

## The Gods 24

### Chapter 24: Everyone Has Their Own Preferences

As soon as the words left his mouth, a chorus of murmured agreements rippled through the crowd.

Yolke turned his head in surprise, his expression lighting up as if he had found a kindred spirit.

But in an instant, that joyful look turned sharp, his gaze toward Cheng Shi now resembling that of a man glaring at a romantic rival.

“Hiss—”

This Yolke fellow sure had a story to tell.

What kind of encounter could have led to such a... situation?

Cheng Shi didn't really want to dig deeper into it. He felt that he had already found the answer to the puzzle.

Of course, whether or not his answer was correct remained to be seen.

Without hesitation, he rose and headed back toward Bai Ling.

“Finally decided to grace me with your presence, big shot?”

“Stop messing around. I need a favor.”

Cheng Shi was still pondering how to trick her into testing Yolke without revealing too much, but before he could formulate a plan, Bai Ling smiled and nodded.

“Sure! What do you need me to do?”

“?” Cheng Shi was taken aback. “Aren’t you afraid I’m going to trick you?”

“That would just mean there’s something about me that caught your eye, wouldn’t it?”

Tsk tsk, anyone who had survived this long, regardless of their points, was no fool.

At least, that saved him some effort.

Cheng Shi nodded and pointed toward Yolke. “Go test out that man.”

“How do you want me to test him? Verbally, or... physically?” Bai Ling asked, her eyes twinkling mischievously.

Cheng Shi’s eyes widened in confusion. “Wait, there’s a difference?”

Bai Ling giggled and began tracing her fingers along his chest, whispering, “A verbal test would be...”

As she spoke, her hand drifted toward the hem of her skirt, slowly lifting it up to her thigh...

“Alright, alright! Verbal test! Let’s not waste time. Go do it now!” Cheng Shi, alarmed, hurriedly pulled her skirt back down and urged her to go.

Bai Ling chuckled softly and sauntered over to Yolke with her usual grace.

But it didn’t take long before she returned, her face dark as a storm cloud.

Cheng Shi, holding back laughter, asked, “What happened? Ran into trouble?”

Bai Ling shot him a glare and growled, “I’ve got some bad news... and more bad news. Which one do you want first?”

Did that even need to be asked?

Cheng Shi couldn't help but laugh. "Let's hear the second one first."

"The guy competing with me for business is, in fact, a fellow practitioner."

"?"

Wait, what? No, hold on a second!

Seeing the seriousness in Bai Ling's expression, Cheng Shi's heart sank.

By "fellow practitioner," she didn't mean someone in the same line of business—she meant another [Corruption] follower!

The five dwarves forming the "lion dance" were actually followers of [Corruption]!

"And the other bad news?" Cheng Shi's face grew solemn.

"The man you had me test—he's already been enchanted. He's become a 'Desire Puppet.'"

Cheng Shi frowned in confusion, prompting Bai Ling to explain:

"A 'Desire Puppet' is an A-rank talent granted by Him, one that unleashes a target's deepest primal desires, turning them into mindless slaves of lust and indulgence.

He'll remain trapped in his past memories of desire, completely losing himself until he dies.

This talent requires continuous casting, which means that if he's the memory core, the reason he's recalling this scene isn't due to any natural connection—it's because he's being controlled. In fact, it's very likely he's still being actively controlled.

Big shot, do you understand what this means?

If he really is the answer, the moment we exit this memory, we'll be facing a [Corruption] follower who's controlling him. And we'll probably have to fight."

Cheng Shi's expression darkened further.

"Call the others. I have a gut feeling that Yolke is the key."

Bai Ling trusted Cheng Shi's instincts, but she still couldn't resist asking:

"Oh? So, no more pretending?"

Cheng Shi feigned ignorance, putting on an act:

"Pretending? What do you mean? You're the one who found the answer while... 'hunting,' right? What's that got to do with me?"

"?" Bai Ling was furious, her eyes widening as she pointed at herself repeatedly. "Me? Hunting? Please, big shot, does he even count as prey?"

Cheng Shi waved her off. "Who knows? Everyone's got their own personal preferences."

"...Alright, alright! I 'hunted' him!"

Bai Ling laughed in exasperation, using the excuse to gather everyone.

As soon as the group reassembled, Fang Shiqing immediately set her sights on Cheng Shi, but he deliberately stayed out of the conversation, clearly waiting for Bai Ling to tell her tale.

Though still irritated, Bai Ling was an honest person.

Blushing slightly, she recounted her “hunting” process, admitting that she had stumbled upon the answer by accident. However, the situation was now... complicated.

Everyone’s reactions were mixed after hearing her story.

Xu Lu looked disgusted, while Ah Ming was left speechless.

Internally, Cheng Shi gave Bai Ling a mental thumbs-up for her performance.

Only Fang Shiqing was deep in thought. After a long pause, she asked the key question:

“How can we be sure it’s him?”

Bai Ling remained silent, prompting Cheng Shi to laugh and say, “Maybe it’s a woman’s intuition?”

Bai Ling rolled her eyes but didn’t respond. Fang Shiqing, however, nodded, seemingly accepting that Yolke was indeed the answer.

She wasn’t trusting Bai Ling—she was trusting Cheng Shi.

“I’ve got a page in my book from a [War] follower containing ‘Mist Magic.’ It’ll help us cover the spawn point in fog when we enter the next memory, blocking the caster’s view.

But since I don't have enough defensive magic, the priest will need to enter second and provide quick healing support.

The assassin will follow third, but remember—if we're not sure the target is the memory core, don't go for the kill. Subdue him first.

If our lives are at risk, retreat takes priority over fighting!

Be cautious with any skills that could cause a major disturbance. We don't want the memory to start unraveling right away!"

After laying out the plan, Fang Shiqing looked at Cheng Shi meaningfully and asked:

"Can you handle it?"

Cheng Shi blinked innocently, as if saying, How can a man not handle it?

Fang Shiqing understood his look and smiled knowingly before turning her gaze to Ah Ming.

Ah Ming nodded seriously in acknowledgment.

She then consulted the others. While Xu Lu seemed a bit skeptical about keeping up with Fang Shiqing, Bai Ling naturally had no objections.

The plan was set, and the group made their way toward Yolke.

Just as the "orc woman" was about to make her rounds to Yolke's row, the players closed in around him.

Yolke, caught up in the moment, didn't notice the players approaching. His gaze was fixed solely on the "dwarf-assembled orc woman," with no room for anything else.

He clutched a wad of cash in his hand, desperate to stuff it into the orc woman's ample bosom.

Cheng Shi, still puzzled, leaned over to Bai Ling and whispered:

"Can His followers influence someone's preferences?"

Bai Ling thought for a moment before replying uncertainly:

"Him? He encourages the release of one's deepest desires, not the distortion of someone's will. So, when you say someone's been 'corrupted' by Him, it's really just a way of revealing that person's true nature.

But with the right talents, it's possible to guide them toward certain desires.

After all, you can hypnotize others, right?"

Cheng Shi nodded in agreement. Otherwise, he couldn't explain how Yolke's preferences had become so... flexible.

As they approached Yolke, Fang Shiqing pulled a gray-black page from her book. She glanced back at Cheng Shi, signaling it was time to act.

Without hesitation, Cheng Shi cast a calming spell on Yolke, followed by hypnosis. For good measure, he also cast an accelerated recovery spell on a nearby audience member who was engaged in a transaction, hoping to buy them a few extra seconds.

Fang Shiqing seized the opportunity and spoke:

"Don't be afraid. Listen to me. This is all just a memory. But you're exhausted, aren't you? You don't want to keep reliving this. Remember, memories are just that—memories. They're not reality. Now, it's time to return to the real world, okay?"

Yolke's eyes grew hazy and vacant. Nodding repeatedly, he murmured:

"Memories... these are all... memories."

With his final word, Yolke's entire form shattered into countless points of light before converging into a new Memory Gate.

"It's him, after all!"

"Miss Bai Ling, well done!"

"....."

"Are we ready? I'll go in first, Cheng Shi second, assassin third. Let's make this quick."

Without hesitation, Fang Shiqing darted through the gate.

To ensure nothing happened to her, Cheng Shi followed closely behind, stepping through the gate just after her.

The moment he entered, his vision was filled with thick, impenetrable gray-black fog. Panicked screams echoed in the distance.

Shit, it's this foggy? How am I supposed to know where Big Sis is?

Cheng Shi frowned. Just as he was about to call Fang Shiqing's name, a cold hand clamped over his mouth, dragging him forward.

"Big Sis?"

“Shh!”