

## The Gods 721

Chapter 721: Adaptation

Reality. A museum in some unknown city.

A massive poker card materialized from thin air and dropped to the floor. The wooden door on its face burst open, and a battered figure stumbled out from the Void within, staggering several steps before collapsing onto the cold ground.

This was the Blind One — come to "call for reinforcements."

This museum wasn't her rest area. It was Zhen Xin's. The moment she appeared, the Blind One weakly called out, "Xin Xin."

Before long, a beautiful figure emerged from behind a display counter, looking mildly startled, still holding what appeared to be an unfinished block puzzle.

Seeing "Xin Xin" in this state, the Blind One's expression froze. "Zhen Yi?"

Zhen Xin frowned slightly too. She set down the puzzle and hurried over to help the Blind One up.

"It's me.

I sent Zhen Yi back. But the deal was that I'd help her finish assembling her new collection piece.

She hates hassle — you know that. I hate hassle too. But weighing two evils, I could only accept her hassle.

You're just in time. Help me, Ming Yu — it's almost done."

Sighing, Zhen Xin shook her head — the picture of reluctant weariness.

"..."

But what the Blind One sensed in Zhen Xin's aura wasn't weariness. It was... indulgence. They were sisters after all. No matter how they sabotaged each other, when they weren't at each other's throats, there was still a hint of "family" between them.

But now wasn't the time for that. Gripping Zhen Xin's arm, the Blind One relayed everything she'd witnessed during the trial, the crisis the Torchbearers now faced — then produced a die in her palm.

"It's extremely strange. Based on everything I know, the situation seems to be heading for collapse. Yet when I divined the near future, His response was a perfect roll.

I can't see any turning point. I can only guess that some change has occurred among Them — something beyond our knowledge. So, Xin Xin — have you been summoned by Him recently?"

Zhen Xin's expression suddenly soured. Whether she was worried about her fellow Torchbearer or thinking about something else entirely was unclear — but after her face shifted through several emotions, she shook her head.

"No. Not since a certain someone played me last time.

But recently, I did meet the One from Life."

"Birth?" The Blind One's eyebrows rose slightly.

"Mm. Him.

That 'Eternal Sun' is an extremely driven player. Though I can't endorse some of her beliefs, I have to admit her approach to getting close to Them is remarkably effective.

I wanted her as inspiration — so I helped her search for another One of Them. Birth's Envoy — the Birth Holy Voice, Lu Xia.

We found Him. And after that trial ended, Birth summoned me.

But never mind all that for now.

Ming Yu, don't rush. If you truly believe Destiny's guidance isn't wrong, then let's wait."

"Wait?" The Blind One paused, then understood Zhen Xin's meaning. "Wait for the Flame of Hope's reaction?"

"Exactly. At the end of the day, we're nothing but dolls in Their hands. When Their will isn't involved, you and I can earn our place on stage through effort.

But once Their will enters the equation, our choices become meaningless.

Lao Deng's escape clearly has something deeper going on. Even if Time wanted to intervene, there'd be no need for this petty retaliation right after you cleared His trial. There must be a much deeper game being played.

We can't participate in Their games. But the Flame of Hope perhaps can. We've never known where He comes from — and this incident gives us a chance to observe that mysterious deity."

The Blind One frowned as if to correct Zhen Xin, but Zhen Xin smiled, guided her to a chair, and cut her off.

"I know we should never test the Torchbearers like this. But Ming Yu — sometimes doing more means erring more. We can't be sure our attempts to fix things won't become obstacles for the Flame of Hope.

At the player level, our actions probably don't affect Him at all. But once it involves Them... it's hard to say.

So my advice is: wait. At least until we receive a signal that the situation has truly collapsed, don't drag Deceit into this.

I don't know if His fingerprints are on this mess. But He is Deceit — the title 'Fun God' wasn't earned for nothing.

As for your Benefactor, Destiny...

A perfect roll is probably the calming pill He fed you.

Alright — I know you could've figured all this out yourself. Stop worrying. Drink some water and take a breath."

Gently, Zhen Xin fished two dried tangerine peels from her spatial storage, dropped them into a cup, stirred briefly, and pushed it toward the Blind One.

The instant the Blind One sensed the faint aroma of tangerine peel drifting from the water, her expression turned icy. She snapped her head up to "look" at Zhen Xin, teeth clenched, voice strained with fury:

"Zhen Yi! This joke isn't funny. You know I'm allergic to tangerine peel!"

Hearing this, a tremor flashed through Zhen Xin's eyes. But almost instantly, both corners of her eyes and lips curved upward.

"Hee~

You got it wrong, Ming Yu. Right now, I'm the big sister!"

"..."

An Mingyu fled. Or rather, she had zero desire to face the person before her, and took off from the museum as fast as she could.

But when she returned to her own rest area — seeing the bookshelves and chairs she'd arranged by hand, the bed and ornaments, the flowers and fish pond, all utterly unchanged and normal — she shuddered violently, as if every ounce of strength had left her. She collapsed into a chair.

"How can this be..."

Trembling, she raised her hand and cast every die she possessed onto the desk. Moments later, the dice settled — seventeen ones stared back at her.

"No... how can this be..."

An Mingyu pressed her lips together so hard they went white. A single tear escaped from her tightly shut eyes, tracing the perfect arc of her cheek before dropping straight to the floor.

The teardrop didn't even stir a mote of dust. It vanished silently against the ground, and the room returned to stillness.

The grief didn't last long. Before long, the Destiny Chosen's composure returned. She looked at the dice on the desk, clutched one tight, and murmured to herself:

"Is this... also Your guidance?"

No one was there to answer. But An Mingyu continued asking the empty air:

"So what was Your purpose in bringing me to this world, my Lord?"

Chapter 722: Change

Yes — the current An Mingyu didn't belong to this world.

But she hadn't discovered this herself. Zhen Xin had told her.

She didn't know when Zhen Xin had seen through her identity. Perhaps from the very start. Perhaps mid-conversation. But one thing was certain: it was only after An Mingyu had recounted the cause and effect of the Time trial that Zhen Xin recognized she wasn't this world's An Mingyu — and used the tangerine peel to... delicately deliver the answer.

The reason was simple: Zhen Xin never tested An Mingyu. Only An Mingyu ever tested Zhen Xin — to make sure the other wasn't Zhen Yi.

Yet today, this bewildering, out-of-nowhere test had stunned An Mingyu on the spot!

Think about it: under what circumstances would Zhen Xin test a best friend who'd entered her museum via poker card and come begging for help?

Before this Time trial, An Mingyu couldn't think of a single answer.

But the previous trial had been about identity — and that forced her suspicions in this direction!

Zhen Xin had absolutely noticed the differences between her and the original An Mingyu. That was why she'd dropped the hint.

In that moment, An Mingyu's heart shattered like thunder striking. She nearly broke down. But she held herself together, fighting to keep her composure, and carried the charade through — a silent pact neither wanted to break.

She knew the other was Zhen Xin. Absolutely Zhen Xin. But she deliberately misidentified her as Zhen Yi, right to her face.

And Zhen Xin played along. She even impersonated her own sister — all so the escape route An Mingyu had offered could work, granting them both a sliver of comfort.

Because neither An Mingyu nor Zhen Xin wanted to shatter this friendship that should have been whole. Even though An Mingyu was no longer this world's An Mingyu, at least for now — when Zhen Xin

couldn't be sure whether there was any chance of getting the original one back — neither of them wanted to end this bond, closer than blood, so... muddled and incomplete.

But for An Mingyu, the blow was devastating.

Everything had been correct. The initial Rainbow Orchid color had been right. So how could it have—

Wait!

The Rainbow Orchid color!

When had she first seen the red orchids?

Obviously — when she and Cheng Shi left the inn on the first separate exploration.

True: the very first glance after leaving the inn had confirmed the world's anchor-point.

But... what if someone had already changed before that confirmation!?

An Mingyu remembered: at the trial's very beginning, there had been an hour mark — right after their descent!

But what baffled her was that at that moment, she'd clearly "seen" the Doctor. So why would—

'Oh no.'

At this realization, the die slipped from her hand.

Because she'd suddenly recognized something: her "seeing" wasn't the same as everyone else's!

At the trial's start, she had indeed "seen" the Doctor. But the problem was — she remembered the Doctor had his back to her. So her "field of vision" contained the Doctor, but the Doctor's field of vision didn't contain her!

If Time's rules were strict enough to require true "line of sight," then at that hour mark — the moment she was watching the Doctor's back — both players in that room might have already become Time discrepancies.

So it wasn't just her — the Doctor didn't belong to this world either!

The Blind One went numb. She recalled the Doctor's final behavior — his confident confirmation of his own identity. Looking back now: had that Doctor used a truth to tell a lie?

Had he truly been unaware that the discrepancy had already happened to him? Or had he deliberately planned to leave his original world through this trial?

But why would he?

Of course — Cheng Shi had said he was a slice. He was 0221's slice!

So the Doctor who'd fallen into the discrepancy with her had known all along he was a slice — and used this trial to cross into another world?

A world more favorable to his identity — or one that freed him from his old identity's trap!?

'Well played, Truth believer. Well played, shadow-stalking assassin.'

'You actually found a gap in Time's all-encompassing shadow.'

But why had she herself never changed afterward?

The answer was simple: because after that, she'd been with Cheng Shi the entire time. That meticulous Fate Weaver had anchored her existence by keeping her in his line of sight at every hour mark.

"..."

After piecing it all together, An Mingyu fell silent. She had to consider her own situation. Thinking it through, she once again produced the Remembrance Needle.

Until Lao Deng was dealt with, this couldn't be used. But now...

That Fate Weaver who'd walked beside her through the trial had seemingly become the only person she could trust in this world.

So this item — meant to make her forget him — should she still use it?

Moreover, if he learned her true identity... would he still trust her?

An Mingyu slumped across her desk, expression grave, and sank into deep thought.

...

Meanwhile, back at the museum.

The instant the Blind One left, the "Zhen Yi" who'd been playfully chasing and teasing her drained every smile from her face. She retracted her outstretched hands, stood frozen in place, head bowed, biting her lip so hard it drew blood.

One drop. Two drops. Three drops...

Tears and blood fell in alternation, spattering against the floor and breaking into unblending droplets — water beads and blood spheres rolling away in every direction.

They rolled farther and farther apart. Just like the distance between Zhen Xin and An Mingyu. Never to close again.

Zhen Xin cried. This was the second time in her life. But she composed herself as quickly as the Blind One had — wiped her tears, cleaned the blood, fetched a cloth, and scrubbed every stain from the floor until it was spotless.

Yet she differed from the current Blind One in one crucial way: the instant she'd seen through the other's identity, this brilliant former Deceit Chosen had already guessed why this world's An Mingyu hadn't come back!

She tossed the cloth aside and hugged her knees on the floor — a posture practiced enough to break hearts.

She stared at the reflection on the polished floor — another blurred version of herself — and murmured softly, just like the Blind One:

"Who are you?"

Are you me too?

Then your luck is really good.

Oh — sorry. I know things are hard for you right now. But what I mean is, at least Ming Yu found out. That's why she chose to help you.

Right, Ming Yu? Only when you see another me suffering would you set aside the me who's here... and go help her instead..."

Zhen Xin bit her lip again. She reached down and touched the cold face of that other self on the floor.

"So cold.

She's wonderful. I don't know if You sent her back to comfort me, but she really is wonderful. Better than I imagined.

Have you met her? Probably not.

Her story didn't include you. But I've gotten to know her. Let me tell you about her, Ming Yu.

She's... warm. So much warmer than you, you cold little thing..."

Chapter 723: Unchanged

Unknown reality. An unknown rooftop in some unknown city.

A leather-jacketed youth stood behind another young man who sat on the building's edge, legs dangling, eating a meal. Gazing at the enormous root systems that crisscrossed and pierced the sky throughout the distant city, he sighed quietly.

"What — feeling sentimental?" The eating youth drained the last of his slime drink, wiped his mouth, and smirked. "Think Jiang Chi was right?"

The leather-jacketed youth shook his head with a wry smile:

"Self-preservation is human instinct. I can't judge that — anyone who finds a lifeline in this world will clutch it for dear life.

Wanting to live in another world? Sure, why not. Plenty of people from our side have already run.

But the thing is — that lifeline wasn't something he found himself. You found it, boss. So to take an opportunity from the Destined Ones and then immediately wipe his memory to sever the connection...

Hah. Trying to play native?

Not that easy. No wonder Destiny never sheltered him again."

The eating youth gathered his trash, stood up, and took his own place at the rooftop's edge, staring into the distance. Watching the countless gargantuan, terrifying roots swaying against the horizon — perpetually leeching nutrients from the present world — he clicked his tongue:

"That side... what did they say?"

"Nothing extra. Very cautious. Cautious like you, boss.

Honestly, if he hadn't barely given me any instructions, there were moments I'd have thought he was you.

But his reaction to Jiang Chi was 'big.' He deliberately slowed the conversation when mentioning him, which means he's already run into Jiang Chi.

Crossing the barrier through a Time gap creates a Time entanglement — people connected to that entanglement keep drifting closer... Perhaps Jiang Chi's already picked up that 'distorted-Time gravity.'

Which means Poison's understanding of Time seems correct after all. Existence's power really does quietly influence everything, silently patching whatever gaps appear.

And that also means we don't need to clean up anymore. Because knowing you, boss — once Jiang Chi crosses the other you, well... he won't live long."

The youth on the edge turned, giving the one behind him a "you want to try rephrasing that?" look. The leather-jacket's eyelid twitched. He instantly corrected himself:

"The Time believer thought he'd escaped Destiny. Little did he know — that's a kind of Destiny too.

Another world's Destiny will deal with him. Nothing wrong with that take, right?"

The youth in front nodded, smile growing radiant. But mid-smile, his brow furrowed again:

"Jiang Chi doesn't matter. What matters is the attitude Time expressed through the trial.

I had in-depth conversations with several Qin Xins. Learned a few things, but this whole 'divine slices' theory still feels off to me."

"Boss, you... didn't ask?"

"I did." At this, the youth picked up the die beside him and sighed. "Every single one of Them ignored me. Forget it — They're all busy headaching over the Convention. We'll have to figure this out ourselves."

"Fine. Where to next?"

"Mid-Chaos Epoch. Civilization Lonely Tower No. 413. There's a small town nearby called Redi Core.

Go rally the troops. See how many are free at home."

The leather-jacket froze, looking confused. But moments later his eyes blew wide with disbelief: "The Eye of Mockery? You got a lead?"

"Mm. Probably there. Just not sure about the timing. Let's go check — hopefully luck's on our side." The youth in front dusted himself off and grinned. "Come on — what are you standing there for?"

"Wait — boss, where'd you get this intel?"

The youth tapped his own ear, lips curving into a playful smile: "My ears told me. Accidentally overheard a little secret of Wei Mu's. That Folly believer — he sure hides things deep."

...

Reality. A cramped, run-down apartment in some unknown city.

Li Wufang woke up. He jolted upright from the sofa, immediately pulling out the three dice in his hand.

That's right — three!

The first was the final memento left by the mysterious leather-wearing stranger from his childhood. The second was the so-called Destined One's "token" that Cheng Shi had given him. And the third...

Hard to believe: a player who'd never even received a Destiny die at the Path Starting Point had somehow just — at the very instant the trial ended — been granted an audience with the second deity of Void: Destiny!!

This was Li Wufang's first divine audience. More importantly, it was an audience with the Destiny who'd "accompanied" him through the first half of his life. In that instant — when those cold, spiraling eyes opened before him — he was so nervous he nearly stopped breathing.

He straightened his back, wanting to present the perfect posture for "inspection." Then worried such stiffness might be disrespectful. So he subtly stooped — but how much was respectful? How much was sycophantic? He agonized, until he was twitching in place like a dehydrated shrimp.

Soon the Investigator realized how ridiculous he looked and froze in embarrassment.

That very embarrassment chipped away at some of his fear, giving him the courage to look at this Lord of Void.

Destiny seemed... very cold.

He felt the frigid wind stirring through the Void and suddenly thought that Destiny should be exactly this cold. That was why the world held so many tragedies that brought people to tears.

But at least his own fate wasn't a tragedy. Good fortune had saved his grandmother and freed him from fearing Destiny's indifference. He knew that no matter how cold the surface appeared, it was all facade — because Destiny's essence was the good luck that sheltered people.

Destiny studied Li Wufang without moving. Those eyes — star-specked, spirals stilled — seemed to read his innermost thoughts. The corner of one eye twitched, ever so faintly.

And right then, a die materialized before Li Wufang out of thin air.

Li Wufang was thunderstruck. His pupils contracted — then wild joy erupted from his heart. He reached out, seized the Destiny token. Just as he opened his mouth to praise—

The cold wind from the Void blew him back to reality.

"Praise— hm?"

The Investigator was dumbfounded.

'The audience... that's it?'

'That fast?'

'Hand over a die and done?'

'Wait — did He refuse my praise?'

Li Wufang panicked. He snapped his eyes open, grabbed the die, and prayed at it loudly. But the die showed no response.

'What's happening — was my praise not quick enough?'

Clutching the die Destiny had bestowed, cold sweat beaded on Li Wufang's forehead.

Chapter 724: Mutation

Reality. A workshop in some unknown city.

Wang Weijin woke up, slumped over his lab bench. The instant his eyes opened, he dropped his gaze, tilting his head down to hide his expression in shadow.

He quickly surveyed his surroundings, then moved with practiced ease to the water station beside the bench, poured a glass, and brewed a cup of coffee at exactly 85 degrees Celsius.

This was his habitual ritual after every trial. Once the coffee was finished, he'd debrief the entire trial, then sort and categorize any materials and lab notes he'd acquired, continuing his research.

He performed it all with impeccable order — until his neighbor, a fellow Truth believer, rapped on the workshop's thick wall again and pressed one eye against the small peephole between them.

This was the "communication device" these two mutually distrustful neighbors had jointly constructed to discuss Truth.

The hole was angled — enough to neutralize certain ballistic weapons. Both ends were fitted with blast-resistant laminated glass, courtesy of Tower of Logic techniques. The airtight seal was perfectly sufficient to block gas attacks from the other side.

This narrow little hole served as the friendly conduit between two Truth believers. After every notable trial, they'd lean against their respective walls and have a brief academic exchange.

Of course, Wang Weijin's contributions were genuinely academic. But the female neighbor on the other side — yes, female — always seemed to harbor ulterior motives.

She constantly probed every aspect of Wang Weijin's life, clearly eager to insert herself into it. But the Doctor remained unmoved.

And now it was time for another exchange.

A sultry female voice drifted through the wall. Even distorted by the barrier into something deep and humming, certain tones alone painted a picture of an intensely alluring woman.

Wang Weijin carried his coffee to the wall and knocked twice to signal his arrival. The other side immediately stirred.

"Drinking your 75-degree coffee again? Mister Wang, are you ever going to change?"

Wang Weijin's lips curved with the faintest scoff, though his tone remained flat: "It's 85 degrees. That's the optimal temperature balancing instant dissolution and cooling time."

"I always feel like you waste your Truth mastery on mundane life. Never mind — whatever makes you happy. How was the trial?"

You sound energetic. Still ready for more. Must not have been difficult?"

Wang Weijin smiled again. But his replies were always strangely deadpan.

"Not too difficult. A home-turf Truth trial. Happened to get placed in Tusnat. Met Grand Scholar Selius — the one who specializes in slice experiments."

"Oh?" The voice on the other side was distinctly surprised. After a beat: "Selius? How'd it go — did you get his manuscripts?"

"It's not that simple. I couldn't even confirm whether the one I met was a slice."

Silence from the other side. Then, eventually: "I'm rather well-versed in this. Generally speaking, the earlier experiment-stage ones are slices. But the later ones... as they gradually awaken their own

consciousness and believe they can break free from the original — most of them can no longer be considered slices. Would you agree?"

Wang Weijin's smile vanished. A flicker of mockery crossed his eyes. His head dipped even lower.

"Yes and no."

"Oh? You have a different take?" The voice beyond the wall laughed. "Do tell. Knowledge should circulate."

"I say 'yes' because most slices currently exist in that state. On the whole, your assessment is correct.

But 'no' because... some slices, even after developing their own consciousness, may not want to do anything drastic. They've sprouted autonomous will — but they won't cause any damage or disruption to the normal experiment or the so-called original."

Another silence. Then booming laughter rang through the wall.

"Sounds like your trial was fascinating, Doctor. Tell me — if I were a slice, which would I choose?"

A sharp glint flashed through Wang Weijin's eyes. His tone remained cold:

"I don't know you. But I know myself. If I were a slice, I'd probably be the second type."

"Really? Then I'd be the first."

More raucous laughter from the other side. Wang Weijin shook his head: "I need to start my debrief. Busy day ahead."

"Good luck, Doctor. I like you more and more."

Through the wall: a creature both young and ancient leaned in a corner. It raised one withered, branch-like arm and touched its own Adam's apple, then picked up a tablet and studied the monitor feed of Wang Weijin working at his desk. A sound escaped its throat — a wheezing, rattling "heh-heh" that made skin crawl.

"Heh-heh... Clever ones tend not to die so quickly."

With that, the creature glanced forward. On the floor of its laboratory lay the corpse of a bespectacled doctor.

The creature tossed the tablet aside and pocketed a golden poker card — one bearing the imprint of a Silence closed-eye mask. Then it found a lab ledger, and next to a name reading "Wang Weijin," added another half-checkmark.

"Still room for observation. No rush to replace him.

Even consumables should be conserved."

It shuffled its body — half bloated, half emaciated — toward another section of the laboratory.

And at that very moment, in the room next door, Wang Weijin — seemingly immersed in his debrief — let a sharp gleam flash through his eyes. He slid his chair back half an inch, then used his pen like a blade and sliced open his own scarred chest. From that mangled, blood-raw cavity, he slowly extracted... a mask!

That's right — a Deceit mask!

It was this mask's presence that had allowed him to perfectly conceal his true thoughts during the exchange moments ago.

As for how he'd gotten it...

The answer was chilling. After the trial ended, the Doctor hadn't returned to his rest area. Instead, a mysterious force had pulled him into the Void — to an audience with a deity he'd never dreamed of meeting!

Deceit!

Those star-scattered, spiral-spinning eyes had summoned him in the Void above. Without preamble, They bestowed a mask upon him.

"Interesting. Today's performance earned you this mask."

Wang Weijin was stunned. He wanted to refuse. And he offered his reason quite "diplomatically": "I... only wish to draw closer to Truth."

"Tch—"

His conviction and devotion earned nothing but a scoff. Those mocking eyes regarded him with amusement, dismissing his refusal entirely:

"You don't even know what Truth wants, yet you have the gall to claim you only wish to approach Him?"

Human — you don't actually think your fingernail-sized intellect can fool Me, do you?"

"..." Wang Weijin shut his mouth. In his first-ever divine audience, he finally realized this was neither the place for bargaining nor for correcting anyone. Cold sweat erupted instantly.

"Whether Truth is the truth — I don't know. But I do know that in all this universe, the only one who knows what truth really is... is Me.

Only by taking up this mask do you have any chance of approaching the real truth."

Hearing this — even though the speaker bore the divine name Deceit — Wang Weijin gripped the mask in his hand with all his might.

"Remember: the mask is for you. If you die, don't expect the next you to receive one.

Now get lost. You little pen of a bigger pen — looking at you gives Me a headache."

A gale roared through the Void, driving the mask into Wang Weijin's chest before letting him plummet back to reality.

Now, having extracted the mask once more, Wang Weijin stored it in his spatial inventory, then cleaned the blood from his body with a furrowed brow.

Truth hadn't rejected Deceit's secondary faith. Could Deceit have been telling the truth?

Drawing closer to Void — and to Him — was that the real truth?

Chapter 725: A Lively Void

The Void — and yet, not the Void.

There was clearly nothing here. Yet anyone who stepped inside would feel the space itself warping. Then again, perhaps it wasn't space that twisted — it was time.

Countless invisible streams of light converged and fused, intersected and split apart. Some ran parallel along the same line; others tangled and knotted. They surged toward an indiscernible future while circling back to an already-hazy past.

But no matter where these streams of light went or how they flowed, they remained trapped in this single corner — like prisoners shackled at the ankles. No escape.

It was like a cell. A bizarre cell. No screaming. No protest. Only mechanical distortion and eternal silence.

But that silence was shattered soon enough.

A pair of eyes painted with star-specks and spirals opened without warning at the center of this space-time. The instant They appeared, every invisible stream of light was stained by the brilliant stars within Their gaze — blooming into dazzling, multicolored splendor. Simultaneously, Their arrival made the streams churn and twist even more violently.

Only now — revealed at last — could these streams be perceived by the living. Only now could any consciousness beyond this space-time realize this wasn't empty Void at all, but a black hole that had seized hold of uncountable timelines.

That black hole had been lurking here, unremarkable. But with the arrival of those star-filled eyes, it instantly devoured every visible timeline in range, then violently contracted — transforming into a pair of black-hole eyes that opened directly across from the starlit gaze.

Within those black-hole eyes flowed warping brilliance that sped up and slowed down unpredictably. Each blink seemed to witness a river of time in both drought and flood.

The bloodshot veins in those eyes resembled riverbeds of time — connecting unknowable numbers of futures and pasts.

"Long time no see."

He greeted the uninvited eyes.

But those star-specked, spiral eyes were so cold that merely opening without speaking had already whipped a howling frozen gale through the Void.

"Long time no see?"

Do you remember your divine name is Time and not Deceit?

The Convention may forbid the gods from excessive interference in trials, but it doesn't forbid us from watching. You expended every effort to block My gaze from that trial — but did it ever occur to you that what is Fixed is Fixed? Even beyond My sight, My followers can still cross the fence and reach the far shore."

"...?"

A flicker of confusion appeared in the black-hole eyes. He seemed about to say something, but before He could speak, the other had already struck.

Destiny gave Time no time. Those frigid eyes plunged downward, and the entire Void began to collapse violently — dragging Existence into the infinite maw of the Void.

The streams of light within those black-hole eyes shattered and scattered, only to ignite again from past and future. He remained where He was, sighed softly, said nothing in explanation, and returned to silence.

His complete lack of resistance made Destiny's gaze falter — as if realization had struck.

And at that very moment, another pair of star-specked, spiral eyes opened above them both. These starlit eyes — eye-corners crinkled sky-high the instant they appeared — looked down at the two below with a gleeful cackle:

"Don't fight, don't fight! Though Time and Destiny are opposites, who says opposition has to be a blood feud? Perhaps being close as family is exactly the scene He most wishes to see.

We're all brothers and sisters in the end. No family feud is worth this much anger.

Hee~

Am I right?"

The words sounded like peacemaking. But the "watching the fun, the bigger the better" tone was absolutely unmistakable.

"It was you!"

Destiny suddenly realized who had prevented Her from observing the last trial. But what She couldn't fathom was: even if Deceit was rebellious, what reason would He have to help an Existence who wanted to approach Origin even more than Himself?

Existence's closeness to Origin was virtually undisputed. They bore Their divine names and descended in the new Era, spreading Their will from the very beginning of the age.

Time had carved out countless riverbeds of temporal flow, extrapolating innumerable worlds, hand-labeling every strand of time — all to present a more colorful universe to Him.

Memory was the same — plucking Time's labels from the Sea of Memory and placing them in the Collection Hall, unraveling the dead knots of countless histories, smoothing the doubts of countless memories — hoping to recapture His attention.

These two Existence deities stood in complete opposition to Deceit's rebellious nature. So why would a fellow member of Void "help" one of Existence against Her?

Was this right?

It wasn't. No matter how you looked at it, it wasn't.

And so Destiny raged.

When She raged, the universe might not change color — but the Void certainly would.

The entire Void froze in an instant. Everyone traversing the Void at that moment felt a horrifying pressure from its deepest depths — so crushing it nearly suffocated them, nearly shattered everything

in the Void. Fortunately, the other Lord of Void intervened just in time, preventing the Void from collapsing entirely.

"You're serious?" Deceit blinked with faux innocence.

"Didn't you want to fight?"

Come. Fight!"

Infinite freezing gales of nothingness materialized before Deceit, instantly encasing those laughing eyes in an ice sculpture.

Even frozen solid, He kept smiling.

The ice sculpture's eye-corners remained perpetually high — every line still dripping with mockery and ridicule.

But Destiny didn't care. She was long accustomed to cold stares and derision — especially from Her twin deity. Though Deceit's expression certainly stoked Her fury, She quickly dragged the entire Void into the battlefield.

"BOOM—"

That's right — the entire Void. She didn't even spare Time. She was ready to fight two-on-one.

"..."

The black-hole eyes, inexplicably dragged into a Void civil war, sighed. He clearly didn't wish to linger. So He acted — only, the direction of His action...

He solidified every inch of Void before Him into Existence — and used that to pin Deceit!

He was helping Destiny discipline the other Lord of Void!

"???"

Deceit was displeased. 'What's going on? I came to put in a good word for You, and You help My little sister beat Me up?'

The eyes within the ice sculpture glanced toward Time. A flash of contempt. Then He blinked with his ice-made eyelids — once — and vanished from before both deities. Simultaneously, sarcasm echoed from every direction of the Void:

"Oh my — I only said 'close as family' as a figure of speech, and you two actually go and become family?"

My dear little sister — you join hands with Existence to ambush Me. Are you planning to ally with Time and defect from the Void?"

"ENOUGH!"

"BOOM—"

The Void that had been solidified into Existence shattered again. Countless shards of reality were swept up in waves of nothingness, surging in every direction — targeting the Deceit hiding beneath the Void's surface and... the Time who'd just helped Her.

Destiny, it seemed, was ready to spare no god.

"..."

Chapter 726: Two Against One — and How Is It Him!!??

Time froze. For one instant, He was reminded of what it meant for Void to be truly meaningless.

He had no time to waste here. So He slowly widened His eyes, letting the black holes within devour every wave of nothingness, then departed without a word.

But Destiny wasn't about to let Him go. While battling Deceit with one hand, She continued using the Void's power to drag at the departing Existence.

Then — another divine force intervened.

From the chaotic currents of collapsing Void and reality, a turbid yellow fog suddenly poured forth. A colossal hand emerged from the fog, severing Destiny's line of sight, flattening the rampaging waves, and tearing the Void apart like a rag.

As the Void shattered, the yellow fog came surging in from all sides, filling every inch of the space.

Destiny's gaze hardened at the sight.

"Chaos."

The enormous hand within the fog quietly withdrew. From the swirling haze came a voice deep as bronze bells:

"I... come by agreement."

Before Destiny could respond, Deceit popped back up from His hiding place, grinning merrily:

"Oh, would you look at that! A moment ago it was two-on-one against Me. Now it's My turn.

When little sister misbehaves, she naturally needs a proper lesson, wouldn't you say?"

With that, Deceit actually stirred up a bizarre wave within the endless fog, painting a grand illusion of the gods before Destiny's eyes.

In this false universe: Life was defeated. Descent was no more. Civilization crumbled. Chaos lost its color. Existence shattered into countless irreparable fragments. Even the Void wasn't spared — dissolving into the invisible, nonexistent nothing.

It looked like the apocalypse of the gods. Anyone who saw it would be shaken to the core. But Destiny knew Her twin deity far too well. She wasn't affected in the slightest. Instead, She detonated divine power at the exact point in the illusion where Deceit had "fallen" — blasting the fish-in-troubled-waters trickster out from beneath the facade.

"Run! Why'd you stop hiding?"

"...Don't rush. The show's just getting started."

"BOOM— BOOM— BOOM—"

...

While the Void erupted in the greatest battle in recorded history, Cheng Shi was pulled into the Void as well.

The instant the trial ended, his consciousness had plunged into infinite darkness. He could feel he was alive — he just couldn't open his eyes.

Until... a beam of white light pierced the darkness and flooded his vision. He jolted awake. He'd arrived.

This obviously wasn't his rest-area rooftop. As for where he was — that depended on which deity had the free time to summon him.

Cheng Shi was used to being summoned after trials by now. What he hadn't guessed was who he'd be meeting today!

The moment this Void walker opened his eyes, he found himself standing atop a "bottomlessly tall" tower, built entirely of walls of true knowledge. Dangling from the eaves and tile-corners were countless somber wind chimes — each made from a pure-white eyeball.

These chimes hung like Prosperity's eyes. One glance would breed fear in anyone's heart.

But the most terrifying thing wasn't the pupil-less eyeballs. It was the pair of eyes that opened mere inches from Cheng Shi's face — swirling with chaotic white miasma!

Folly!!!

In his wildest dreams, the clown never imagined he'd be granted an audience with Folly after this trial!!

'Why Him!?!'

'How could it be Him!?!'

The only connection to Folly in this entire trial had been two foolish Tower of Logic exile-scholars. Calling them Folly believers would be an insult to Folly Himself. He couldn't possibly have come for those two, right?

'And I didn't even do anything to them!'

Cheng Shi was panicking. He genuinely feared Folly.

After all, His followers were already the smartest group among all players. And Folly, their Benefactor deity Himself — He'd probably seen through everything long ago.

Which meant all the lies on Cheng Shi's person, and his honey-tongued little tricks for playing gods against each other, were probably useless against Him.

And there was one more critical reason: his other Benefactor, Destiny, apparently intended to fuse with Folly.

Honestly, he still had no idea why Destiny harbored such intentions. In Cheng Shi's eyes, Destiny and Folly had virtually nothing in common.

Now Deceit, on the other hand...

Fusing those two sarcastic deities together would probably be hilarious.

But Cheng Shi didn't dare voice that thought. He currently belonged to the "Fear Faction." Meanwhile, Destiny leaned toward the "Approach Faction." If She wanted to fuse with Folly, that almost certainly meant Folly was also "Approach Faction." So Cheng Shi's greatest fear right now was that his private thoughts would be read at a glance by this second deity of Chaos — threatening Deceit's plans or his own position.

So Cheng Shi was extremely tense.

He wanted to offer praise to ease the strange atmosphere but feared that any word out of his mouth would let the other "read his mind." So the silence dragged on — those massive white eyes examining Cheng Shi from every angle, inside and out.

Can you imagine the feeling of two sun-sized white eyes staring you down from a few meters away?

Cheng Shi lasted barely a few seconds before his scalp went numb and his legs began to buckle.

'Can't stay silent any longer. Saying nothing screams fear. The more I "fear," the more He'll read into it.'

He didn't know whether this audience was connected to Destiny's fusion push. But surely, for Her sake, Folly wouldn't make things too difficult?

He should know Destiny's intentions?

Cheng Shi harbored not a shred of confidence about underestimating Folly's intelligence. He was only afraid of not overestimating it enough. So after a brief silence, he spoke.

His plan was to at least project a "cooperative" attitude and get through this audience quickly.

Nobody expected what came next. The moment his mouth opened — it was earth-shattering.

"Do you believe your foolish acts will ever have an answer?"

"!!!???"

The words landed. Cheng Shi's mind went blank. The next second, cold sweat poured down his back like a waterfall.

'NO!!'

'Brother Mouth???'

'You— you— you—'

'I call you Brother and you're trying to get me killed!?'

'How DARE you say something like that to Folly's face!?'

'Want a new host, do you!!!'

'Shi Lolin called Him names behind His back and I'd already call her brave. And now here I am, mocking Folly's foolishness straight to His face. So who's the fool here — Him, or me?'

'Can a sane person actually do something like this?'

Now Cheng Shi was truly terrified. If not for that thin thread of trust in Brother Mouth, he'd have lost control of his trembling legs and collapsed right there on the tower's peak.

'Too terrifying. This is genuinely terrifying. This is my first time committing point-blank blasphemy — and it's PASSIVE blasphemy while being extremely careful!'

'Am I... actually going to die?'

Chapter 727: Folly Was One Thing — but What's This Now?

The Death Cheng Shi "expected" didn't come. And neither did death itself.

Those sun-sized white eyes gave him a casual glance, scoffed, and tossed the question right back at Cheng Shi — or perhaps, at the Fool's Lips.

"Do you believe your foolish acts will ever have an answer?"

Hearing this, Cheng Shi's body went taut — yet his heart quietly exhaled with relief.

'Getting scolded is fine. Getting scolded means He's not attacking. Means there's still room to salvage this blasphemy.'

There was indeed room. But the direction it turned was the last thing Cheng Shi wanted.

Because the instant Folly finished speaking, the clown's mouth moved on its own again:

"Are you a parrot?"

"..."

A tingling current exploded from Cheng Shi's scalp, electrifying every limb, raising goosebumps across his entire body.

'Kill me!'

'Please, Brother Mouth, just kill me outright.'

'I've had enough! Truly enough! What's the point of living every day on tenterhooks, walking on eggshells?'

'Is it so I can survive long enough for you to get me killed!?''

'Hm!?''

'Have mercy. Stop talking. Just finish me off.'

'Otherwise you'll literally scare me to death sooner or later.'

The Fool's Lips' retort was genuinely savage — enough to catch even Folly off guard. Those divine eyes stiffened for an instant. But He quickly realized something, and scoffed once more:

"So what if I am?"

Under this universe, I'm not the only one mechanically repeating the same actions. Perhaps aside from the Void, every deity is a 'parrot.' As for whether the Void itself is...

I thought so. But you're telling Me — perhaps not. Am I right?"

"You blather on and on with things nobody understands. You think that makes you clever?"

"I seldom argue intellect with the other deities. Because they don't dare — and they don't deserve to. Truth included.

As for you? Hah.

The wise have no worries; the foolish have no deeds. You're no fool, but you're nowhere near a wise man either.

I've already seen the ending of your foolish act. Boring. Truly boring."

With that, those chaotic white eyes actually sighed — as though They'd genuinely lost interest.

But right then, Cheng Shi — drenched in cold sweat and practically dehydrated — opened his mouth again. With a single world-shaking retort, he stamped a terrifying exclamation mark on this confrontational audience!

"Sure, sure, sure — you're so impressive. If you're so impressive, how'd you manage to lose your own authority?"

"!!!!!"

'WHAT!?'

Cheng Shi was thunderstruck. His pupils shrank to pinpoints. He stared at Folly in disbelief, his brain going "BOOM" — detonating.

'Folly lost His authority?'

'Why?'

'When?'

'If Folly has no authority, how does He shelter His followers? How does He hold a seat under the Convention?'

'Doesn't the Convention protect all divine authority from being lost? How could Folly's just... disappear?'

'How much is gone? Where did it go? Was it proxied through the Convention?'

'Wait — big guy, did You die and come back like Prosperity did?'

Cheng Shi's CPU was overheating and smoking from the overload. His eyes were full-screen SHOCK.

Folly, for His part, didn't seem to mind discussing it. He merely paused His departing step, scoffed one more time:

"The pursuit of knowledge always demands a price. I paid Mine. Don't tell Me you haven't paid yours?"

Hah. Foolish.

Glamour is useless. And facades... are merely things you use to deceive yourself.

You're boring. Far more boring than I expected.

But this Void walker, on the other hand..."

Those chaotic white eyes scanned Cheng Shi up and down once more, then glanced at the tower beneath his feet. Tone dripping with mockery:

"Though ignorant and foolish, at least your ridiculous appearance has its uses.

You can entertain an audience, at least.

Wouldn't you agree... clown?"

With that, He vanished — tower and all — dissolving into the Void.

And Cheng Shi, having been inexplicably roasted about his profession, plummeted through the Void in utter bewilderment, internally screaming: 'Wait — Brother Mouth, your argument with Him — what's that got to do with ME?'

The Fool's Lips scoffed:

"Hah. Foolish.

He couldn't out-argue Me, so naturally He could only take it out on you. Is that really so hard to understand?"

"???"

'Great, great! Perfectly understandable!'

'Today I'm not just a clown — I'm a stupid clown!'

'You commandeered my mouth for a fun little roasting session, but the one sweating bullets the whole time was ME. And at the end of it you have to mimic Folly's tone and twist the knife one more time!'

'I don't even want this mouth anymore!'

Cheng Shi snapped. He whipped out two cans of tentacle slime and viciously... rewarded the slime-drink-loving Fool's Lips.

This "kill the enemy for a hundred, lose yourself for ten thousand" move left even the Fool's Lips speechless.

"..."

'When it comes to absurdity, the clown reigns supreme.'

"Blrgh shmo shlah... glug glug glug... dono bla shlah... glug glug glug..."

The slime stuck to the throat, impossible to spit out — forced down the hatch, can and all.

But while punishing Brother Mouth, Cheng Shi hadn't forgotten where he was. He realized he was still falling through the Void. Normally by now he should have already tumbled out and landed back on his rooftop. But now...

'Oh no!'

Snapping out of his rage, Cheng Shi instantly realized today's gauntlet was far from over. He was just about to compose himself and brace for whatever came next — when everything around him changed.

The Void was no longer dark. It shimmered with multicolored ripples.

His descent was slowing. Before long, it felt like he'd plunged into a soft cloud — caught, pulled, sinking, trapped by viscous forces from every direction.

Cheng Shi's heart lurched. He felt like he'd fallen into quicksand. No amount of struggling could free him.

He panicked. Called out for Brother Mouth. But the Fool's Lips — who'd been trash-talking the heavens moments ago — had suddenly turned ostrich and gone silent.

Cheng Shi's heart sank. Brow furrowed, he pulled out his lantern and dice, planning to switch back to Destiny and use the Never Lost Gambling Gear to teleport out. But the instant his lantern flared to life, a current roared past like an undersea volcanic eruption — engulfing him completely, dragging his vision into a dazzling, kaleidoscopic, dreamlike sea of stars.

Cheng Shi was dumbfounded. This domain undeniably belonged to Them. But the problem was — in the clown's understanding, the only places that could be called a "sea" and were connected to Them were either Memory's Sea of Memory... or Corruption's Sea of Desire!

This clearly wasn't Memory's territory. So... this couldn't actually be Corruption's lair, could it!?

'Huh???'

'H-Help! My Lord — save me!'

Chapter 728: Not the Sea of Desire — a Sea of Blood! It's Him!

Cheng Shi's survival instinct exploded.

He instantly held his breath and shut his eyes. He even covered his ears — and in the same motion of raising his arms, threw out his lantern and die, switching faith through his "reflection" in the "sea" and activating the Never Lost Gambling Gear.

The sequence was executed with masterful precision. Even a hunter renowned for agility would have to call it "flawless."

But sometimes, flawless execution didn't matter. Especially in this sea of desire, where every blessing of Destiny seemed nullified.

Cheng Shi couldn't swap positions with his die. The viscous pull surrounding him kept dragging him deeper — as if trying to haul this wayward clown into desire's ultimate abyss.

His face went white. Fear, confusion, panic, and despair flooded his heart simultaneously. He instinctively thrashed against the "water" around him, swimming with everything he had in some direction — any direction.

He didn't know where he was swimming. He only knew he didn't want to die here.

Perhaps his will to survive burned too fiercely. Or perhaps Destiny's protection finally evaporated enough of the desire-sea to find him again. Either way — as he swam, his surroundings suddenly changed.

Temperature rising slightly. Resistance fading. The terror in his heart gradually receding. Had he broken free?

Cheng Shi's spirits soared. He kicked hard, surging forward. When the "water" around him shifted from viscous to slick, he knew he'd truly left that earlier sea behind.

But!

His current location didn't seem much better.

Because Cheng Shi was all too familiar with this warm, slippery, greasy sensation. This was no hot spring or mountain mud. It could only be...

Blood!

A vast, ocean-sized expanse of blood!

His body tensed. He swam toward buoyancy. The moment he broke the surface, he wiped his face clean and forced his eyes open — and saw himself floating in the center of a blood sea, surrounded by tumor-like mounds stretching to every horizon, blanketed in corpses as far as the eye could see!

A battlefield!

This was undeniably a battlefield!

Cheng Shi was staggered. His pupils contracted so violently he nearly froze and sank back under.

This shouldn't have been a sea. It was merely a depression in hilly terrain. But so many had died — so impossibly, incalculably many — that the trickles had slowly accumulated until the ground itself was drowned, turning this lowland into the floor of a blood sea.

"...Where am I?"

It was a foolish question, honestly. The moment he registered that the "seawater" around him was blood, he'd essentially confirmed whose audience he was attending.

He just hadn't expected that the "thrown onto a battlefield" his friends had described would be this literal.

From the seafloor upward?

And that earlier stretch of viscous water definitely wasn't War's authority. It might have been His handiwork, but the power itself didn't belong to War.

Unless... He had stolen Corruption's authority!

Cheng Shi's expression turned grim. He didn't know if War was watching from some corner. But before facing this Civilization god directly, he needed to find a safe place to wait — lest he bump into something unsavory in this blood sea.

He moved. Swimming toward the nearest landmass, he quickly clambered ashore. Surveying the massive unrecognizable beast carcasses and the towering humanoid corpses — larger than giants — he'd never seen before, his brow knotted tight.

'Where is this?'

It didn't look like the Land of Hope. Neither species nor terrain matched. It seemed like an entirely new world.

'Could this be His domain?'

'He uses a battlefield as His "reception hall"?''

'So where is He? Why won't He show Himself? Does He like silently observing summoned players?'

'But isn't that more of a Silence thing?'

'Seriously — You're War. Why is even summoning a player this roundabout?'

Cheng Shi was numb. He'd been standing here for a while now, and aside from the reeking wind and the stifling heat, he'd felt nothing at all.

Just as those Chosen Ones had said: War threw you onto a battlefield awash in blood, then never showed His face.

As time trickled past, Cheng Shi grew increasingly lost. He was afraid some unpredictable catastrophe might erupt on this battlefield and drag him in — but equally afraid that escaping by other means would displease the observer behind the curtain. So he sat there like an unemployed clown, waiting for time to pass.

He was counting. From the moment he'd climbed ashore, he'd been timing — wanting to know whether this silent, invisible War really would lock someone in for one night and then release them peacefully. But before his experiment concluded, outside forces interrupted the confinement.

A pair of star-specked, spiraling eyes opened without warning in the terrifying blood sea. The instant those eyes appeared, the stars within them seemed to descend beneath the surface — and every wave of blood, stirred by the reeking wind, lost its gravity. Like a waterfall, the blood drained into the unknown starry sky below.

Within moments, every drop of blood in the entire world had dried.

Those eyes blinked. Cold. They looked toward one corner of this world and asked in a voice like an arctic gale:

"War — you don't dare fight Me, yet you dare imprison My follower?"

"..."

The world answered with vast silence. No one dared respond to those eyes.

But Cheng Shi — the moment he saw his Benefactor descend — felt the boulder in his chest crash to the ground. He leapt to his feet, face brimming with piety, and praised his Lord aloud:

"Praise Destiny!

Timeless chapters write of Your generosity! Eternal poems sing of Your mercy! Though Your follower now stands before You disheveled and unfit for audience — my unsullied devotion still lets me feel Your radiance, compelling me to pay my respects.

Your devoted follower Cheng— wha, hey, wait—"

Before he could finish, those cold eyes tossed him unceremoniously into one pupil. As for this world, now drained of all blood — They scoffed, left behind a single word, "Boring," and vanished.

After Void departed, a pair of heterochromatic eyes — boiling with blood and fire — opened across the sky above. Brow furrowed, they looked at where Cheng Shi had stood and rumbled in a deep, muffled voice:

"The will to survive..."

Truly a boring desire."

With that, the entire battlefield-world and those eyes crumbled into the Void together.

Chapter 729: Faiths Must Eventually Fuse — What Do You Want to Fuse With?

The clown in the Void was drenched in cold sweat.

He didn't know why today's Benefactor was so frigid. He only knew the howling gale signified Destiny's fury.

'Who pissed Her off?'

'It shouldn't be me... right?'

Cheng Shi stood there like a schoolboy being punished, obediently reviewing his recent actions. Once he was absolutely certain he hadn't committed blasphemy, he straightened up — equal parts cowardly and brave — ready to resume his praise.

But just then, those cold, impassive eyes spoke.

"Faiths must eventually fuse. Regardless of what They think, My followers will only walk the fixed path."

The instant Cheng Shi heard this, he answered without a second thought:

"It is not that the fixed path was already charted — rather, every step a devout Destiny follower takes leads toward the fixed path.

The world believes the great Destiny guides the direction of the fixed. They don't realize it is their own devotion to Him that paves the fixed road.

He never deliberately shaped it, yet this road is inscribed with His will.

Praise the great Destiny — may Your radiance become the brightest sun in this world, warming every devoted soul who walks the fixed path."

He even topped it off with an exaggerated bow, thinking: 'After that barrage of praise, today's audience should at least get a little better?'

Indeed — the clown's insight was remarkably unique, and his praise carried genuine sincerity. Destiny should have been pleased. But to everyone's surprise, the instant he finished, the wind in the Void blew even fiercer.

The bone-piercing cold nearly froze Cheng Shi to death on the spot.

"..."

'What's going on? Why won't flattery work today?'

Baffled, Cheng Shi hastily bowed his head and clamped his mouth shut, assuming the posture of "I don't care what happened — let me apologize first." But inside, he was already muttering:

'If someone gets praised and still isn't happy, why is that?'

'Simple: because They have issues.'

Of course, he didn't dare mutter too much. The Fun God had mind-reading abilities; he was terrified Destiny did too — or rather, he knew She definitely did. But that slip had been irresistible, so now he could only double down on looking repentant and pious.

Yet impossibly — the very instant he finished muttering, the Benefactor before him suddenly became less furious. Those cold eyes swept across the surrounding Void, and the raging gale fell silent in an instant, granting the nearly frozen clown a sliver of breathing room.

Those eyes watched him. Cold. And asked another question:

"What faith do you want to fuse with?"

"!!!???"

Cheng Shi blinked in disbelief, convinced the cold had induced hallucinations.

'Huh?'

'What?'

'I get to decide this myself?'

'Wait — I can fuse with whatever I want?'

'You'll agree to anything I say?'

Cheng Shi's mind blanked. The instant he heard this, he purged every irreverent thought and bit of sacrilege from his heart and instantly became the most devout Destiny follower since the universe's creation.

He jerked his head up — ignoring his frozen-stiff neck and frost-crusting eyelids — and stammered through his shivers, eyes blazing with light as brilliant as a galaxy.

"My Lord — are You... asking for my opin— suggestion?"

Those eyes gave him a dispassionate glance. No reply.

Cheng Shi's heartbeat quickened. He couldn't tell whether this was a trap or a treat. But even if it was a trap, his own Benefactor surely wouldn't just watch him jump in and do nothing?

She was his deity, after all. Would someone this magnanimous truly let him die?

And so — Cheng the Greedy came online, displacing Cheng the Honest's "personality." Eyes blazing, he looked at those starlit eyes and opened with:

"Ori—"

When the cold wind in the Void instantly surged tenfold, Cheng Shi corrected himself in one second flat.

"—give my presumptuousness, my Lord.

If I — as the most insignificant follower — may offer the humblest suggestion regarding the fusion, then I still wish to ask for Your guidance.

I want to know which faiths' fusion would best serve Destiny's fixed path.

Of course, I don't mean which faiths would help me walk toward the fixed. What I want to understand is which of Them also draw near the fixed.

That way, beneath Your mercy, perhaps Your most most most faithful follower — me — could bring Them along for a short stretch on the fixed road, letting Them too experience Destiny's greatness and the Void's goodwill.

If it pleases You..."

Those eyes grew colder still. She seemed on the verge of another eruption. But after a moment of silence, She gave Her answer.

"Birth is unyielding; Prosperity cannot be restored; Death won't be swayed — Life has always been bland.

Corruption drowns in itself; Decay locks itself in; Oblivion amuses itself — Descent is innately dull.

Order is pitiable; Truth is lamentable; War is laughable — Civilization is nothing but a joke.

Chaos won't awaken; Folly lacks wisdom; Silence won't answer — and Chaos is just as much a punchline."

"..."

Hearing this, Cheng Shi's eyelid twitched violently.

'Hold on — my Lord, You just roasted every single god. You even stamped Folly — the one You supposedly wanted to approach — with "lacks wisdom." What is this?'

'So who on earth made You this angry?'

Cheng Shi silently chewed over Her words, not daring to speak. He was even beginning to wonder whether the Benefactor before him was truly Destiny. Could the Fun God be impersonating Her?

But this demeanor — and the push for faith fusion...

It didn't fit.

Even if the Fun God impersonated Her, He couldn't interfere with Destiny's fusion. At most, He'd trick a few followers into switching sides. How could He possibly have a hand in Destiny's fusion?

Cheng Shi was utterly confused. But Destiny's critique continued.

"As for Existence..."

"???"

'Wait — what!?'

'Who?'

'Existence!?'

Cheng Shi was thunderstruck. He looked up at those eyes in shock, thinking: 'Can a Void walker actually fuse with Existence?'

And finally — a flicker of color passed through those eyes. Like a shooting star across the sky, it brightened the Void for one instant. Even the howling gale stilled for a heartbeat.

"Memory only illuminates the path behind. Time still points to the road ahead.

You will ultimately walk toward the fixed. In that process, grafting a fragment of the forward path onto yours wouldn't contradict My will.

So, Cheng... Shi...

Would you be willing to fuse with Time — to reconcile the opposition and carve a path of Void through the heart of Existence?"

"!!!!!!!"

Cheng Shi was stunned. Cheng Shi was losing his mind. Cheng Shi had an epiphany.

This absolutely couldn't be his Benefactor Destiny. It felt more like his other Benefactor, Deceit. Or possibly the Time who had just administered his trial — a deity he barely knew!

Otherwise, the clown simply couldn't explain any of this.

A deity of Void was asking him to fuse with a faith of Existence!

Was it She who'd gone mad — or him?

Chapter 730: Chaos — Too Much Chaos!

Cheng Shi didn't dare speak.

The excitement that had been boiling in his heart just moments ago cooled instantly. In one second flat, he purged every shred of greed and switched back to steady mode.

'Something's wrong. Everything about this reeks of something wrong.'

Based on his understanding of his Benefactor: if She truly wanted him to fuse with Existence, She would never have offered so many reasons for rejecting the other gods beforehand. She'd simply assign him directly and tell him — this is the fixed path.

He'd have no right to choose. No right to refuse. That was what Destiny was like.

But here She was — offering a choice yet not allowing one, while casually roasting every deity. This attitude looked more and more like his other Benefactor: the Fun God.

Indeed — far too similar. The only detail that didn't fit was: even if the Fun God impersonated Destiny, all He could do was score a few verbal points. Could He actually interfere with Destiny's fusion?

As for the idea that this might be Time — that was just a delirious thought born from being shell-shocked.

Given Time's frigid demeanor at Aph Ros's house, He probably wouldn't even say this many words. He'd just drop His faith on you and vanish.

After all, Time didn't have that much time.

'Who knows what that guy's even busy with...'

Getting sidetracked. Cheng Shi pulled his thoughts back to the present. After mulling it over, he decided that regardless of who was on the other side, he absolutely couldn't agree rashly. If the real Destiny showed up later, he — the man who'd "certainly committed blasphemy" — would be in an impossibly passive position, with no room to negotiate with the Void.

So Cheng Shi went silent. He clamped his mouth shut and played dead.

Well — played frozen-to-death.

But fate didn't comply. If some force in this Void truly wanted the clown to approach Time under the guise of Destiny, then Cheng Shi — a mere player — could he refuse?

Obviously not.

Not only couldn't he refuse — he'd actively agree.

So Cheng Shi opened his mouth. Though he kept his head down and cautiously pinched his own lips shut to prevent the Fool's Lips from backstabbing him, that absurd mouth still pried open a crack between his fingers and mumbled:

"Praise... Destiny... I will obey... all of Your... arrangements..."

"!!!"

"BOOM—"

Thunder struck Cheng Shi's brain. The sky was falling!

The instant Brother Mouth uttered those words, Cheng Shi was certain: the eyes before him absolutely belonged to the Fun God!

Only the Fun God would pull something this "underhanded"!

But why would the Fun God want him to fuse with Time?

'Could Time truly belong to the Fear Faction?'

'Not only opposing Destiny in terms of faith, but also opposing Her in the desire to approach Origin?'

If that were true, then the purpose of granting the last trial would need careful reconsideration.

'What was He trying to express?'

'Or rather — what was the Fun God, who seemed connected to Him, trying to express?'

'Were They trying to make him uncover this universe's truth? Telling him that invisible parallel worlds had always existed, and even the gods were nothing but slices?'

'Or were They themselves slices who hadn't realized it until that trial revealed the truth — and Cheng Shi had simply benefited by association?'

'No, no, no — if They didn't know, They wouldn't have conveyed this information through a trial to a group of players utterly irrelevant to the struggle for authority. They definitely knew. But what use could such a secret — the gods' most hidden truth — have at the player level?'

'What help could he possibly offer Them?'

Cheng Shi couldn't figure it out. So he decisively raised his head, seeking answers from his Benefactor.

Since this was the Fun God's arrangement, then Cheng Shi — fellow Fear Faction member — naturally wouldn't refuse. But he refused to be a clueless pawn. He wanted to know why he was jumping into Existence and what he'd gain from it.

Eyes resolute, he looked at those gleaming orbs and spoke: "My Lord, I— cough cough cough..."

Before he could finish, those eyes suddenly shifted — from cold hostility to gleeful amusement. Without giving Cheng Shi the slightest chance to ask questions, a single blink sent a gust of wind to dispatch this "I knew it" clown.

Watching His follower vanish, Deceit — yes, Deceit's eye-corners arched even higher.

"Worthy of Destiny's pet. His flattery skills have actually surpassed his professional abilities.

Origin...

Hah. You dare dream big, I'll give you that. But just because you dare dream doesn't mean I dare let you fuse it. That power... I have other uses for."

The spirals in those eyes unraveled. Stars scattered across the sky. The eyes dissolved, leaving only a lingering gale to sweep this patch of Void clean — as if erasing every trace that He and he had ever been here.

...

Meanwhile, the Void's civil war raged on.

Deceit hadn't shown Himself for some time. The one trading blows with Destiny had been Chaos throughout.

The colossal hand born from the chaotic yellow fog was clearly stronger than before — meaning this first deity of the Chaos Path had gained some unknown advantage.

Destiny traced the universe's fate trajectories and reached her conclusion in moments.

Order!

For reasons unknown, Order seemed to have lost a hand against Chaos — allowing Chaos to seize a portion of Order's authority, growing even more brazen.

Of course, this outcome didn't surprise Destiny. After all, the current Order was no longer the true Order. The true Order had long since drowned in the Sea of Desire, fragmented beyond repair.

But no matter how strong Chaos grew, it couldn't surpass the master of the current Era. Destiny handled Chaos with deliberate restraint — because what She truly watched for was the Deceit who'd vanished behind the fog and gone utterly silent!

She knew Her Void twin deity too well. With an ally enabling a two-on-one, He would never pass up a chance to humiliate Her.

Destiny may never be defeated. But undefeated didn't mean un-mocked. No one could escape Deceit's mockery. That was His authority — the most void thing within the Void itself.

"How much longer do You plan to hide?"

The freezing wind howled fiercer through the Void. This was nothing like the chill the clown had endured earlier — the cold here had already crystallized the chaotic yellow fog, coating Chaos's giant hand in terrifying ice.

Chaos focused solely on siege, never answering. The fog was silent too — so quiet it seemed as though that twin deity had truly departed.

But could He have actually left?

Destiny couldn't be sure. She could indeed see through the universe's essence, but She also had to respect the name Chaos that Origin had bestowed. Chaos's authority perpetually disrupted Her perception, and Deceit's illusions amplified the confusion to its extreme — until, for a moment, Destiny couldn't see the road ahead.

But She couldn't waste all Her time here. After this trial, She had plenty of other matters to attend to. Being pinned down in the Void by two gods was... rather embarrassing.

So Destiny stopped holding back. And the very instant She deconstructed the entire Void into fate trajectories, the other Lord of the Void finally revealed Himself — as if He'd been waiting for precisely this moment. The moment His twin deity went all-in.

"Hee~

At last! Today I'll find out — who is the real Void, and who is just a pretty facade!"

"BOOM—"

A battle that shook the entire universe erupted in the Void. In that instant, every single one of Them opened Their eyes.