

The Gods 23

Chapter 23: The Lion-Dancing Dwarves

Not long after, Cheng Shi bumped into Bai Ling, who was walking down from the rows of seats, her face flushed.

He glanced up and down at the [Corruption] follower, seemingly trying to gauge how things had gone.

Unfortunately, Bai Ling had tidied herself up well, showing no signs of what had transpired.

“Big shot, did you find anything?”

“I found one of your peers.”

Bai Ling didn't seem particularly surprised, though she still feigned shock, covering her mouth as she said, “Are they as skilled as I am?”

“?”

Cheng Shi felt his face heat up, realizing he was outmatched in this conversation. He promptly shifted the topic. “Let's not go there. Did you discover anything noteworthy?”

The moment the question left his mouth, he regretted it—after all, Bai Ling hadn't been investigating.

But to his surprise, Bai Ling actually seemed to have found something.

She licked her lips, her flushed face still radiant. Pointing to her face, she smiled coyly and asked:

“Do you think I'd have found anything?”

She was lying.

Cheng Shi smiled brightly and said:

“To be honest, you’re not very good at lying. Or maybe it’s just that you’re bad at hiding your thoughts. Let’s get straight to the matter, we’re short on time.”

Bai Ling’s expression froze for a moment before she squinted and laughed.

“The big shot lives up to his name. Your observation skills are excellent.”

I’ve got better skills, but I can’t tell you that.

Cheng Shi winked at her, signaling to get to the point and save time.

Understanding his gesture, Bai Ling pointed in a direction and said:

“I found a few men that we saw earlier at the tavern. Maybe there’s a clue among them.”

“?”

Cheng Shi looked at the vast audience, frowning.

Finding the same individuals in adjacent memories was indeed significant. Sometimes, memory owners recalled a previous scene because they recognized someone from that earlier memory.

This was often how players solved memory trials, tracing connections between people to find the next clue.

Even if the connection between two memory layers wasn’t deep, any lead was better than none.

Cheng Shi understood the logic. But the problem was, how had Bai Ling managed to find those particular people so quickly in such a crowded audience?

Bai Ling noticed Cheng Shi's doubt and, with a playful smile, extended a finger, tapping him on the forehead, and then pointing to her ample chest.

Following her "guidance"...

Gulp.

Wow, that's... big.

Seeing Cheng Shi's wide-eyed stare, Bai Ling chuckled slyly.

"Come on, big shot, don't pretend. My talent allows me to sense men's desire for me, down to how much they covet each inch of my skin. You clearly don't feel anything for me, so why are you acting all flustered?"

"Wait, what? That's an actual talent?"

Cheng Shi, realizing she had him figured out, didn't feel embarrassed. He cleared his throat and looked away with a click of his tongue.

"Wasn't pretending. I mean, who doesn't appreciate beauty?"

"Pitying me?" Bai Ling blinked her eyes, her seductive demeanor shifting to one of innocence.

"Pity? Who's pitying who?" Cheng Shi laughed lightly. "Maybe I like men instead?"

Bai Ling burst out laughing, taking a step forward and playfully grabbing his arm.

“If you say it, I’ll believe it, Sister Cheng. Come on, time’s ticking.”

With a face full of awkwardness, Cheng Shi allowed himself to be dragged along for a bit, but eventually, the soft pressure on his arm became unbearable. He struggled free, smiling wryly as he said:

“I was just kidding.”

Bai Ling held on tightly and laughed even more as she teased:

“Don’t worry, little sister here can keep a secret.”

“.....”

Realizing he was getting nowhere, Cheng Shi quickly redirected the conversation:

“Why don’t you confront them yourself and help them break through the memory?”

“Little sister here’s not capable of that. All I can do is lead them into fantasies. The moment I do that, it won’t be just a private show—it’ll be the whole circus acting out an... entirely different performance.”

Cheng Shi knew she was right. If Bai Ling were to manipulate the memory’s owner and induce desires, the memory could easily spiral into chaos.

Once a memory began to unravel, the entire scene could rapidly collapse.

“So, you do care about your life, after all.”

By “you,” he meant followers of [Corruption].

Bai Ling nodded enthusiastically.

“Of course! Only if we’re alive... can we... indulge... in more, right?”

Cheng Shi’s face darkened, mentally filtering out the words that couldn’t be repeated.

When they arrived at the “familiar” faces, Cheng Shi recognized them immediately. They were indeed some of the men who had been drinking and boasting in the tavern memory.

“Mind telling me how you found them?” Cheng Shi asked, genuinely curious. He wanted to know the specifics of Bai Ling’s talent, but instinctively knew that even if he asked, she wouldn’t give a straight answer.

Bai Ling glanced at Cheng Shi, flashing a smile.

“Every man has his preferences. Some like waists, some like legs, and some like...”

Got it.

“And what do you like?” Bai Ling licked her lips, her eyes gleaming.

What do I like?

I like being alive.

Cheng Shi ignored her and silently approached the targets, casting hypnosis spells on each one.

However, after questioning all of them, none turned out to be the memory core.

Both of their expressions darkened.

“These guys were definitely within the waiter’s line of sight. If none of them are the key, then could the waiter have recalled something else—maybe an object triggering the previous memory?”

If it was an object, that would make things much harder.

For the same reason as before—the place was just too big.

“Let’s inform the others and narrow down the search area,” Cheng Shi sighed, feeling a bit defeated.

He spent some time calling Fang Shiqing and the others back. She and Xu Lu had been investigating the VIP seats, which turned out to be a dead end.

Ah Ming, on the other hand, hesitated before confessing that some of the audience members appeared to be engaging in... “intimate transactions” with certain special service workers.

The group treated it as a funny story and quickly moved on.

Encounters like this were too common to be shocking anymore.

Compared to the chaos in the VIP section, the audience in the regular seats was much more orderly.

After their first exchange of information, Fang Shiqing frowned and said:

“Let’s keep searching. The memory core must be somewhere in the regular audience. The fact that the performance hasn’t been interrupted means the memory’s owner is still fixated on watching the show. Focus on the spectators who are paying close attention to the performance. We’ll split up again and meet back in an hour.”

“Sounds good.”

“Whatever the big shot says.”

“No objections here.”

The team split up quickly, and Cheng Shi once again found himself wandering through the rows of seats alone.

Frowning, he ignored his assigned area and started moving between the seats, as if searching for a particular target.

He was looking for that “dwarf-assembled orc woman.”

Fang Shiqing’s earlier deduction had reminded him: if someone hadn’t interacted with the “dwarf-assembled orc,” then Cheng Shi wouldn’t have been able to see the dwarves putting on the orc skin.

Therefore, the memory owner of this layer must have had some interaction with the “dwarf-assembled orc” and even knew she wasn’t a single individual.

Who would continue interacting with someone, knowing full well they weren’t a normal service provider?

Cheng Shi swore that, with his relatively normal brain, he couldn’t figure out the answer.

But not knowing didn’t mean he couldn’t search.

So, he began hunting for the orc woman.

The circus was chaotic, with people coming and going without any particular order. The regular audience section was filled with shouts and laughter, much like the tavern scene before it.

Cheng Shi’s movements went largely unnoticed in all the commotion.

It didn't take him long to find his target—the "dwarf-assembled orc."

At that moment, "she" was wriggling and cuddling up to an audience member.

Literally wriggling.

Cheng Shi was dumbfounded. He wanted to get closer to observe what exactly they were doing, but then he noticed someone nearby who made him smile in recognition.

Yolke.

The stableman the tavern patrons had gossiped about, the one who suddenly came into money and slept with the orc woman.

Cheng Shi smirked, realizing he was onto something.

"Ah, I found it."

Yolke was wearing a straw hat, hiding his eyes. His gaze kept shifting between two spots—one was the stage, and the other was the location where the orc woman was.

In fact, it wasn't just him. Many of the audience members were sneaking glances in that direction, though the orc woman's subtle movements and quiet demeanor kept the situation from causing too much of a stir.

But while other spectators were ogling her chest, waist, legs, and hips, Yolke's gaze remained fixed on her face, his eyes overflowing with affection.

"..."

Brother, can you please explain how you fell for these five “lion-dancing” dwarves?

Cheng Shi observed him for a while, his confusion growing by the minute. Finally, unable to hold back, he sidled up to Yolke, pretending to be just another audience member, and sighed deliberately:

“Why only female orc services? They should broaden gender options, don’t you think?”