

The Gods 96

Chapter 96: Who Is That?

Cheng Shi's laughter froze in an instant. He finally understood why everything had unfolded the way it did during the trial.

So, [Memory] had sent Su Yida back from the future to vent His frustration over losing His authority!

"Damn, so that's what it was all about!"

But why hadn't [Memory] simply taken direct action against him, especially when Cheng Shi had no means of resistance?

Ah, of course—his Patron was involved.

At that thought, Cheng Shi quickly bowed deeply toward [Deceit].

"Thank you for Your protection, Patron. You truly care for Your faithful followers like a mother cares for her child."

"When I realize that your words are lies, I feel both comforted and disappointed."

"....."

The emotions of gods sure are complicated.

Cheng Shi kept a wide smile plastered on his face, not daring to say anything in response.

"Let me clarify. I didn't stop [Memory] from acting—it was the [Covenant] that prevented Him.

Hmm... though this is something you aren't supposed to know about, so let's pretend you didn't hear that. While wandering through the [Existence], [Memory] found an opportunity to bypass the [Covenant] and erase you. So, He lent a bit of His power to His follower."

Just as I thought! There was a follower of [Memory] involved in that future trial!

Damn it! Let me find out who you are, and I'll write your name down in my little black book! Revenge will come, sooner or later!

"Thank you again for Your protection, Patron!"

Flattery never fails. No matter who stopped [Memory] from acting directly, it's always wise to thank the boss.

"I told you, I didn't stop Him."

"Surely, Patron, You had Your own considerations. Under Your guidance, I safely survived this ordeal!"

"... It seems that you've become much more talkative."

Uh... maybe I've just picked up the habit from someone.

"But you're not wrong. If He can act, so can I.

As a return favor, the [Memory] Chosen who entered My trial didn't have an easy time either."

!!!

Just hearing that made all of Cheng Shi's suffering worth it.

Serves you right!

I'm ranked in the sixties, and you mess with me? Well, your number one player just got hammered by my boss.

Let's see who comes out worse off!

Cheng Shi was thoroughly pleased, but he still had a lot of questions. Sensing that the audience with his Patron was going well, and that [Deceit] was in a good mood, he cautiously asked:

"Patron, I have a small question."

"Hm~"

The upward lilt in the tone made Cheng Shi realize that today was indeed a good day for asking.

He quickly continued:

"If [Memory] lent His power to His followers in the future, does that mean the future of the players is already determined and tied to existence?"

Cheng Shi had been puzzling over this issue for a while. He couldn't quite grasp how, if memory could be altered and the future backtracked, what exactly were the players who walked between these moments supposed to be?

The gaze clearly hadn't expected Cheng Shi to ask this. [Deceit] chuckled heartily:

"What humanity calls the past, present, and future are merely scattered pieces of [Existence] in His eyes.

[Time] enjoys making deductions. He labels the states that are too similar, and so you mortals conceive of time.

[Memory] loves to collect. He selects the pieces of [Existence] He fancies and redraws them into His memory sea, so you mortals remember the past.

Though He cannot infinitely evolve [Existence] like [Time], He can steal [Time]'s authority and hop on the 'evolution' train, turning what you call the future into memory.

For your part, pondering matters like these is pointless.

You are a favored of the void. You need not concern yourself with [Existence]."

Scattered states of [Existence]?

Cheng Shi didn't fully grasp it, but suddenly, it felt like he had gained some insight.

Not about that topic, though:

It turns out that the gods just love stealing from each other. Whether or not they follow the same path, if they can steal something, they will. Maybe that's the true nature of the gods.

"Then, in the eyes of our [Void], what do the past and future represent?"

"Oh? An interesting question.

From My perspective, the past is the future, and the future is the past.

From His perspective, the past may have never had a future, and when fate writes its full stop, the future will already have become the past."

“.....”

I have no idea what that means!

Forget it. Let's stop asking abstract questions and focus on something more practical.

After considering for a moment, Cheng Shi carefully asked:

“One more thing, Patron. Do You happen to know what's happened to Su Yida?”

The gaze paused for a moment, then blinked before responding:

“Who is that?”

“.....”

Cheng Shi froze, stunned, and then suddenly felt like laughing.

Su Yida had schemed so thoroughly, weaving his deceptions across both past and future trials, all to present a grand performance to [Deceit] in the hope of earning His attention.

And yet, [Deceit] didn't even know who Su Yida was.

No, perhaps He knew that Su Yida was one of His followers, but He had never truly noticed him.

In this light, Cheng Shi realized—he really was the favored one.

Yet, even with this realization, Cheng Shi's smile carried a trace of bittersweetness.

He felt like he had just discovered something else about the nature of the gods:

The devout faith that humans hold so dear might mean absolutely nothing in the eyes of the gods.

Because, in the end, they don't care.

Still, that dog Su Yida did manage to deceive me.

He wasn't even being watched by [Deceit], yet he used his trickery to win his life.

Damn, I really should've killed him when I had the chance.

Sensing the mix of anger and frustration coursing through Cheng Shi, the spiral in the gaze began to spin faster.

In an instant, the entire void seemed to warp with an inverted distortion. After a moment, it seemed that [Deceit] had gleaned the whole truth.

Cheng Shi chuckled darkly:

"So, in a way, he did earn Your attention after all, didn't he?"

May I ask, Patron—did Su Yida... succeed?"

"Which one are you asking about?"

Cheng Shi hesitated for a moment. "Both of them."

“They’re dead.”

“!”

Cheng Shi’s eyes widened in shock as he asked:

“Which one are You talking about?”

The gaze remained emotionless, as eternal as the cosmos.

“Both of them.”

“!!!”

Both Su Yidas were dead?

It wasn’t a surprise that future Su Yida had died at the hands of future players, but how had the present Su Yida died?

Who had killed him?

The gaze seemed to pierce through time and space, observing a distant scene as [Deceit] casually commented on what had transpired:

“His performance may have been impressive, but in any unscripted play, there are always extraneous elements.

He shouldn’t have coveted [Death]’s gift, even though he eventually realized this and returned it to you.

But...

[Death] is petty.

And so, My poor follower was punished.

You borrowed from His faith, but you still owe Him a sacrifice.

Someone has paid that debt for you.”

“.....”

Cheng Shi’s mouth hung open in disbelief. His mind raced back through the trial, but he couldn’t recall any sign of [Death]’s presence.

As far as he knew, aside from himself, there hadn’t been any other players following [Death] in the trial.

Could it be that someone else had lied?

Or had someone used one of His relics?

Just as Cheng Shi’s mind spun furiously, the spiral in the gaze began to twist even faster, until eventually the entire eye squinted shut.

“Interesting, so interesting!

I should’ve looked more closely at you from the start. Who would’ve thought, aside from [Death], there was another one of Them involved in all this.”

“Ah?” Cheng Shi was shocked once again.

What is this, some sort of divine poker game?

How did another god get involved?

“May I ask... which one?”

The gaze spun a few more times, and [Deceit] spoke cryptically:

“You’ve overstepped. I don’t have weaklings like you who are so easily broken.

But since I’m in a good mood today, I’ll forgive you.

The other one isn’t an [Existence], but rather a fellow [Void].

In other words, the one you like to call...

The bitch.”

The way [Deceit] said “the bitch” was so mischievous that it made the void seem to tremble, as if there were unseen beings laughing uproariously in the background.

“Hehe~

Alright, that’s enough for now. The rest of this isn’t for you to know. I’m off to go mock Them.

Today’s audience was quite enjoyable. You’re dismissed.”

With that, Cheng Shi felt himself get smacked out of the void, spiraling back to his rooftop.

Staring at the brilliant sun on the horizon, Cheng Shi's mind buzzed with the words his Patron had just spoken:

"The one you like to call... the bitch..."

That's the second time I've heard a god use that term.

Cheng Shi scratched his head, completely bewildered.

Have I somehow led the gods astray in their behavior?

Forget it. Better to focus on more pressing matters.

Patron, your poor follower still has this "four days left to live" debuff hanging over his head... Did You not notice, or are You just not planning to help?

Didn't You say You wouldn't punish me!?

"....."