

## The Gods 20

Chapter 20: Follower of [Chaos]

“Forgotten Doctor?”

Fang Shiqing looked at Cheng Shi with interest, picking up the pocket watch from the table with a smile.

The others also picked up their pocket watches, but the expressions on their faces varied, each unique in its own way.

Their gazes kept drifting between Cheng Shi and Xu Lu, thinking to themselves that the girl’s fear was probably justified.

She had already assumed a defensive posture, yet Cheng Shi still went ahead and practically announced their opposing faiths, seemingly unafraid of revealing his connection to the Prophet girl.

Xu Lu clearly didn’t dare accept anything from Cheng Shi. She checked the time on her own watch and then pushed the pocket watch back across the table.

“A Forgotten Doctor in a [Memory] trial isn’t exactly comforting, Cheng Shi. I hope you don’t mess with the NPCs too much. Over-accelerating them could cause the memories to collapse, and we might get trapped inside with no way out.”

Cheng Shi shrugged indifferently, pocketing the watch and turning to leave.

He needed to find a quiet place for his [Divine Will].

The tavern was large, spanning two floors.

It had a medieval Scandinavian style, with wooden furniture and animal pelts decorating the walls—very rustic.

Dozens of tables were scattered across both floors, most of them occupied.

The clinking of glasses and roars of laughter filled the air, and after walking just a few steps, Cheng Shi could no longer hear his teammates.

At the center of the tavern, there was a bar with a double-height ceiling, surrounded by railings on the second floor, allowing a clear view of the ground floor from above.

Moving quickly, Cheng Shi turned down a hallway and found an empty corner where no one could see him. He pulled out his Dice of Fate.

After completing his [Divine Will], he felt the favor of [Time] tickling his fingertips. With a satisfied smile, he stepped out from the shadows.

Time to start investigating.

Compared to [War] trials, [Memory] trials were far more “civilized.” There was rarely much combat, and even when there was, it was usually confined to small skirmishes that ended quickly.

In a [Memory] trial, every scene was someone else’s memory. If the memory was distorted too much, the entire memory could collapse, trapping everyone inside.

The goal of the trial was to continually search each memory scene for the “Memory Core”—the true owner of the memory.

In the current scene, the memory’s owner must have been here before and stayed for a long time, which is why they had such a vivid recollection of the tavern’s layout and patrons.

However, a person’s memory has areas of focus—places they paid attention to. These areas would be more “alive,” with the behavior of the “NPCs” being more logical and lifelike.

Conversely, in places the memory owner had ignored, there would be vague or fuzzy details.

The NPCs in these areas would exhibit various “errors”—small inconsistencies or flaws. While these errors weren’t always obvious, players needed to find them to progress in the trial.

The simplest and most straightforward method of finding these errors was to... interact with everyone.

In other words, talk to them.

However, even talking required skill. A failed interaction could distort the memory further, leading to a trial failure.

Cheng Shi wasn’t great at small talk, but he was good at lying.

He noticed a few tavern waiters emerging from a small room and, seizing the opportunity, slipped inside when no one was looking. He quickly stole a waiter’s uniform, changed into it, and strolled back out.

Just as he exited the room, he spotted Fang Shiqing leading Xu Lu in his direction, sneaking around as well.

He couldn’t help but smile—what a coincidence. They had the same idea.

Fang Shiqing’s eyes lit up when she saw Cheng Shi already dressed as a waiter. She nodded approvingly and whispered:

“Smart!”

Cheng Shi basked in the compliment, grinning. “A compliment from a pro is the best motivation.”

Hiding behind Fang Shiqing, Xu Lu glared at him warily, muttering under her breath, “So fake.”

Fang Shiqing laughed lightly.

“I’m sure you know about my [Divine Will], so let me share some knowledge with you. The light of [Truth] will guide your way.”

The [Divine Will] of [Truth] is the pursuit of knowledge. Any new rule or piece of information brings a follower of [Truth] closer to “truth.”

For followers with support or defensive abilities, gaining divine protection requires them to share knowledge with other followers.

Cheng Shi’s eyes flickered, and he quickly shared a random fact.

“Inserting a finger into the anus and rotating it for thirty seconds can effectively suppress hiccups.”

“?”

“?”

As soon as the words left his mouth, both women stood frozen in place.

Xu Lu’s face twisted into a mixture of fear and disgust. She wasn’t sure if she should be more frightened or repulsed. Opposing faiths really were terrifying—players like this were a threat to her personal safety.

She took two cautious steps closer to Fang Shiqing.

As for Fang Shiqing, she could feel the light of [Truth] flowing toward Cheng Shi, which meant what he said was genuine.

“How... did you figure that out?”

“Ah, I’m a doctor. The truth comes from practice.”

“A doctor in real life?”

Cheng Shi didn’t bat an eye. “Doesn’t it seem like it?”

Though Cheng Shi’s words implied he had practiced on other people, Fang Shiqing couldn’t help but glance at his backside.

“...Thank you. I’ve learned something new.”

She forced a smile, pulling Xu Lu along as they entered the changing room.

Cheng Shi chuckled to himself as he walked away, starting his investigation.

Each player had roughly divided the tavern into zones, and Cheng Shi was in charge of the entire east section of the first floor—about a dozen tables.

Talking to people was a boring task, especially for someone like Cheng Shi, who had social anxiety.

He grabbed a tray and collected a few bottles from tables with drunk patrons, then began delivering drinks to other tables.

At each table, he casually introduced himself, saying it was the tavern’s special of the day—free drinks from the boss. Then he’d ask how the customers were enjoying the evening. If they were in a good mood, he’d ask them to share some gossip, pretending it was the price of the drink.

To be honest, the Belus wines weren’t cheap. The customers were thrilled about getting free drinks and happily shared all kinds of local rumors.

Most of them were just bragging, and getting a free drink in exchange for more boasting seemed like a great deal.

Soon, Cheng Shi became a gossip sponge, soaking up every bit of information wherever he went.

In no time, he had heard every piece of gossip about this place called “Brookes Town.”

“The town started as the fiefdom of Duke Brookes, but as more refugees arrived, it grew into an administrative center. But it’s said the mayor wasn’t appointed by the king—he’s just a refugee impersonating the real one. Don’t ask how I know—that’s a secret.”

“Even the town’s chief justice is an imposter.”

“They even pretended to be strip dancers. It wasn’t until they took all their clothes off that the nobles realized these dancers had... you know what. That’s when they figured out they were all men.”

“But they’re still more popular than the original dancers. At least, the nobles like them better.”

“Do you think your boss has been replaced too? He’s gotten way too generous lately. What? You’re going to expose him? Come on, it’s good for business. You’re making more money, aren’t you?”

“The refugees came from Garthmelia. Word is that the underground faith is spreading in the Tower of Logic. They started a civil war and drove out the heretics. That’s why they fled to Belus. This isn’t new—why are you asking?”

“There are more refugees than citizens now, and the duke’s worried. But at least the nobles seem happy with them—affordable and plentiful.”

“Gossip? How about this: Yolke picked up a prostitute who turned out to be an orc. Rumor has it he’s been shouting her name in his sleep ever since. Who’s Yolke? He’s the duke’s stableman, over at that table. See him? The scrawny one...”

“Weird, how does Yolke have money for prostitutes and drinks? Isn’t he in debt to your boss?”

“.....”

An hour passed, and Cheng Shi was so absorbed in the stories that, if not for the pocket watch’s alarm, he would’ve happily kept listening.

This was way more fun than the trial itself.

What? You’re asking how a socially anxious person can enjoy this kind of interaction?

Well, social anxiety... social terrorist... same thing, right?

But a trial is still a trial, and having found no anomalies, Cheng Shi reluctantly returned to meet up with his teammates.

When the six players gathered back at the table, everyone had a serious expression.

Except for Cheng Shi.

He was having the time of his life.

“Why the long faces? Did anyone find any issues?”

Ah-Ming pursed his lips and shook his head, Fang Shiqing frowned in thought, and even Huang Bo, who’d been scratching his head all this time, sat quietly with his head down, deep in thought.

“Based on past trials, there should be some subtle but noticeable inconsistencies in the memory scene. However, Xu Lu and I eavesdropped on nearly all the tables, including upstairs, and we didn’t notice any NPC behavior that was too ‘forced.’ Everything seemed normal—too normal, in fact, for a memory.”

“I feel the same. I even used my talent to sense their emotions—calm and orderly, not like people in a memory.”

“You can read minds?” Cheng Shi asked, intrigued.

Ah Ming quickly shook his head. “No, no, it’s more of a vague feeling. I can’t explain the specifics.”

Cheng Shi nodded and turned his gaze to Fang Shiqing. He suspected that the curly-haired teacher also had a similar, perhaps stronger, ability.

Seeing Cheng Shi looking at her, Fang Shiqing asked, “And you?”

“Me? I didn’t find anything out of the ordinary, but I did pick up a lot of gossip. Want to hear some?”

“.....” Remembering Cheng Shi’s earlier “knowledge,” Fang Shiqing twitched her lips and quickly turned to the others.

“Huang Bo?”

“Ugh... headache... there’s nothing! There shouldn’t be anything!”

Fang Shiqing and Cheng Shi both furrowed their brows, the same thought crossing their minds:

Damn, this guy’s a follower of [Chaos].