

The Gods 256

Chapter 256: You [Void] People...

Let's rewind a little — back to before [Fate]'s arrival, after the audience with [Deceit].

When the battle that erupted in the depths of the Void had concluded, [Fate] — on the way back from the [Chaos] temple — encountered a familiar face.

Two identical pairs of eyes locked gazes in the Void, neither yielding an inch.

A déjà vu scene. One pair with playfully upturned corners; the other, cold as death.

"Hee~

The smell of [Chaos]. I was wondering who was stirring up the Void — turns out you two had a little brawl. So? Did you make Him angry?"

"Hmph. The era of [Chaos] ended long ago. Just a pitiful creature clinging to futile delusions. I merely helped Him face reality."

"Oh? So you won?"

The cold eyes twitched at the corner. The tone grew icier still:

"Why are you here?"

"Just happened to pass by.

Thought I'd remind you — our little wager has a result. Looks like you lost.

[Fate]'s favored little player never once abandoned his lies throughout that trial. Seems his confidence in [Fate]... just isn't quite enough.

Oh~ I see. Don't tell me you got angry from embarrassment and took it out on [Chaos] for hosting the trial?

Hee~

This is a [Void] wager. Don't go dragging other gods into it."

The playful eyes grew more playful. The frigid eyes turned ever colder.

He looked at this sibling god of [Void] and spoke, word by word:

"You had a prior arrangement with [Chaos]. He must have helped you circumvent the Convention to orchestrate everything within the trial.

Therefore, you violated the terms of the wager. This round is void."

"Really? Where's your proof?"

[Fate] sees through all things — naturally You'd know the exact moment I intervened. Point it out, and I'll concede this round is invalid."

"..."

[Fate] choked — as if a hand had seized His throat.

He truly hadn't detected any irregularities. That was precisely why He'd visited the [Chaos] temple.

"Oh~ so You have no proof. That's fine — I do." [Deceit] laughed merrily. "You forcibly interfered with a player's fate, meddling in [Chaos]'s trial, stripping His envoy of the chance to birth his own divinity. By that logic, even if he did abandon his lies — You still lost.

Because You violated the wager's non-interference clause.

Am I right? Great [Fate]?"

"...What do you want?"

"Nothing much. Just do what the wager stipulates.

Let me recall what our wager actually says... mm, allow me to refresh Your memory.

If [Fate]'s favored child abandons his lies in the next trial, then the original [Void] agreement shall be torn up and voided — and I shall no longer recognize him as one of my Collection.

Conversely — if [Fate]'s favored child does not abandon his lies, then the [Void] agreement originally set to take effect in the future shall take immediate effect. And the loser — that being You, my dear sister, the great [Fate] — shall personally restore my Collection's inalienable power of [Deceit].

Of course, I have so many items in my Collection. He's just one among many. Even if he walks [Fate]'s road alone, it matters little.

But I respect all agreements and contracts, just as I respect the Convention. And I trust You do as well.

So — the Collection must be returned to its proper place.

However, considering that Your followers don't have the advantage in their rivalry against [Time]'s followers, I feel I shouldn't be too harsh. Since our little trickster doesn't reject [Fate]'s favor, then...

I happen to have another method — a method that 'satisfies both sides.' I wonder, great God of [Fate] — would You care to hear it?"

A terrifying gale erupted in the Void. Even the pitch blackness representing nothingness was frosted white by the biting wind.

"So you planned this from the start. That means the wager I personally agreed to was likely already tampered with the moment I accepted it!"

The cold eyes focused, thinking of one God — [Chaos], who had just fought with Him!

[Deceit] and [Chaos] seemed to be on rather good terms!

In that case, He might indeed have made a promise to [Deceit] and tampered with things accordingly.

'That beating just now — I went too easy.'

"Careful with your words, or I'll report you for defamation."

"Hmph. Report to whom? [Order]? You think He dares sanction Me?"

"Hee~"

Never mind who. You just need to tell me whether you'll honor the wager or not."

The gale still raged. The temperature kept dropping. But in the Void, none of it mattered — because both supreme beings of [Void] were present. They were, by nature, the embodiment of meaninglessness.

"I will honor the agreement. But I must remind you:

[Chaos] is not a wise choice."

"Oh? Then who is?

[Truth], whom You so often spar with?

Or [Folly], who deigns to cooperate with no one?

You're fishing. So am I. We're using the same bait. On what grounds do You claim my catch is inferior to Yours?"

"Because I have already seen the ending — the fish's ending, and the bait's!

No matter how you meddle with his fate, it will be futile.

Fixed Destiny is called Fixed for a reason — all endings were written long ago. You can alter the process, but you cannot alter the Fixed destination."

"We'll see. Who knows what the future holds?

[Fate] isn't only about the Fixed, now is it?

Well then — I have things to do. No need to see me off."

With that, the playful eyes dissolved into nothing.

The cold eyes watched the place where He had vanished. After a long silence, a frigid whisper:

"This, too, is fate."

...

Far across the Void — outside the pale-white Fishbone Hall.

A colossal skull materialized before the Fishbone Hall's entrance. He stared at the endlessly extending staircase of white bones and grumbled:

"Old Bones, is this how you treat your guests?"

"You. Are not. A guest."

"Hee~"

You already consider me family?

Well, while [Void] has no intention of partnering with [Life], given the grand reception you've prepared, I can represent [Void] and... spend more quality time with you, Old Bones."

"No need. I. Do not. Like. You."

"Dead men really do speak coldly." The skull bounced twice, failed to hop up the stairs, and gave up. He "squatted" on the bone staircase, watching countless living beings leap from the cliff of white bones only to be scoured by the Void into countless new skulls — an endless cycle. Boring, but He didn't speak either.

After a while, the real skull couldn't take it anymore. He sighed:

"Why. Have you. Come?"

"Playing dumb, Old Bones?"

My follower finally managed to get his hands on a tiny bit of New Authority Divinity — something not bound by the Convention — and you went and snatched it! That's the big bullying the small, the old exploiting seniority!

Hand it over. Hand it over and I'll let it go."

But this time, [Death] did not yield.

"Do you. Know. That was. The New Authority. Of [Corruption]?"

"Obviously. Fear, right? It's not like I've never seen it."

"Then you. Should not. Have forgotten. How [Order]. Was split apart!"

The skull on the stairs grew uncharacteristically quiet. He seemed to be remembering something, his tone shifting to something wistful:

"How could I forget?"

How could I possibly forget?

After the First God War ended, the undisputed sole victor — [Order] — entered the Sea of Desire to purge the cosmos. And then...

The cosmos lost [Order].

He was torn apart by His own desires — split into four.

[Justice (Order)] and [Fear (Order)] filled the Convention. One became its framework and rules; the other became His will within trials.

[Obsession (Order)] inherited His Divine Throne, calling himself the [Iron Law of Order], and continued sheltering His people.

As for [Pride (Order)]...

He vanished. No one ever saw Him again."

"As long as. You remember.

Such dangerous. New Authority. Even you. Should not. Collect.

He. Cannot yet. Handle. These things."

The skull on the stairs shook off the sentimentality and grew cheerful again. He bounced twice, laughing:

"So you're saying — you're protecting him?"

The great skull on the Bone Throne said nothing, but the green flame flickering within his eye sockets said everything.

"Sigh — why does everyone always covet my Collection..."

"..."

"Fine, fine, fine — let's say you're right. But you still can't just take my follower's things for free."

"..."

The great skull fell silent again. This scene felt familiar — and had happened not so long ago.

"I. Have not. Taken. Any more. Sacrifices. From him."

"That's only because he pre-deposited a lot. You can't fool me — I saw all of it."

"..."

'Pre-deposited...'

Using a word like that to describe a mortal's offering to a God. How novel.

Only He could utter something so absurd.

The great skull was speechless beyond measure — yet had no choice but to find a way to dismiss this annoying fraud.

"What. Do you. Want. This time?"

"Hee~"

Before [Deceit] could even finish, he was cut off.

"Anything. But. An alliance."

"Tsk. Boring. Old Bones, how can you be so predictable?"

"Change. Is the Authority. Of [Fate]."

The skull on the stairs froze wide-eyed, staring up in utter disbelief at the one on the Bone Throne:

"You can actually crack jokes now?"

"..."

After being needled one time too many, [Death] finally lost His patience. The green glow in His eye sockets flared, and the great spine of the Fishbone Hall cracked like a whip — "whoosh" — launching the fraudulent skull out through the gates.

Watching [Deceit] fly off without the slightest resistance, He sighed and began deliberating what to compensate that troublesome employee.

'A boss offering unsolicited compensation to an employee...'

Even in the reality before the Gods descended, this would have been utterly absurd.

But the Void held something even more absurd!

Not long after the fake skull was whipped away, a pair of eyes painted with spirals and constellations opened above the Fishbone Hall in the Void.

The great skull on the Bone Throne gazed listlessly upward and heard the cold eyes slowly begin their interrogation:

"[Death], why did you seize the New Authority Divinity from my follower's hands?"

"..."

The green flame in the skull's eyes guttered out. He seemed to have exhausted every ounce of patience.

"Why won't you speak?"

"You. [Void]. People..."

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