

The Gods 198

Chapter 198: So [Fate] Had Already Decided...

A fierce battle erupted in the void.

No one knew why it started, nor when it ended.

What was certain, however, was that when the battle concluded, Cheng Shi awoke.

He had been thrown back into reality much earlier, but his consciousness remained in a state of chaos, unable to fully return.

He felt as though he had experienced a long dream, a dream where he had swapped lives with his shadow. He became the shadow on the ground, while the shadow took his place.

He desperately wanted to switch back but was repeatedly thwarted by the helplessness of the dream. The feeling was deeply unsettling, making Cheng Shi feel, at one point, as if he had lost his future.

But the moment the battle in the void ended, Cheng Shi abruptly broke free from the absurd and eerie nightmare and woke up.

The first thing he did was look down at his shadow. He found that the shadow, which had been pulled into three dimensions, was now flat against the ground again, back in its two-dimensional form, and showed no further abnormalities.

The “illness” was cured. This brought him immense relief.

“Thank goodness, thank goodness. It’s all back, everything’s normal.”

However... it wasn’t entirely good news. After all, he had become an oathbreaker.

He sat slumped on the ground, recalling everything that had just happened, and quickly opened his player panel to check the details.

But when he saw the list of entirely new talents, an indescribable mix of emotions welled up inside him.

So I really did break my oath...

[Cheng Shi, Male, 22 years old]

[Fate Path: Void]

[Faith: Fate]

[Current Path to Godhood Score: 2156, Global Rank:]

[Current Ladder of Ascent Score: 166, Fate Path Rank: 43]

[Faith Talents:

– Loom of Fate (SS): Fate Faith Talent, Active. When you place a [Mask of Mortals] on your face, your base class will temporarily be replaced by the base class of the follower from whom the [Mask of Mortals] originated. The [Mask of Mortals] disappears upon removal.

– Fate Also Has Detours (S): Fate Faith Talent, Active. When you predict that the near future is heading towards misfortune, you can abandon your current fate and endure a period of even greater misfortune.

– The Trick of the Underdog (S): Fate Faith Talent, Passive. All 1s you roll are equivalent to the maximum value on the die face.

– Never Lost Gambling Tool (S): Fate Faith Talent, Active. You can swap positions with any die you throw.

– Honest Clown (S): Deceit Oathbreaker Curse, Passive. A clown who cannot lie moves rigidly, relying only on cheap sincerity to win applause. Therefore, when you lie, your movements become tense and full of flaws. This talent cannot be replaced by other talents.

...]

?

There was so much information packed into this panel that Cheng Shi's brain practically shut down after just a quick scan.

Huh?

Setting aside everything else, Lord Patron, the name of this oathbreaker talent... are you sure it's not pointed?

What do you mean, "Honest Clown"?

Just insulting me directly, huh?

And what's this about "when you lie, your movements become tense and full of flaws"? So you sold me out, and I still have to take the blame?

Heh, I'm the clown.

However, within the limited text description, Cheng Shi spotted a crucial detail with massive implications.

That was: This talent cannot be replaced by other talents.

Seeing this sentence, Cheng Shi's heart skipped a beat.

Damn it, this phrase was too familiar. So familiar that it immediately reminded him of the “Visage of Mortals” talent he had when he followed [Deceit].

Let’s review the effect of “Visage of Mortals”:

Visage of Mortals (S): Deceit Faith Talent, Passive. Special trial rewards will be replaced by the special item [Mask of Mortals], and this talent cannot be replaced by other talents.

[Translator’s Note: I previously used “The Many Faces” / “Masks of the Many Faces,” which fit the initial idea of disguise. However, this chapter revealed that these masks actually allow the user to temporarily take on the base class of the person the mask came from. For this reason, I’ve updated the terms to “Visage of Mortals” and “Masks of Mortals” going forward, as it connects more clearly to the story’s themes of fate and identity. Thanks for your understanding!]

Mask of Mortals!

This utterly useless Mask of Mortals, whose effects could only be seen by others, actually had a new purpose under the faith of [Fate]!

Cheng Shi’s gaze sharpened, his pupils constricting. He quickly looked back at the “Loom of Fate” talent, and then he realized that these “useless” Masks of Mortals he had stored in his warehouse had actually become key items under the faith of [Fate].

If so... wasn’t fate already decided back at the very first starting point of the Fate Path?

Taking it a step further, could “Visage of Mortals” itself have been a [Fate Oathbreaker Talent], merely disguised with different wording by his Patron—no, former Patron!?

Could it be possible!?

Very possible!

That sounds exactly like something He would do!

But doesn't that mean I was already an oathbreaker back then, or right from the start of my Fate Path?

"..."

Cheng Shi was stunned.

All those times I joked about being a [Fate] oathbreaker were just self-deprecation and banter, but you were playing for real?

Does that mean I've broken my oath twice now?

A good horse forced to eat the grass it already passed over?

Damn, this is too messed up.

"..."

Having figured all this out, Cheng Shi finally understood why the "compromise" with [Fate] required him to return to [Fate]...

Because likely no [God] would compromise with an oathbreaker, unless... that oathbreaker became Their follower again.

Reasonable. So damn reasonable.

So everything was written in His script all along. Even his return to [Fate] might have been foreseen by Him, which is why He gave him such an oathbreaker talent in the first place.

But He truly was merciful. Because an oathbreaker talent, unlike an oathbreaker curse, not only lacked obvious negative side effects, but all the masks accumulated through it became a source of power for Cheng Shi's future.

Putting prejudice aside, He had indeed done everything He possibly could.

And yet, I cursed Him day in and day out... thinking about it now...

Damn, I'm really not a good person!

Perhaps that death in the void last time was His anger after reaching His limit. But He must have foreseen [Deceit]'s arrival, which is why He "heartlessly" finished me off.

Recalling the encounter with [Fate] this time, He clearly wasn't a heartless and cruel [God].

Not only that! He even gave me, who was about to become a "little bitch," a different identity besides just being a bitch:

A Gambler!

He perceived the strong gambling nature within me and built an entire talent system around "gambling and strategy" for me.

Although this "Fate Also Has Detours" seemed a bit useless and somewhat like a commentary on my past actions...

But after sorting out this long string of events regarding His motives and thoughts, Cheng Shi suddenly felt that returning to the path of [Fate] wasn't entirely unacceptable.

At least the real bitch was someone else, and at least His "favoritism" was no different from his former Patron's...

At this moment, he finally understood the true meaning of the words [Memory] had spoken during their previous meeting.

“Interesting. So [Fate] had already decided.”

Indeed, fate had already decided.

And the bargaining chip that was decided upon was himself.

Cheng Shi raised the Die of Fate in his hand, holding it up to the sunlight. For the first time, he found the pale, bone-like surface of the die so dazzling, and the golden pips seemed to refract endless light.

In this blinding light, he clearly saw his past, yet vaguely glimpsed his future.

“Fate is like the stars, visible but unreachable.

Today, I will no longer be the Clown, but a follower of [Fate]...

A Weaver of Fate!”