

The Gods 138

Chapter 138: Cheng Shi, Are You Interested in Becoming My Follower?

So, it turns out that my becoming an Ultraman wasn't [Memory]'s doing, but rather something my Patron pulled off.

What the hell is He planning?

Or rather, what does He want me to do?

[Memory] noticed Cheng Shi's confusion and chuckled again.

"Your Patron damaged countless artifacts in my collection, all in an effort to hide this particular doodle of yours.

When I discovered the damage, I couldn't discern His secret—naturally, He's quite adept at deception.

So I went ahead and restored the artifacts.

For me, it was a trivial restoration, but for you mortals, when the divine power of memory surges, it might just present you with an opportunity."

Opportunity?

What opportunity!?

Cheng Shi's mind raced as he recalled everything he knew about [Memory]. Then, suddenly, a name flashed in his mind.

No, not just a name—an entire scheme!

That assassination plot from the future!

“It seems you’ve remembered.

Good. I’m pleased that my follower was able to cleverly harness my power, which shows that he is committed to carrying out my will.

But for you, it could have been a disaster.

Though, you’ve overcome it, and that’s commendable.

Yet, the drama hasn’t reached its conclusion. Your restless Patron, instead of fixing the damaged artifacts, added a new smear to them.

Though that smear erased itself, the repeated provocations have been... embarrassing, to say the least.

And so, here I am.”

“.....”

Wait, what?

Dude, if the gods are arguing, why don’t you go flip through your memory archives and learn some better insults?

Does bullying someone like me really make you feel better?

“Your expression is amusing—the way your eyes are full of defiance, fear, anger, and panic, yet you pretend to show no fear.

Ah, the stench of [Deceit] is strong with you.

That's not good.

But I'm here to confirm something."

As [Memory] finished speaking, He waved His hand, and the surroundings began to rapidly shift once again.

Everything played out in reverse, as if the world were rewinding a film, diving deeper into the sea of memories, while the void rose up. Fate returned to its beginning.

Yes, soon enough, the scene froze in place, showing the moment Cheng Shi first stepped onto the path of fate.

He saw an image of himself, walking forward, reaching the moment where he stood before the mask and the dice of fate.

Then, the Cheng Shi in front of him took the dice, as [Memory] had suggested.

[Memory] watched this scene and smiled.

"You chose [Fate], rather than directly choosing [Deceit], which shows that you aren't fond of deception.

Deception is merely your method of self-preservation.

It's a pity—had you continued down [Fate]'s path, perhaps I would have had fewer troubles.

Hmm, that's a good idea.

Cheng Shi, have you ever thought about returning to the path of [Fate]?"

“?”

Cheng Shi was dumbfounded.

What does that mean?

Seeing his confusion, [Memory] smiled and explained:

“I can help you return to His embrace.

As for the so-called Oathbreaker’s Curse, rest assured—[Deceit] would likely be amused by the whole thing and won’t punish you.”

Huh?

You want me to become an Oathbreaker?

Is that even possible?

Cheng Shi thought of his patron, the god of amusement and mischief.

Hmm, you know what? It might actually be possible.

But even if my prank-loving Patron enjoys this kind of chaos, I, Cheng Shi, am not shameless enough to go back on my word!

I’ve been doing just fine among the tricksters, so why would I go become a turncoat?

Besides, He was so eager to write me off—no way He'd let me come back!

You want me to be an Oathbreaker?

Heh—tui!

[Memory] seemed to have guessed Cheng Shi's thoughts, and His pupils shifted again, transforming into white voids.

“You think He wouldn't take you back?”

No, no, Cheng Shi. You've misunderstood something, and your Patron would never bother pointing it out to you.

It's not that [Fate] is angry with you for your minor blasphemies.

It's that...

You've gone too far down the path of [Deceit], when you should have progressed this far down the path of [Fate].”

Huh??

Wait, hold on a second...

You're saying...

That He's jealous!!?

What kind of soap opera plot is this?

Perhaps sensing Cheng Shi's thoughts, [Memory] arched an eyebrow, His expression turning a bit odd.

"He has indeed been quite lenient..."

If you were to return now... Hmm? Wait a moment. It seems there's already some meddling here.

Interesting. So [Fate] had already set things in motion.

Looks like I'm a step behind.

But... this solution doesn't resolve my problem.

Let me think.

Hmm, how about..."

[Memory] turned to Cheng Shi, smiling as He asked:

"Cheng Shi, would you be interested in becoming my follower?"

Huh?

What... what now?

Cheng Shi was utterly dumbfounded, staring at the "boss" standing in front of him, his mouth opening and closing, but no words coming out.

"I... I... tend to fib a little, and I can't help it.

So, um... I don't think... we'd be... a good match?"

"Few dare to refuse my invitation. You're not the first, but you're definitely the most cowardly.

Pledging your loyalty to Him at this point probably won't earn you His favor. But I'll give you some time.

You can think about it."

The "boss"'s smile faded, leaving His face expressionless as He stared at Cheng Shi. Slowly, He added:

"As for the authority of deceit, it's not something I lack."

???

Wait, aren't You the god of faithfully recording everything? How do You have the authority of deceit?

"Faithfully recording everything doesn't mean I'm faithfully recording the truth.

If I scour my archives and find a record filled entirely with lies and falsehoods, and then present it to the world...

What do you think? Am I restoring history, or am I retelling a deception?"

What the—!

Cheng Shi's mind felt like it had been struck by lightning, and suddenly, a word popped into his head:

Theft!

Perhaps this is how [Memory] is able to steal the authority of [Deceit]!

He faithfully records lies, meaning lies are now part of memory!

So, it works like that?!

Cheng Shi was dumbfounded, and his mind began to spiral, wondering how his own Patron might be stealing the authority of [Memory].

And an even bigger question!

If one day, a god's entire authority is stolen...

Does that mean...

The divine seat would be vacant???

So, is this what my Patron meant when He said "Humans can become gods"?

By constantly pulling and tugging on the authority of a god through faith and followers, could He be trying to drain a god of all their power, and then push one of His followers onto that divine throne?

"Those who are grounded can walk further, while those who chase the sky wind up blind.

So, have you thought it over yet?"

With [Memory] staring at him, unmoving, Cheng Shi's back stiffened, his fists clenched tight.

This could very well be a life-or-death question.

One wrong answer, and his fate would be sealed.

He didn't dare speak carelessly, but he also couldn't remain silent.

After a few moments of frantic mental gymnastics, Cheng Shi raised his head, looked [Memory] in the eye, and resolutely shook his head.

He chose to refuse.

[Memory] quirked an eyebrow, slightly surprised.

"Reason."

"Memory may lie, but I... I never lie."

"....."

What kind of nonsense is this?

Do you even hear yourself?

Do you think that's something a normal person would say?

Are you really starting to believe you're some devout follower of [Chaos]?

You, a notorious liar under the protection of [Deceit], dare stand here and say you never lie?

Heh.

Funny thing is—it actually worked.

That bizarre statement left [Memory] momentarily speechless.

He studied Cheng Shi intently for a long time but didn't erase this "blemish" who had twice refused Him. Instead, He nodded and said:

"A very... hmm, unique reason.

I see you still harbor some prejudice against me.

No matter. Time will give you the answers."

With that, He snapped His fingers once again.

At the crisp sound, Cheng Shi's hand lifted on its own.

The hand, adorned with colorful rings, saw one of the rings—a plain blue one—slip from his finger and float in the air.

"[Death] isn't well-suited for things like this. No, none of the gods of life handle this very well.

They are too primitive, too crude.

But [Existence] and I... we can make everything that exists, exist exactly as we desire it to."

[Memory] reached out, swiping a finger across the blue ring. The soft blue light dimmed, transforming into a deep, unfathomable ocean of memories.

“This is not a gift, nor is it compensation. It is a witness.

Let this allow you to witness the wonder of [Memory] and the greatness of [Existence].

Use it well, Cheng Shi.

I hope you won’t refuse me a third time.”

And with those words, the “boss” vanished.

As He left, the world around Cheng Shi shattered into pieces, and his consciousness was violently pulled back into his body.

With a start, Cheng Shi jerked awake from what felt like a dream.

His hand was still gripping the door handle of the storage room, one foot outside on the rooftop, and behind him were the stocked shelves of the warehouse.

He was back!

Finally back!

Cheng Shi let out a huge breath, letting the cold sweat pour down his face, soaking the ground beneath him.

Just as he was silently thanking his luck for surviving yet another near-death encounter, a voice called out excitedly from across the way.

“Hey, man! Finally awake, huh? You’ve been standing there like a statue all day. I thought you were dead!”

Cheng Shi turned toward the voice, seeing Xie Yang shouting from the rooftop across the street. He forced a grin and chuckled.

“Sorry, didn’t quite die. Bet you’re disappointed your space-merging prayer didn’t work, huh?”

“Uh...”

Xie Yang’s face stiffened instantly. He gave a nervous chuckle and waved his hand dismissively.

“No way, I knew you wouldn’t die. A follower of [Death] isn’t that easy to kill, right?”

Damn it...

I had almost forgotten.

I still owe that god dozens of sacrifices...

I’m not going to have to die to pay off that debt, am I?!?

Please, come on, give me a break...

I’ll be quick about it.