

## The Gods 299

Chapter 299: This Is Bad—I've Been Tricked!

Cheng Shi was stunned. He could tell Hong Lin wasn't testing him—she genuinely needed the Concentration spell to sharpen her focus. But the problem was...

'Sis, I'm a Hero of Today!'

'I can't just switch faiths for a single Concentration spell...'

But sometimes reality was exactly like that. You never knew what absurd reason would push you forward.

Right now, with only two of them left and both facing a common enemy, Cheng Shi couldn't afford not to cast Concentration. He couldn't let a trivial spell create a new crack in their otherwise solid partnership, or stir up suspicion.

So if switching faith was the price of preserving their alliance and cooperation... well, when he thought about it that way, it was much easier to swallow!

'Sigh, that's the only way to comfort myself...'

Cheng Shi's lips twitched. He nodded, and the moment Hong Lin turned back to monitor Eposka, he secretly reached out and touched his shadow. But that single touch made his mind detonate.

"What's wrong?"

The giant bear frowned. Seeing Cheng Shi frozen in place for so long, a faint sliver of suspicion crept in. This subtle doubt might not damage the friendship they'd just built, but Hong Lin was genuinely curious about Cheng Shi's true identity.

According to Tao Yi, Cheng Shi was supposed to be a Priest. He'd even admitted to being a Fate Weaver. But throughout this entire trial, he hadn't displayed a single hint of priestly talent—if anything, he behaved more like a Warrior who was both physically and mentally capable.

She knew certain faiths had special talents that allowed class changes. So she wondered—was the Fate Weaver identity also a lie?

Was he still deceiving her?!

But just as this suspicion grew with Cheng Shi's prolonged stillness, he finally moved. He raised his hand and cast Concentration on the giant bear—and not just Concentration, but also Spirit Spell, Anti-Interference, a faint Resistance Shield, and a Healing spell infused with shared divine grace.

Feeling these genuine restorative energies, Hong Lin blinked: "You really are a Fate Weaver?"

Cheng Shi ignored her, brow furrowed tightly.

Hong Lin assumed her suspicion had annoyed him and sheepishly pursed her lips, then channeled all her embarrassment and frustration into the oncoming Eposka.

The two colossal beings crashed together once more. But this time the giant bear grabbed the tree spirit by the legs and started slamming it against the ground like a broom.

As spectacular as the fight was, Cheng Shi couldn't afford to watch. Right now, only one thought consumed his mind—why had his shadow changed?

Yes—Cheng Shi's shadow had changed!

The instant he'd made contact with it, he'd sensed something fundamentally different from before.

Before the trial, when he switched faiths through the shadow, its response had been fluid and responsive, carrying a faint whisper of divine will within it.

But just now, his shadow had become mechanical. Emotionless. Nothing more than a stiff, lifeless faith converter, stripped of all its former vitality.

Why had this change occurred?!

Every change had consequences for what lay ahead—and this one had happened to his own body!

So he cast Concentration on himself as well, then focused intensely, trying to figure out what had gone wrong.

First, he ruled out the trial as a factor. Yesterday in the Sighing Forest, when he'd been about to switch faith to save the Puppet Master, his shadow had still felt responsive. But today, that responsiveness was gone.

So what had happened in between to cause this shift?

Cheng Shi meticulously replayed every event and detail between the two switches, yet found no clues. The only major variable was the Dream Peeping Ranger invading his dream and dying inside it. But the Ranger had also entered his dream on the first night, and the switch the next day hadn't shown any issues.

He racked his brains to no avail. In frustration, he began toggling his shadow switch again and again—seven or eight times—until he was certain it wasn't his imagination. The shadow had gone dull.

But how could a shadow change on its own, when nothing had changed about him and nobody had come into contact with it—

'No! Wait!'

'Contact?!'

Cheng Shi's pupils contracted. He suddenly realized he'd overlooked something—it wasn't true that nobody had touched his shadow!

The Puppet Master!

No—the historian puppet controlled by that Puppet Master he'd found so strange had indeed made contact with his shadow!

The historian had even used Cheng Shi's own shadow to perform Shadow Shuttle to dodge his attack!

'Was it her?!'

'That Puppet Master?'

'Did she discover something abnormal about his shadow?'

'Had she seen it yesterday, when he switched faiths?'

'Wait—that still doesn't add up!'

Cheng Shi stretched his memory further back and recalled a scene from the morning of the second day. Before departure, while everyone had gathered at the Altar, the historian had been right beside him, head lowered, seemingly searching for something. At the time, Cheng Shi had assumed the man was simply curious about the Altar's design and materials. But now, looking back...

'Could he have been searching for my shadow even then?!'

Cheng Shi's expression darkened.

'This is bad. I've been tricked!'

'That Puppet Master might be no ordinary person!'

Even if she truly knew Zhen Yi, and Zhen Yi had told her about him—his shadow-switching talent was something he'd acquired after all of that. How could she possibly have known about it, let alone developed an interest in his shadow?

It defied common sense and logic.

But it was perfectly consistent with how a con artist would think!

Cheng Shi's gaze sharpened. He glanced at the battlefield from the corner of his eye, confirmed he was safe for the moment, and set his mind racing at full speed.

He began adopting Zhen Yi's perspective, starting from when she'd obtained all of his surface-level memories, and used a swindler's logic to reverse-engineer her thoughts and objectives.

And the first thing that came to mind was that prophecy—the one that had cost the Chosen Ones their rankings:

"Sun and moon alternate, above the real and unreal—the future has arrived!"

After that trial where they'd fooled Grand Marshal Hu Wei and Xiao Bai, Cheng Shi had always believed the "future has arrived" was nothing more than a farce—that the Blind One had simply foreseen Zhen Yi impersonating him. But now, re-examining it in light of the current situation, was it possible that it hadn't been a farce at all?

When the logical foundation shifted, details he'd once taken as certainties suddenly took on entirely different meanings.

For instance—Grand Marshal Hu Wei's unusual attention toward him.

His good brother had claimed at the time that he'd received a prayer-vision containing clues related to the prophecy. But ever since that "history lesson" at the Void Experimental Site, Hu Wei had lurked in the shadows, monitoring everyone, even appearing at the scene the instant Cheng Shi made contact with Xiao Bai. If it was merely about "related clues," why was he so fixated on Cheng Shi specifically?

They'd already been at the Tower of Logic's Void Experimental Site. Was he certain there were no clues in his surroundings?

No—perhaps he hadn't needed to bother with the surroundings at all. What if his prayer-vision had pointed him toward a person connected to the prophecy?

After all, a person could count as a clue too, so it wasn't technically a lie!

And that would explain why Hu Wei had kept his eyes locked on Cheng Shi and Yan Chun. As expected, that so-called prophecy had likely been pointing straight at him all along.

But within that trial—the one supposedly where the prophecy was fulfilled—where exactly was the "future"?

His own "future" had been fabricated by Zhen Yi in disguise. The residents and Divine Envoy of Far Dusk Town couldn't see the future at all. Only one person had caught a vague glimpse of the future—Hu Xuan, who had been acknowledged by [Birth].

But Hu Xuan had absolutely nothing to do with his shadow. So, logically, this Puppet Master who claimed to know Zhen Yi had no reason whatsoever to touch his shadow!