

The Gods 251

Chapter 251: This Position — It Should Rightfully Be Yours

At the top of the stairway wasn't another stretch of Void — it was a magnificent golden palace.

Bizarre didn't begin to describe it. At the terminus of the Chaos Steps stood a palace more grand and imposing than any structure in existence.

Its gates rose to invisible heights. One glance was all it took for Cheng Shi to feel an endless oppressive force bearing down from every direction.

This was the first time he'd ever felt truly small before a Deity.

Whether it was the two different pairs of eyes belonging to [Void], or the colossal skull atop the torrent of white bones — though those Gods stood far above, they carried enough human quality that Cheng Shi felt only fear in their gaze, never the insignificance of humanity.

[Memory] went without saying — now whenever He was mentioned, all Cheng Shi's mind conjured was the image of his boss...

That feeling was like a nightmare that refused to go away.

So when he arrived outside [Chaos]'s temple and truly recognized the gulf between mortal and divine — that humans were nothing more than dust beneath a God's feet — his knees buckled.

Both physically and mentally.

He couldn't imagine what the Being standing — or sitting — inside that palace might look like. If he'd known that an audience with [Chaos] would be like this, he'd have stocked up on adult diapers before coming and strapped one on in advance.

"..."

'Forget it. Sticking your neck out gets it cut. Hiding your neck gets it cut. Nothing to be scared of.'

Cheng Shi gritted his teeth, puffed out his chest, lifted his head, and walked inside.

But the moment he stepped into the hall — its divine inscriptions etched in graffiti-like scrawls — he didn't see any unbearable-to-behold God. Instead, he saw a person. Someone who shouldn't have been here — and yet somehow belonged here all the same.

When Cheng Shi recognized the human face smiling and bowing to him from the side of the hall, his spine went rigid and he froze in place.

"Lord Ultraman. It's been a long time."

"It's you..." Cheng Shi's eyes went wide, disbelief flooding his voice. "You're actually... you're really... you're also His... envoy?"

"I haven't had that honor, Lord Ultraman — because the position I've been standing in should rightfully belong to you!"

"!!!"

Cheng Shi was shocked.

Because the one standing in this Chaos Temple and speaking with him was none other than Kataro — one of the [Chaos] seedling followers who had vanished from the [Prosperity]-protected Eternal Bloom Town. A junior of the Tower of Logic scholar Ardos, and a scholar who had likewise turned himself into a flesh puppet!

Chernosly had once told Cheng Shi that Kataro would prove Cheng Shi's innocence at the right moment.

But after Cheng Shi returned to the inn, Kataro had disappeared. What's more, during the final stretch of that [Death] trial, Cheng Shi himself had impersonated Kataro to get thrown into jail.

So encountering him here, in [Chaos]'s audience chamber, naturally made Cheng Shi suspect this wasn't really him — but rather Him.

"Belong to... me?"

Cheng Shi was lost again.

Truthfully, it wasn't that he didn't want the title of [Chaos] envoy — he was afraid he couldn't carry it. From start to finish, he'd only dared joke about it, never dared actually claim it.

Even after learning it was an identity [Deceit] had bestowed upon him, without [Chaos]'s explicit confirmation, he still wouldn't make a move.

But now, hearing what Kataro was saying...

What was happening?

A new employee who just walked in the door gets promoted straight to the board without going through any process?

"Wait, hold on..." Seeing only a human in the hall and no God, Cheng Shi's backbone somehow returned. He frowned, thinking and asking simultaneously: "You're saying I am His envoy? Ultraman? He's confirmed it?"

Kataro smiled and nodded firmly:

"You always have been. From the moment you struck [Chaos]'s very first note across the Land of Hope, your identity was sealed."

"Then why were you standing in my spot?"

"..."

Kataro was taken aback too. He hadn't expected the Lord Envoy's thoughts to be this erratic. But he didn't stay stunned for long — he immediately walked Cheng Shi over, placed him in the spot where he'd been standing, and positioned himself below the dais with a smile.

'Hss—'

'That doesn't seem fake!'

'I'm really the envoy now?'

'That simple?'

'He doesn't need to sign off?'

'Besides, I don't even feel [Chaos]'s divine power flowing through me.'

Cheng Shi's beady eyes darted around the hall. Finding no second person — and no God — he leaned forward and whispered:

"What's... your story? Didn't you turn yourself into a puppet? How are you here?"

Back in Eternal Bloom Town, when I returned to the inn, I couldn't find you anywhere..."

Cheng Shi's question was laced with suspicion. Kataro didn't mind the bluntness and replied respectfully:

"Yes — at that time, I was indeed a puppet. Per Chernosly's plan, I was supposed to commit another killing while you were in prison to clear your name. But it seemed you had a better plan, so I quietly slipped away.

I thought if you weren't in danger, there might still be a use for me later.

What I didn't expect was that you were different from us. So... when you left that 'trial,' because you yourself were missing from history, [Memory] — following its aesthetic — automatically filled in that gap, patching the hole left by your disappearance.

And I was the lucky one whom our patron woke and pushed onto the stage."

[Memory]!

Cheng Shi's gaze sharpened. He hadn't anticipated this explanation.

"[Memory] intervened too?"

"It wasn't truly Him — it was... I can't say more. You can understand it as the divine power He left behind within a certain Agreement!"

The moment Kataro finished speaking, a word surfaced in Cheng Shi's mind — a word that ordinary players shouldn't know: the Convention!

So it was the [Memory] force within the Convention that had filled in the historical gap!

It turned out that historically, Ultraman had indeed always existed — just not as Cheng Shi himself, but as a substitute patching a hole in history.

It was Kataro who had been exercising the privileges of [Chaos]'s envoy on his behalf!

No wonder he was standing here.

Still...

"You know about trials?"

Oh, right — we're not in a trial at the moment. Come to think of it, this is my first time meeting someone from the Land of Hope outside of a trial.

So... are you aware that the Land of Hope has already been destroyed in history?"

Kataro smiled. "In the mortal dimension, it has indeed faded. But in Their eyes, the universe has never changed."

"Tsk. You sound less like a scholar now and more like a con man."

"Ah... different routes, same destination."

Indeed — different routes, same destination. Only these two roles approached their respective Deities through different means.

That single remark earned Cheng Shi's profound respect for Kataro.

This old acquaintance seemed to have achieved enlightenment. His level of faith had risen to a genuinely impressive height.

As they chatted, Cheng Shi gradually relaxed. He surveyed the hall once more and asked:

"This is really His temple?"

Uh... no disrespect intended — ahem, just curious — isn't it a bit too... orderly in here?"

Kataro answered with an enigmatic smile:

"My Lord, this 'order' you speak of — on what basis do you define it?"

Cheng Shi blinked, then gestured at everything around him:

"How is this not orderly? I felt every kind of chaos on those divine steps below, but here...

Look — regular spaces, symmetrical pillars, complementary engravings. This is practically more orderly than the Grand Trib— ahem, it's definitely orderly.

Isn't it?"

"My Lord, if we go by humanity's understanding of order on the Land of Hope, then yes — you're absolutely right."

"?" The words hit Cheng Shi's brain like a thunderclap — "Bzzzz—" — and something clicked.

But Kataro was already offering his explanation:

"However, at the scale of the entire universe — or higher still, in the eyes of all the Gods — human order may hold no meaning whatsoever."

Just listen to that — the single most blasphemous statement ever uttered against [Order]!