

The Gods 192

Chapter 192: ...Reliable Torchbearers

Fang Shiqing finished her opening statement, her face flushed. But that single sentence was enough to leave the man standing before her utterly stunned.

?

Do you even hear what you're saying?

You, a City Guardian, are telling me that the City Builders' will is too conservative?

So, my dear Flame-Seeker lady, what exactly happened to you?

What, or rather, who, caused such an "incomprehensible" change in you?

The man, much like Fang Shiqing, took a deep breath and needed a moment to recover. He walked over to her side with keen interest, his sharp eyes scanning her from head to toe, and then he smiled again.

Interesting. The one who changed her mind was a man, but not in that sense.

"Tell me more, my Flame-Seeker. I hope I'm about to hear an even more shocking story.

Of course, be mindful of your words and phrasing. There's only one Remembrance Needle. Once I know about him...

We would be betraying the oath we uphold."

Fang Shiqing nodded solemnly and began to articulate her thoughts—no, Cheng Shi's "inner" thoughts.

A long time passed, long enough for the petal on the desk to dissipate all its power and gradually wither away.

The man stood motionless, listening intently to the entire account.

His brows furrowed deeply as he fell into contemplation.

Seeing him like this, Fang Shiqing picked up the Remembrance Needle, silently erased her own memory, and prepared to leave quietly.

“Wait! This petal...”

“It’s not needed anymore.”

Fang Shiqing didn’t turn back, but her posture alone conveyed a smile—a smile full of confidence and radiance.

“I suddenly realized something. An organization that relies on oaths and compromises to maintain morale cannot become the existence you speak of—the one that brings a new dawn for all things beautiful.

So, we don’t need it anymore.

Just as you felt when you saw this petal, my path had gone astray.

But thankfully, someone guided me back in the right direction.”

With that, Fang Shiqing turned and strode purposefully away.

The man watched her retreating figure thoughtfully, then glanced meaningfully at the withered petal on the desk. He picked up the notebook he had been writing in and flipped to the latest page.

Then, he penned four large characters:

God Creation Plan?

“Do you think it’s feasible?” he asked the void behind him.

A remarkably quiet woman paced out from the void. Although her eyes were covered by a black cloth, she still turned her head towards the notebook, her gaze lingering for a moment before she smiled faintly.

“Why wouldn’t it be?”

Didn’t you hear what the Flame-Seeker said?

‘When I was at 2400 points, I wondered why, among those seated on the high thrones of godhood, there couldn’t be a place for me?’

You, and I, we have more than just 2400 points.

You need to have some faith, Qin Xin?”

The man frowned in thought for a moment, then gave a soft hum of agreement. He raised his hand and decisively crossed out the question mark after “God Creation Plan.”

“Then, let’s give it a try.”

...

Reality, in an apartment in an unknown province and city.

Ever since returning to the rest area, Bai Ling had been pondering the deeper meaning behind Fang Shiqing's question.

She was terrified that Fang Shiqing had noticed the change in her memory, remembering the things lost during the trial.

So, he came!

A big shot is a big shot. He turned out to be the Clown, he had 2400 points, and he saved her again.

But she had almost killed him by mistake.

Even though she had forgotten that Cheng Shi was Cheng Shi at that moment, she was still consumed by deep guilt.

She was afraid, terrified.

Her fear wasn't about the harm her bowstring might have caused Cheng Shi, nor was it about whether Fang Shiqing had seen through her. Her anxiety, her worry, her unease stemmed from... the current memory!

She didn't know why the big shot's technique had failed on her, but she worried that her 1400-point self wouldn't be able to keep this memory safe, that she would expose Cheng Shi's existence.

Yes, since the big shot had chosen to make her forget, she shouldn't remember.

But if she didn't remember, what a pity that would be.

It was one of the few times she had fought alongside him, one of the most captivating sights on the increasingly bright path she walked!

But again, Bai Ling felt she couldn't keep it safe.

So she decided to do something.

Thus... she washed away her fatigue, calmed her chaotic thoughts, knelt devoutly before the bed, and whispered a prayer:

"Dis..."

She stopped after just one word.

No, she couldn't pray to [Corruption]. That would be tantamount to broadcasting the secret to the "public."

A complex mix of emotions flickered across Bai Ling's face. After much deliberation, she clenched her teeth and tremblingly began to attempt a different prayer:

"Unable to distinguish truth from falsehood, regardless of reality or void.

Oh, omnipotent God of [Deceit], I, Bai Ling, an utterly humble follower of [Corruption], a sinner unworthy of pity, pray to you now to initiate a trial...

A trial that can permanently erase the memory of 'your devout follower Cheng Shi'... from my mind!"

...

Reality, in a residential house in an unknown province and city.

Cui Qiushi was eating when his memories returned.

Even in an era where all resources could be obtained through prayer, he still maintained the habit of cooking his own meals.

It wasn't out of boredom, but out of nostalgia.

Old Cui loved Little Cui's cooking, so he never stopped.

On the small wooden table, there was a bowl of rice and a plate of food, but two pairs of chopsticks were set out.

He really wanted to give Old Cui another bowl, but Old Cui had said not to waste food, so he refrained.

As the tide of memories washed over the shores of his consciousness, Cui Qiushi shoveled rice into his mouth. Remembering everything from the trial, he swallowed large mouthfuls of rice while tears of longing streamed down his face.

These sudden tears certainly weren't for Cheng Shi, but for the person he saw in Cheng Shi's eyes...

Cui Qiushi's father, Old Cui, Cui Dingtian.

Cheng Shi must have met his father; otherwise, Cui Qiushi couldn't explain the surprise and nostalgia that flashed in Cheng Shi's eyes the moment he saw him.

He had never been matched with Cheng Shi before, nor had he heard Cheng Shi's name from Sister Qing or Bai Ling.

Even if Cheng Shi knew Zhao Qian, Zhao Qian wasn't the type to gossip; he wouldn't reveal a companion's identity to an outsider.

Cui Qiushi was honest, but honesty didn't mean he wasn't observant or lacked inner depth.

He noticed Cheng Shi treated him differently, sensing a very faint, subtle admiration emanating from him.

All these signs led him to believe that Cheng Shi had likely met his father.

Because in this world, only he resembled him.

Is Father okay?

Actually, Cui Qiushi had considered these theories during the trial, but at that time, he was still the steadfast shield protecting his companions, unable to let his personal sorrow affect his emotions.

So he put aside all distracting thoughts and focused on the trial.

But now, in this moment, it was his own time. He could finally cry properly, releasing the longing he felt for his father.

Cui Qiushi had asked himself countless times why he didn't go find Old Cui, but he had answered himself just as many times:

Because he had decided to do something about this twisting, crumbling world, and the price of that choice was too heavy. He didn't want his father to bear it with him.

His elderly father had already carried him for half his life; now it was time for the fledgling to try soaring on its own.

He also knew his father would support him, because Old Cui used to say: The Cui family must live with integrity, standing tall between heaven and earth.

Maybe I'm not there yet, but I'm already on the right path.

Dad, did you see that?

It was a slightly salty dinner, but the saltiness came not from salt, but from tears.

After Cui Qiushi finished his moment of remembrance, he resolutely drew a symbol on the wall behind him, stepped through the black door, and walked onto the Path of the Torchbearers.

He found the idle [Flame of Hope] and asked for help concealing this memory.

[Flame of Hope] cheerfully examined him for a long time, then asked with amusement:

“How did you know it was me who restored your memory?”

Cui Qiushi paused, looking bewildered.

“I... just found out.”

“...”

The flame froze. In that instant, the Torchbearer space protected by [Flame of Hope] was almost breached by [Silence]!

He was thoroughly choked up, sighing heavily as he looked at the bewildered Cui Qiushi.

“Relax, you’ll forget everything.”

As soon as the words were spoken, Cui Qiushi lost his memory.

He even forgot why he was there, because the Torchbearers’ shared code was “don’t knock unless necessary.”

But just then, a shout from the distance broke the awkward silence.

“Qiushi? Perfect timing! I was just about to call you. Quick, the boss says a new City Builder recruit has joined, and they’re holding a welcome ceremony!”

Cui Qiushi paused again.

City Builder?

Didn’t the City Builders’ Flame-Seeker die at the hands of a traitor?

How could there be a new City Builder recruit?

Could it be... a new Flame-Seeker?

His companion saw his shock and nodded with a smile.

“Figured it out? Looks like we’ve found another strong companion, a new... Flame-Seeker.”