

The Gods 194

Chapter 194: Returning to the Starting Point of Fate!

Two fingertips touched, one flesh-colored, the other... black.

Cheng Shi sat cross-legged on the ground, the sun blazing overhead, yet cold sweat dripped down his body.

He stared at the black shadow hand in front of him, which had detached itself from the ground and was now touching his own fingertip, stunned for a long moment.

Huh?

Brother, you're kind of freaking me out.

Can't we just talk things out? Why are you so agitated you're lifting off the ground?

Maybe you should lie back down first, and then we can chat?

For some reason, on a whim, Cheng Shi suddenly grabbed the shadow's wrist, trying to force it back onto the ground.

But the moment he moved, the shadow also suddenly reached out and grabbed his wrist. The two hands, one black and one white, held each other firmly, and then...

They started arm wrestling.

You know, surprisingly, this shadow looked thin and frail, but it wasn't weak at all.

The two "people" wrestled for a long time, perfectly matched, with neither gaining the upper hand.

The absurdity of the scene almost made Cheng Shi laugh, but the next second, his face paled, and he abruptly let go, scrambling backward on his butt, putting distance between himself and the shadow before asking uncertainly:

“Who are you?”

“...”

“Speak!”

“...”

“Did you come from the fruit?”

“...”

“What, brave enough to arm wrestle but too scared to talk?”

Cheng Shi cautiously probed, tightly gripping the [Death] ring in his hand, just in case.

However, after waiting for a long time, the shadow didn't respond. Instead, Cheng Shi's "own" mouth spoke again.

“I've never seen such a fool who talks to his own shadow.”

“?”

Cheng Shi was startled. He touched his own lips.

“And I've never seen a mouth that insults itself.”

“...”

The Fool’s Lips were momentarily speechless, a rare occurrence. Cheng Shi seized the opportunity, immediately lowering his stance and asking respectfully:

“Mouth-bro, what’s going on here?”

The Fool’s Lips rarely initiated conversation with Cheng Shi. The fact that it spoke now meant one thing to Cheng Shi:

This shadow lying on the ground, mimicking his every move, was likely not dangerous.

But where did it come from?

Was it really from the Conjugated Whispering fruit he had eaten?

Only that fruit could have such an effect, right?

The fusion of reality and void, born in conjugation—when manifested in a person, wouldn’t it look just like a person and their shadow?

Thinking this, Cheng Shi gradually grew bolder.

He slowly crawled towards the shadow, his cautious eyes carefully examining this mirrored figure crawling towards him.

In its current state, it was less like a shadow and more like a pure black, textureless, three-dimensional, transparent “person.”

When Cheng Shi's gaze focused beyond the shadow, his sight easily passed through the "black" figure. But when his focus returned to the shadow itself, the transparent figure seemed to solidify into an "existence" with physical volume.

The sensation was novel, so much so that Cheng Shi couldn't resist poking and prodding his own shadow.

He began to carefully study this mirrored shadow, which had detached from its two-dimensional plane and become a three-dimensional existence.

It couldn't speak and had no self-awareness. All its actions were exact replicas of Cheng Shi's movements, like a mirror image—identical yet reversed.

But aside from that, it seemed no different from a two-dimensional shadow.

When Cheng Shi pulled out a frying pan from his inventory, the shadow couldn't produce a "shadow version" of the pan.

Not only that, but even more bizarrely, the frying pan cast its own shadow, and that shadow was exactly where it should be.

Only Cheng Shi's shadow stood before him, mimicking the swing of a non-existent "frying pan," looking like a mental patient wrapped in black cloth.

Cheng Shi looked at the inexplicable shadow with a strange expression, and unable to resist, he swung the pan at it.

As expected, the bottom of the pan passed through the shadow's body and hit the ground.

Cheng Shi didn't stop. He continued pulling out various items from his surroundings, his warehouse, and his inventory, throwing them at the shadow, but none of the miscellaneous objects left any mark on it.

Until!

He slapped a mask onto the shadow's head, and this time, it connected solidly!

The mask didn't pass through the shadow but settled firmly on its head!

The body that even the Die of Fate couldn't hit was now struck by a mask!

Cheng Shi shuddered, his pupils instantly constricting!

Could it be...

An idea sparked in his mind. With slightly trembling hands, he reached out and adjusted the mask on the shadow's head, fitting it perfectly onto its face.

The moment the mask settled snugly, "Swish—" Cheng Shi's consciousness was sucked away again.

Completely without warning.

...

Another bright and sunny afternoon, another all-too-familiar space.

When Cheng Shi opened his eyes again, he was shocked to find himself back at...

The starting point of his Fate Path!

Yes, the starting point! And before him, once again, were the laughing mask and the motionless die.

Except this time, the die showed a 6.

“?”

Staring at this unbelievable scene, a guess began to form in Cheng Shi’s mind.

A bold, unspeakable guess.

He didn’t dare dwell on it, didn’t dare let his thoughts run wild. Taking a couple of deep breaths to calm himself, he followed his memory and asked the two divine artifacts before him the very first question he had asked upon entering the [Faith Game].

“How should I choose?”

However, unlike last time, the mask before him didn’t respond.

Cheng Shi’s heart skipped a beat, his spine instantly straightening.

He instinctively reached for his mouth, repeatedly calling the name of the Fool’s Lips in his mind, but the mouth that usually loved to deceive him remained silent.

It was as if it wasn’t there.

Cheng Shi swallowed nervously, the premonition in his mind growing stronger.

There seemed to be no [Deceit] here, only... [Fate]!

Because the mask of [Deceit] had likely been “sent away” by his own hand—given to his shadow!

Cheng Shi’s face turned grim, his heart filled with unease.

He cautiously moved forward a couple of steps, his wary eyes darting between the two artifacts.

When he got closer, he took a deep breath, closed his eyes, then opened them slightly, squinting as if trying to trick himself, and reached out towards the mask floating in mid-air.

But the moment his fingers touched the mask, his hand passed right through it!

!!!

This wasn't a mask!

It was just an illusion!

Just as Cheng Shi had guessed, in this "new" starting point of his Fate Path, there was no [Deceit], only... [Fate]!

Such an obvious hint, such clear guidance, such an undeniable choice—the answer He wanted seemed self-evident.

"..."

Cheng Shi looked at the "void" mask before him, then at the "solid" die, his heart filled with complex emotions.

He once again recalled the words [Memory] had spoken:

"Have you ever considered returning to the true path of [Fate]?"

So...

What He wanted was for him to return to the true path of [Fate]?

Cheng Shi understood. He had a sudden realization.

So this was the compromise. He had already given the answer.

Swallow the bitter fruit of [Fate], then return to the true path of [Fate]. Only then would "Fate" "let him go."

"..."

But I don't want to be an oathbreaker.

Cheng Shi thought this but didn't dare say it aloud. Not only that, but his actions demonstrated perfectly: "If I had another chance, I'd still be greedy."

Even knowing the mask was fake, even knowing he had no choice under His gaze, Cheng Shi reached out towards the mask again.

And the moment his hand passed through the mask once more, the motionless die moved!

It suddenly flipped from a 6 to a 1.

Then, a terrifying pressure surged from all directions!