

## The Gods 258

### Chapter 258: Speculations on Gods and Authorities

With great power comes great responsibility. That phrase wasn't always true, but in certain circumstances it served as a useful reference.

Such as right now.

Going from a single-faith follower to a dual-faith coexistence without any initiative on his part might not actually be fortunate at all.

Since he hadn't prayed for this himself, someone must have engineered the outcome.

So after the initial shock faded, Cheng Shi calmed down and began analyzing his two patrons' intentions.

Clearly, after [Deceit] compromised, [Fate] had chosen to compromise as well.

The reason for [Deceit]'s compromise remained unknown. As for [Fate]'s — it definitely wasn't because [Deceit] had stopped smiling...

Cheng Shi was more inclined to believe that [Fate] was concealing His true purpose — one that perhaps players were neither meant nor allowed to know.

So what did They actually want?

[Deceit]'s push for Faith Fusion was self-evident — He'd personally admitted it. While His words couldn't be taken entirely at face value, using this as a logical starting point did help make sense of certain things Cheng Shi had observed.

For instance, [Deceit] had deliberately arranged for him to get close to [Chaos] — turning him into [Chaos]'s envoy, or more practically, giving him an opening to approach [Chaos].

But what puzzled Cheng Shi was: was the goal fusion, or theft?

[Deceit]'s talents did include some with a [Chaos] leaning. Cheng Shi had always assumed these were stolen authorities. But now, reconsidering — what if they hadn't been stolen but... traded?

Was [Deceit] exchanging authorities with [Chaos]?

The two didn't appear hostile — at least not from everything Cheng Shi had seen and heard. [Chaos] had never denied [Deceit]'s methods and had even offered Cheng Shi a choice.

But why?

Wasn't the fundamental nature of the Gods to steal each other's authorities?

Cheng Shi frowned deeply, tracing the words "theft," "exchange," and "fusion" on the ground with his finger. As he wrote, a flash of inspiration struck:

'Theft, exchange, and fusion all share the same essential purpose — allowing Them to possess other Gods' authorities. So the goal isn't theft at all. It's...'

'Expansion!?!'

At this thought, Cheng Shi recalled what [Deceit] had said during their very first audience:

'To become a god!'

At the time, Cheng Shi had been puzzled about who was trying to become a god. But looking back now — was it possible that the Gods were expanding their authorities in order to become Gods?

They were already gods, yes — but the division of authorities meant none of Them was omniscient or omnipotent!

So through theft, plunder, exchange, and fusion, They sought to become that higher-level, all-knowing, all-powerful God!

Was it possible!?

It was!

Cheng Shi's eyes gleamed — but he sighed almost immediately:

"Sigh. These are all just my wild guesses. There's simply too little information about Them."

Moreover, this hypothesis had one fatal flaw: [Fate]'s choice.

He seemed resistant to [Deceit]'s gravitation toward [Chaos].

Why?

[Fate] had consistently pushed Cheng Shi away from [Chaos]. That meant He had no intention of acquiring [Chaos]'s authority. But according to the reasoning above, if He wanted to "advance," He shouldn't — couldn't — reject [Chaos]'s authority.

Unless He... didn't want to "advance." Didn't want to become that omniscient, omnipotent god!

But if He didn't want that, why had He planted such a massive setup in the trial's final moments — linking Galusha's death to Cheng Shi?

Cheng Shi didn't know Galusha well. Even now, he still wasn't sure about her faith alignment.

Based on the history he knew, the faction that toppled the Tower of Logic was the Afterglow Church. So Galusha most likely followed [Chaos]. But following [Fate]'s trajectory made it clear she couldn't be

[Chaos] — otherwise He could have simply left the slices alone and had no need to rush Cheng Shi through the [Chaos] extrapolation so quickly.

So who did Galusha follow?

In that era, the forces capable of overthrowing the surface alongside the premeditated Afterglow Church were limited to: the desire-indulgent [Corruption], the all-destroying [Oblivion], and the ever-contemptuous... [Folly]!

Neither [Corruption] nor [Oblivion] seemed to fit Galusha's profile. So — did she follow [Folly]?

Was [Fate]'s choice... [Folly]!?

Did He want Cheng Shi to forge a connection with [Folly]?

Not impossible.

Then what did the coexistence with [Deceit] mean? Was it possible that these two [Void] gods had diverged in their path to "godhood" — one choosing [Chaos], the other [Folly]?

In His eyes, was the ideal first fusion partner beyond [Void]... [Folly]?

"Can't figure it out. Can't see through it. But this needs to be noted. Next time I get a teammate who knows history, I need to ask about the period when Galusha destroyed the Tower of Logic."

After several hours of exhaustive contemplation, Cheng Shi was forced to shut down his overloaded brain and take a break.

He'd wanted to chat with Xie Yang across the way — maybe hear about his love life — but Xie Yang had poked his head out and promptly vanished. Looked like he'd gone on another date.

With nothing better to do, Cheng Shi resorted to playing with his shadow.

He gazed at the shadow before him and slowly extended a finger. The moment his mind focused on switching faiths, the shadow peeled off the ground like a mirror image and reached up with its own dark finger.

Fingertip to fingertip. Faith swapped.

Cheng Shi switched back to [Fate].

The sensation was fascinating. Grinning, he extended his hand again — but this time he didn't touch the shadow's finger. At the very last instant of contact, he pulled away.

The shadow's finger froze visibly for a split second, then snapped back into the ground like a startled animal.

This piqued Cheng Shi's interest.

He kept reaching out and pulling away, reaching out and pulling away. The shadow kept peeling off the floor and shrinking back, peeling off and shrinking back. After five or six rounds, the shadow had had enough.

Yes — had enough. It extended a middle finger at Cheng Shi.

"..."

Cheng Shi was stunned speechless by the "insult."

'What is happening? My shadow has self-awareness?'

'That doesn't seem right. Unless it's because the faith it's currently carrying is... [Deceit]?'

'Hm?'

Cheng Shi blinked in bewilderment, then extended his own middle finger to meet the shadow's. The touch functioned normally — faith toggled back to [Deceit].

He had a hypothesis. So he performed the same theatrics again — and sure enough, after being toyed with countless times, [Fate]'s shadow never once raised a middle finger. Though its responses did grow... increasingly sluggish.

Watching this, Cheng Shi laughed.

'Interesting. Shadows carrying different faiths actually retain a trace of the God's will?'

'If so, I just gained one more tiny source of entertainment to kill time.'

'Praise be— actually, forget it. I just got cursed out. What am I praising?'