

The Gods 216

Chapter 216: Fate Has Divergence

The thunderous voice of [Order] echoed across the entire arena. Regardless of whether the convicts in the prison below could hear it, every surviving deathmatch prisoner in the field wore an ugly expression.

But the one whose face twisted wasn't the Penal Knight behind Cheng Shi.

Upon hearing the Supreme Inquisitor commute their deathmatch sentences to the Blasphemy Death Penalty, the knight sneered savagely and clamped an iron grip around the back of Cheng Shi's neck.

"You dared make a fool of me? Die, scum!"

'I wasn't even the one who swapped you in. Why are you losing it at me?'

'Go find Zhao Si if you've got the nerve. Find him, and you won't even need to lift a finger—I'll kill him for you.'

But words were useless now. The humiliated Penal Knight simply wanted to unleash his fury on Cheng Shi, apparently believing that if he killed Cheng Shi, no one would ever know he'd been played.

He thought wrong. The instant he was about to snap Cheng Shi's neck, Cheng Shi spun around and drove a scalpel into the knight's throat.

Hiss—

The Penal Knight crumpled on impact, blood spraying wildly.

"Ugh... guhh... you..."

"Me what?"

"If you're going to try killing someone, be prepared to get killed right back. That's common sense. Understand?"

"Now then—I'll be borrowing that armor of yours!"

While chaos spread and the surrounding Iron Law Knights hadn't yet sealed off the Colosseum, Cheng Shi stripped the Penal Knight's armor in three swift moves and pulled it on over himself.

As for the helmet... the prisoner helmet couldn't come off, which meant the knight's helm wouldn't fit over it either. 'Good enough. This'll fool the idiots.'

But his every move had been spotted by Iron Law Knights scouring the area for deathmatch convicts. Shouting [Order]'s battle cries, they converged on him immediately.

Facing this small steel avalanche, Cheng Shi didn't panic in the slightest. In fact, he smiled.

He filled his lungs and bellowed across the entire Colosseum:

"Little liars!"

"I hope you've already escaped!"

"If you're still here, you'd better hide well—because I'm about to find you!"

With that, Cheng Shi snapped his fingers at the encircling knights and activated the first talent of his curtain-call performance:

Fate Has Divergence!

Yes—Fate Has Divergence!

Cheng Shi's fate was indeed hurtling toward misfortune: the prison bombed, citizens in a panic, armored cavalry closing in, a death sentence pronounced.

In any foreseeable future, if Cheng Shi didn't resist, nothing awaited him but death.

So Cheng Shi grinned. 'Since my fate is this unfortunate, why not make it a little more unfortunate?'

After all, only change can breed opportunity—and only opportunity can create new life.

And so he activated Fate Has Divergence!

The talent—whose very name reeked of disaster and suffering—produced no visible effect upon activation. Not a single ripple disturbed the scene.

However, the moment the knights were about to run Cheng Shi through with their lances...

Deep underground, one of the support pillars beneath the spectator stands suddenly gave way.

This pillar—gnawed by rats, riddled by termites, neglected for years—had long been on the verge of collapse. The chaotic stampeding in the stands and the fluctuating pressure above had left it teetering on the brink.

Most critically, the instant Cheng Shi activated his talent, a rather generously proportioned woman in the audience abruptly changed her escape route and came wobbling across the platform this pillar supported. That one tremor was the straw that broke the camel's back, delivering this column—which had stood for only a few years—to a premature demise.

BOOM!

The ground caved in.

The southwestern section of the Colosseum's spectator stands collapsed without warning. Countless splintered beams and billowing clouds of dust swallowed screaming civilians into the underground below.

As one section gave way, the entire ring-shaped canopy began to disintegrate. Stripped of its support, the stands triggered a cascading chain reaction before everyone's horrified eyes.

Boom—boom—boom—boom—

Something far more terrifying than the explosions had arrived. The entire Colosseum was collapsing.

Massive timbers rained down from the canopy like executioner's hammers, crashing toward the Iron Law Knights and Cheng Shi at the center of the arena.

Now an even more unfortunate fate loomed, and this one looked inescapable.

No one could survive this—even the Iron Law Knights had gone deathly pale. They held their lances overhead, seemingly hoping to fend off the plummeting timbers through sheer force of will.

But those few lances were pitifully inadequate. The knights had underestimated both the weight of the canopy beams and the speed of their descent.

Before [Order]'s faint glow could link into a unified barrier, the "divine punishment from above" was already upon them.

"No—NO!!!"

BOOM—BOOM—

Dust erupted in all directions. The earth itself quaked.

Today's Montelani was destined for turmoil. Citizens throughout the city jolted awake from the violent tremors, their gazes turning as one toward the Colosseum.

There, an enormous cloud of dust was rocketing skyward before dissolving into nothingness.

In the place where the Supreme Inquisitor's voice of [Order] still echoed, [Fate] had arrived in silence—and commuted the death sentence for every listener of [Order].

As for Cheng Shi—the favored child of [Fate] whose destiny was supposed to diverge toward misfortune...

Where had he gone?

That was an excellent question.

In truth, before activating the talent, Cheng Shi had sensed this ability could escalate things dramatically. His plan had been to intensify the explosions, create more chaos—perhaps enough for the Iron Law Knights to fully surround the Colosseum, trapping his troublemaking teammates inside.

'If we're all going to sabotage each other, might as well go all in.'

But he never imagined that misfortune was contagious.

When an entire web of misfortune linked together, not even a god could save His followers.

So the Colosseum fell. All of it. Burying everyone who hadn't escaped beneath the rubble.

Cheng Shi had bolted the instant he saw the massive timbers plummeting overhead. He might not be able to escape the collapsing Colosseum, but as long as he dodged the falling beams, he still had a way to survive.

So he activated the second talent of his curtain-call performance—using the die he'd buried when he stumbled at the prison entrance—and swapped himself into the already-collapsed rubble beneath the surface.

The ordinary die he'd teleported to the center of the arena wobbled on the shaking ground before slowly rolling to a six—frozen there like [Fate]'s mocking grin, a motionless witness to the tragic destiny of the Iron Law Knights.

"Cough, cough... cough, cough..."

Having inhaled a lungful of dust, Cheng Shi materialized in the underground rubble in a curled-up position. The stolen armor had blocked many of the splintered wood spikes, but its thickness also compressed his already-limited survival space.

No matter. As long as he was alive, recovery was possible.

Especially since Cheng Shi still had plenty of potions—and he was, after all, a Hero of Today.

The Hero produced a vial of Yesterday's Prosperity and a small magic lamp from his personal storage space.

He tipped the potion back without hesitation. His injuries healed completely, and with god-like strength, he cleared away the broken timber and twisted steel around him, carving out a pocket of space just large enough for one person.

He paused to listen. Beyond the groans and screams drifting through the surrounding wreckage, the sounds from the surface had faded to nothing.

"Tch. Five days. If I survive down here for five days, does that mean I've cleared this trial without lifting a finger?"

"Hmm, that makes sense..."

"But what about the prophecy? What's going on with the prophecy? Did all my deceiver teammates really not make it?"

At this thought, Cheng Shi smiled.

Everything he'd shouted in the Colosseum had been a bluff—pure intimidation. He had no intention of hunting down those little deceivers.

[Fate]'s prophecy had already revealed the ending. If they were destined to die, searching was pointless. If they were destined to die at his hands, then without any effort on his part, fate itself would bring them right to his doorstep.

Right on cue: the debris before him shifted twice, and a rat with glowing green eyes came squeaking out of the rubble.

Cheng Shi didn't hesitate for a single second. The scalpel in his hand plunged into the little rodent's skull without a word.

'See? Right on schedule.'

...