

The Gods 35

Chapter 35: [Deceit]

Cheng Shi opened his eyes and realized he wasn't on the rooftop.

His heart skipped a beat, and his first thought was: Could I have been wrong? Was Xu Lu telling the truth after all?

But as he became aware of his surroundings—floating amidst a starry sky, with the entire universe spread out above him—he quickly cast aside that notion.

He wasn't wrong.

His body had been transported by a mysterious power.

He had heard about this power from other players in previous trials.

Supposedly, when a [God] favored one of their followers, they could descend in a form understandable to humans and summon them at the end of a trial.

“Holy crap, this is real?”

Cheng Shi's mind buzzed with disbelief.

He'd always thought his fellow players had been joking when they mentioned such divine encounters.

But now, as he held his breath and gazed at the dazzling stars above, searching for his patron among them, a pair of colossal, terrifying eyes suddenly opened in front of him.

The sheer intensity of the gaze struck him like a tidal wave, hitting his soul directly, leaving him paralyzed.

Compared to these eyes—black as a void, with swirling galaxies in the pupils—Cheng Shi felt like a mere speck of dust floating in an endless universe.

“Thump—thump—thump.”

His heart pounded in his chest.

He could feel his heartbeat speeding up, quickly syncing with the rhythm of the void beneath the stars. Within a few short breaths, he began to lose all sensation of being “human.”

As if his soul had left his body.

In shock, Cheng Shi looked down and saw that his physical form had indeed been left behind—his body hanging limp, expressionless.

Meanwhile, his current form—transparent and ethereal—drifted like a spirit.

Only then did the overwhelming fear and pressure begin to dissipate. Cheng Shi gradually regained control of his consciousness.

And at that moment, from the eye before him—an eye painted with spirals and scattered stars—came a cold, unchanging voice that seemed to echo from eternity.

“Cheng. Shi.”

This sound was unlike anything Cheng Shi had ever heard before; just hearing it made him feel as though he would be absorbed into nothingness.

His instinct was to tremble. Glancing down, he saw that yes, his body was indeed trembling.

But in his current ethereal state, he couldn't truly feel fear. So, he responded softly:

“Yes.”

But right after, he felt that wasn't enough.

No one could stand before the [Gods] and still maintain the composure of a mere human.

At least, not someone like Cheng Shi, who wasn't nearly powerful enough yet.

So, like a sycophant, he quickly added:

“Praise the Void, praise my Patron. It is my great fortune to be summoned by You.”

Survival was key—there was no shame in that.

To his surprise, the enormous eye shifted slightly and let out a mocking chuckle.

“Foolish human. You don't even recognize your own patron, and yet you dare to offer praise.”

“!!!”

Not [Deceit]!

Cheng Shi's eyes widened in horror, but soon narrowed as his mind raced. He hesitantly asked:

“[Time]?”

The eye, upon hearing the name of this god, spun like the hands of a clock for a moment before replying in a colder tone:

“For uttering a false name, I sentence you to death.”

As soon as the words were spoken, Cheng Shi’s ethereal form instantly disintegrated into the void.

It was as if he had never existed.

His physical body fragmented into dust, carried away by the cosmic winds into the endless abyss.

The massive eye spiraled once more, as if observing the twist in someone’s fate, before closing, seemingly satisfied.

It was as if none of this had ever occurred.

Time passed.

Perhaps a century, perhaps only a second.

In the chaotic flow of time, it was impossible to tell how long it had been. But eventually, the eye reopened in the same position.

This time, however, its edges curled slightly upward, as though in amusement.

“Oh dear, I wasn’t too late.”

The spiral-and-star-filled eye blinked, and with each blink, new clusters of bright stardust appeared where Cheng Shi’s body had once been.

The stardust gathered and fused together, coalescing into the shape of a human being under an invisible force.

And when this stardust-formed body was finally complete...

The newly reformed “clay figure” under the stars opened its eyes.

“Huff— Huff—”

Cheng Shi gasped for air, sweat dripping down his forehead.

He glared at the eye before him, gritting his teeth, forcing a single word out of his throat:

“Fuck!”

The eye blinked, momentarily taken aback, before bursting into even greater laughter.

“Based on my understanding of your human language, that word seems to suggest you’d like to share in the powers of [Birth]?”

The eye turned in slow circles, teasing mischievously:

“Or perhaps you wish to drag me into the lustful depths of [Corruption], to engage in some... unspeakable deeds—oh wait, I should say ‘un-godly’ deeds?”

Cheng Shi’s face went blank as he processed the words, swallowing down the string of curses he had been about to let loose.

Whatever this entity was, its tone and behavior clearly weren’t the same as before.

His mind raced, piecing things together. His expression darkened as he asked, voice low:

“You stood by and watched as your own follower was killed by another [God]. As my patron, I have to ask—where was the protection you promised?”

The eye flicked back and forth, laughing again.

“So, you’ve figured out who I am. But let me correct you on one thing.

I didn’t see you get killed.

I came here with my eyes closed.”

“?”

Cheng Shi was stunned.

Turns out, there was a reason for his shamelessness.

The saying “a crooked roof leads to a crooked foundation” had never felt more accurate.

But...!!!

That’s not even the point right now!!!

Cheng Shi didn’t know whether to laugh or cry.

Still, at least he had confirmed one thing.

The entity before him had responded to him, acknowledging itself as his patron.

[Deceit].

And the so-called “divine summoning” wasn’t as solemn and grand as he had imagined.

Scratch that—what had happened before didn’t count.

“So, can you tell your confused follower what just happened? That other [God]... who were they?”

“You get familiar with people this quickly?”

“?”

Cheng Shi snapped back to his usual self, retorting:

“I’m socially anxious. I’m not good at dealing with people.”

“I can understand your feelings. So, is it just because I saved you and happen to be your patron that you’re acting so...”

Let me think... how do you humans say it?

So reckless?”

Cheng Shi shook his head, denying [Deceit]’s assessment.

“It has nothing to do with that.”

“?”

“Because you’re not a human.”

“Hahaha!”

Joyful laughter echoed through the starry night. The eye, filled with spirals and stars, twitched uncontrollably, laughing so hard it couldn’t even maintain its blinking rhythm, twisting and distorting in its amusement.

The [God] gazed at Cheng Shi, thoroughly entertained, as if observing a rare, precious artifact.

“You’re the second creation of mine to please me this much.”

Cheng Shi raised an eyebrow, maintaining a calm expression, though the word “creation” made him feel uneasy.

“And who was the first lucky one?”

“A fascinating young girl named ‘Zhen Xin.’ In your terms, she’s my [Chosen One].”

Cheng Shi’s pupils contracted.

The [Gods] knew about their [Chosen Ones].

Of course, the [Gods] were supposed to know everything.

But hearing a [God] talk about players like merchandise—right to his face—made Cheng Shi feel... uncomfortable.

“Oh? It seems you’re feeling a bit angry for being treated as a mere player?”

Cheng Shi's playful attitude vanished. He shrugged, looking defiant as he spoke in a tone that begged for a beating:

"Is that not allowed? Sorry, I can't help it."

"Anger is merely a way of deceiving oneself. The more fragile a being is, the more it tries to hide its incompetence through anger."

The eye scrutinized Cheng Shi's thoughts, laughing softly:

"Do you wish for revenge against that [God]?"