somewhat dry as he said, "What, ready for what?"

"The answer you want."

"!!!"

Cheng Shi's heart was about to jump out of his throat. He clearly felt every muscle in his body trembling, and that uncontrollable fear almost engulfed his rationality.

That's right, fear!

Even though Cheng Shi thought every day about knowing the answer leading to the world's future, when it was truly right in front of him, he was suddenly afraid.

Feeling timid as one nears their hometown; feeling more fear in the heart as one nears the truth—this was the same principle.

He didn't dare face that answer. Even if he didn't know what the answer specifically was, he could predict that to reach the other shore of the future, this world would definitely have to pay a sufficiently 'large' price...

After experiencing the False Curtain Call once, he indeed no longer feared death, but he was afraid that his death wouldn't be able to save those friendships watered with blood.

Was the gaze of [Origin] really so easy to 'play'?

If Wei Mu's guess was true... could that world where the new god descends really survive?

Cheng Shi didn't know, nor did he dare to think about it.

However, [Deceit] was still the same [Deceit]. He fundamentally didn't give Cheng Shi a choice. The only progress was that this time He gave Cheng Shi an advance notice.

Cheng Shi's thoughts were boiling. He didn't know how to respond, nor did he know how to speak of his fear. He could only subconsciously reply:

"What answer?"

[Deceit] snickered, but there was no laughter in the high-tilted corners of His eyes.

"All answers.

Didn't you really want to know where I locked up [Fate]?

I can tell you, I didn't imprison Him."

"?"

"He is my only twin god in [Void], and also my only reliance under this Starry Sky.

Appearance and essence depend on each other like lips and teeth. Without appearance, all essence is empty talk; without essence, all appearance is also vain illusion.

So I will never distance myself from Him, never dislike Him, and never betray Him..."

"!!!"

What!?

Cheng Shi's brain directly exploded.

You and [Fate]'s wills are so completely different that the whole Universe knows it, and you've been fighting in [Void] making a mess. Now you tell me [Fate] is your only reliance?

Lord Benefactor, did you drink fake alcohol?

Or is the current [Deceit] in front of my eyes not [Deceit], but [Fate]?

Otherwise, Cheng Shi couldn't think of a single reason why [Deceit] could say these words.

However, [Deceit]'s words were not finished yet. That pair of eyes lowered dejectedly, a trace of inexplicable emotion flashing in them.

"But He... betrayed me."

"Ha."

Cheng Shi suddenly laughed.

At this moment, the clown's IQ returned to the high ground. He wagged his index finger at that pair of eyes, not believing a single word as he said:

"Stop deceiving me, Lord Benefactor.

In the False Curtain Call, [Fate] once said that He descended with the fixed destiny's will at the beginning of the era. And You descended together with rebellion. So from the very beginning, the two of you were opposed to each other. There is fundamentally no such thing as who betrayed who!

I thought this would be a truth-telling game, but you insist on playing a 'heart-to-heart' game with me...

I don't know what you are building up to. Your emotions are too strange. This is not like my Benefactor. It's not like that Fun God who has everything under control, laughing and teasing the Universe.

I really don't dare to believe you again, especially at this time.

Lord Benefactor, can't you be a bit more sincere?

Fine, taking ten thousand steps back, I can believe that everything you said is true, but there are preconditions. You said you didn't imprison [Fate], then let [Fate] come and testify with you.

I am talking about the true [Fate], not your illusion, your clone, or your acting.

As long as He appears here and confirms everything you said, I will..."

"He is dead."

"...Don't mess around. This kind of excuse is so low-level that even Your followers no longer use it. If You hid [Fate], just say so clearly.

The Clown stands on the side of the Fear Faction. You can see my thoughts, why do you still have to take precautions against the Clown?" Cheng Shi couldn't understand no matter how much he thought about it.

[Deceit] didn't say a word, just expressionlessly gazed down at Cheng Shi. Only when the expression on Cheng Shi's face slowly solidified and he swallowed his remaining words did He repeat with neither joy nor sorrow:

"He is dead."

"I don't believe it!" Cheng Shi blurted out. A sneer rose from the corner of his mouth, but he quickly suppressed it.

His cheeks twitched, his body trembled, and his consciousness fought with itself.

One consciousness told him this was the Fun God's new trick to tease the clown, absolutely do not believe it, whoever believes it is a clown; while another consciousness told him that the Fun God's emotions didn't seem fake, [Fate] might really have fallen. Otherwise, this joke was too abrupt and very unnecessary.

But Cheng Shi didn't dare to believe it!

Even though he cursed 'bitch, bitch' every day, the moment he truly heard the news of [Fate]'s death, he still felt as if his rationality was drained, and his whole being completely shut down.

This was the era of [Void]. As the ruler of [Void] who could gain insight into the past and future, how could [Fate] possibly die?

When did He die?

When [Prosperity], [Truth], and [Oblivion] fell, the Universe still shook. Could it be that the commotion of an era ruler falling was not even as loud as these few?

Cheng Shi instinctively rejected this 'answer'. But he also remembered that during the three days before the Audience Meeting, he had indeed left this world. As for what happened in the Universe during that time, he knew nothing.

But this also didn't prove anything. The swindlers at the Audience Meeting had never discussed this matter. Even if they didn't know the inside story, what about Long Jing, what about the Jokers, what about Big Cat?

If such a huge event really occurred, it would be impossible to hide it from Zhen Xin who succeeded [Chaos] and Big Cat who was acknowledged by the [Convention]. They would definitely try every means to inform him.

Since he hadn't received any news, that meant those three days were calm and peaceful, and nothing had happened.

Therefore, the Fun God's words were fundamentally a lie. No god could die completely without a sound...

Wait!

Cheng Shi suddenly froze. Then, he seemed to think of something. His eyes slowly widened, and his pupils shrank to pinpricks.

It wasn't that there weren't any!

In the change of that False Curtain Call, there was one god who indeed died completely soundlessly!

And entirely coincidentally, it was exactly [Fate]!!

The [Origin] power of the Outer God restricted the misfortune that would drag down the Universe, turning [Fate]'s self-destruction into a muffled thud with no commotion at all!

Could it be that [Fate] died at that time?

But wasn't that a change triggered by the authority of [Fate]? How could a deity really fall?

Could it be that the Fun God uniquely merged [Fate]'s death into reality, making that muffled thud the swan song of [Fate]!?

Thinking of this, Cheng Shi's whole body shook. He looked at [Deceit] in disbelief, a trace of shock and doubt flashing in his eyes as he said:

"Who exactly are you?"

"..."

[Deceit] fell silent. After a long while, He said faintly:

"I am [Deceit], and also [Fate]."

...

Chapter 1380: Audience Meeting — [Fate]

As He spoke, the surrounding void suddenly began to boil.

A multicolored aura steamed up from the endless pitch black. For a time, it was as if [Mockery and Jeering] washed over the area, drowning Cheng Shi's consciousness and distorting his field of vision, pulling him back to the moment at the beginning of the era when [Void] descended into the world.

The Universe expanded into endless existence at the end of the previous era. All things and everything turned into solid light, stuffing the entire universe full.

After the white light, the world returned to darkness. Then a voice sounded from the depths of the darkness, also sounding by Cheng Shi's ear.

The instant the voice appeared, Cheng Shi immediately recognized its owner: [Origin]!

Only to hear that soul-stirring voice say:

"To exist yet not exist is called [Void].

All existence is fundamentally void.

The self-deception of living creatures serves as the skin, and the fixed destiny of the universe serves as the bones.

This, is precisely [Deceit], the appearance of [Void], the indistinguishable unreasonableness;

This, is precisely [Fate], the essence of [Void], the unreachable truth."

The Creator bestowed the divine oracle, giving [Void] its proper name. Thus the darkness receded, the epoch restarted, and a new era came rolling in atop the waves of creation. Two identical pairs of eyes also opened at this moment!

The scene should have ended here. Past experiences of 'peeking' at [Origin] were all like this.

But today was clearly different. Everything around was still continuing. Cheng Shi felt like a 'stowaway' exiled back to the beginning of the era, illegally slipping into that moment when [Void] descended, greedily absorbing all information, reluctant to shift his gaze even a little bit.

This wasn't just because he was shocked by the magnificence of the era's opening, but even more so because he was shocked by his own discovery!

He found that the two pairs of eyes opening in the endless darkness at this very moment looked exactly the same... Yes, They were supposed to look exactly the same in the first place, but the problem was, why did the [Void] back then look different from the [Void] now!?

Whether it was [Deceit] or [Fate], Their eyes clearly had never flickered with any dazzling starlight; there were only spirals spinning endlessly!

Just like the [Deceit] he was facing right now!

No!

They were also different.

It wasn't that the Fun God's eyes right now had no starlight, but rather that all the starlight in His eyes had dimmed. The traces of the starlight's existence were faintly visible, completely different from those starry eyes that only had spirals.

But why would it be like this?

Cheng Shi really wanted to ask, but before he could make a sound, everything in front of his eyes gave him the answer.

He saw the two rulers of [Void] gather together because of Their descent, meeting for the first time in the pitch-black void. [Fate] was not cold and indifferent. He broke into a smile, the corners of His eyes tilted high, as He poured out to His only twin god in front of Him:

"Praise the great Creator for bringing guidance to [Void].

I have gained insight into the unique truth beneath the Universe. I respectfully accept [His] divine oracle, and will use everything in this world to piece together an eternal Divine Throne for Him before the era's curtain call.

[Deceit], will you help me?"

"I will not."

[Deceit] refused in a second, and rolling His eyes, He sneered, "I think you haven't woken up yet, have you, [Fate]?"

What kind of thing worthy of praise is the Creator?

I descended from the [Origin]'s divine oracle, and the very first thought upon opening my eyes was to tear down [His] Divine Throne. And you, you actually want to piece together a new Divine Throne for [Him]?

Are you [Existence] or [Void]?"

[Fate] froze. He smoothed out the corners of His eyes, saying in disbelief:

"Absolutely impossible! [Void] is one. Even if you and my wills differ, they would absolutely never differ to this extent. Are you deceiving me?"

[Deceit] gave a cold snort and sneered again:

"Deceiving you? You hold the authority of truth; who in the Universe could deceive you?"

Even though I control lies, I am innately countered by you. If you don't believe it, just look for yourself.

Heh, [He] bestowed the name [Void] upon the era, so naturally it is to let everything return to void. Thus your divine oracle is merely your delusional thought. I can understand your eagerness in rushing to express devotion to [Him], but don't be too ridiculous, [Fate].

[Void] is [Void]. There is only returning to silence, no creation."

[Fate] frowned slightly, His gaze firm as He said:

"The guidance of [Origin] will absolutely not be wrong. I have already gained insight that that Divine Throne will appear at the time of the era's curtain call.

Although I didn't see the figure of [Void] at that time, it seems that the will of [Void] will ultimately be put into practice in this era."

"Don't drag [Void] into this; that is your will.

I have never thought that piecing together a Divine Throne counts as void. Only breaking it does.

[Fate], do you want to part ways with me right at the beginning of the era?"

[Deceit] spoke these words toughly, but just looking at His eyes where the spirals almost stagnated, one would know He fundamentally didn't want to separate from [Fate].

From their descent until now, [Fate] had shifted His line of sight several times due to pondering, looking toward the void. But [Deceit]'s gaze was on [Fate] from beginning to end, never once looking away!

[Void] being one was not just talk. There seemed to be an inseparable connection between Them.

Sensing [Deceit]'s 'stubborn mouth', [Fate] smiled.

For a time, colors bloomed in the void, and the Universe matched in its radiance.

[Fate] lightly blinked His eyes and comforted His twin god:

"There's no need to be so serious. If this is truly my delusional thought, I still have a way to confirm it.

What you call breaking the Divine Throne might be dictated by your divinity. The lies of all living beings gather upon you. With the divine name of [Deceit] overhead, naturally everything everywhere is a lie.

I will not use my authority to treat my twin god. [Void] is one; I believe in you."

"..."

[Deceit] remained silent, but the corners of His eyes clearly tilted up slightly, imitating [Fate]'s appearance.

[Fate] continued:

"But I also believe in [Origin]. [His] guidance is absolutely not empty talk.

Since we cannot determine true from false, then we will just use [Fate]'s method to verify it."

[Deceit] was completely unsurprised. He seemed to have long known what exactly [Fate]'s method was, and had no objections to this either.

Seeing that [Void] was of one mind, [Fate] smiled. Lightly blinking His eyes, He drove away all the boundless pitch black of the void, causing countless stars beneath the Starry Sky to all ascend.

Flowing light poured backwards, and the host of stars trailed their tails. The sky full of dazzling light gathered together, transforming into a shining galaxy that made the Universe lose its colors.

Seeing this strange spectacle, Cheng Shi only felt inexplicably shocked. Looking at the starlight close at hand, he seemingly felt that fate wasn't that unreachable either.

The stars were still gathering!

Before long, this galaxy grew bigger and bigger, and its shape became more and more regular. Cheng Shi observed it for a long time, always feeling that this galaxy looked like some actually existing thing in reality. It wasn't until the countless stars moved spontaneously, their trajectories weaving into a giant

ring, that a bright light suddenly flashed in his heart. His pupils shrank as he pointed at this star cluster in front of him that was just like a universe, and cried out involuntarily, wide-eyed:

"A dice!?"

That's right!

These countless stars mutually added to each other's radiance, gathering into a 'dice' of who knows how many 'faces'.

In the next moment, this starry dice was tossed out by [Fate].

...