

## The Gods 257

Chapter 257: Back to [Deceit]! Reflection of [Void]!

Cheng Shi woke up.

But he lay motionless on the rooftop floor.

Before, he hadn't moved because he was thinking. Now, it was because he was waiting to see if there'd be a fourth trip to the Void.

'I'm tired... truly, genuinely tired.'

'Could these opportunities maybe be spread around to other players? Let them experience the tender loving care of the Gods for a change? The amount of divine attention on me is getting ridiculous — any more and it'll crush me.'

'A God's gaze has weight, you know. Every single thread of it pushes down with the force of a thousand pounds!'

After waiting for quite some time and receiving no further summons, Cheng Shi sprang to his feet with a carp flip. His mind kept replaying [Fate]'s words, every inch of him wound tight with nerves.

He'd just received an utterly absurd and preposterous divine decree.

'The process? Forgot. The reward? Forgot. The reason... what was it again?'

"In countless futures, He stumbles and errs, never to smile again..."

'Huh?'

'That's a reason to issue a divine decree?'

'My Lord — don't You find this even slightly ridiculous?'

"Don't bother with Him." "Don't be as reckless as Him." Those were YOUR words!'

'And somehow the conclusion ended up being: fun has gone stale, please help [Deceit]?''

'What is this relationship between You two? Hss — dare I even think about it?'

'And setting aside all these things that feel like hallucinations — haven't I been helping enough already!?''

'I play the clown every single day for everyone's amusement!'

'What more can I do!?''

'No... wait!'

Overthinking was useless. The first thing Cheng Shi did was check his player interface.

One glance and he froze.

But before long, the shock on his face transformed into absolute, delirious ecstasy. The corners of his eyes climbed higher. His grin stretched wider. Within moments, the rooftop of the rest area featured a maniac wearing the most deranged smile imaginable.

"AAAAAAAAAAH—"

The unhinged laughter immediately drew Xie Yang's attention from the neighboring rooftop.

"Dude — did you catch a baboon or something? That laugh is seriously creepy."

Cheng Shi froze instantly. He clapped a hand over his mouth, converting the wild cackling into a secretive titter.

'So that's how it is. I knew my guess was right — faiths really have begun to fuse!'

And the first step of fusion was: coexistence!

[Cheng Shi, Male, 22]

[Path: Void]

[Path Talent:

Reflection of Nihilty (SSS): Void Path talent. Active. You and your shadow share the same root, born conjugate. By swapping identities, you can switch faiths. Upon switching, the original faith's talent effects are deactivated.

...]

[Current Faith: Fate]

[Current Road to Ascension Score: 2168 — Global Ranking: 428,647]

[Current Ladder of Ascent Score: 169 — Path Ranking: 41]

[Faith Talent:

...

Fate Clown (S): Deceit Oathbreaking talent. Passive. A clown blessed by fate is still a clown — his ridiculous performances still draw laughter. Therefore, you remain under His favor and enjoy the blessing of Master of Deception. This talent cannot be replaced by other talents.

...]

'?'

'Oh no — the Oathbreaking curse has become an Oathbreaking talent. Somebody just became the real clown here...'

'As for who, I dare not say.'

'So to rescue [Deceit]'s smile, You really went all in...'

But aside from the comedy, Cheng Shi's eyes locked onto this so-called Path Talent:

Reflection of [Void]!

He finally understood. So this was how faiths coexisted — not by housing two faiths in one player simultaneously, but by staggering them across time!

His shadow had truly become a faith repository. It was now a follower of [Deceit], while he himself was a follower of [Fate].

That being the case — how did the swap work?

As he pondered, Cheng Shi looked at his shadow. It lay flat on the ground like any ordinary shadow — unremarkable, docile — nothing like the three-dimensional form it had taken before.

Just a dark silhouette. How was he supposed to swap faiths with it?

'Chant a prayer?'

"Lies like yesterday..." No reaction.

"Cannot distinguish true from false..." No reaction.

"Fate like myriad stars..." No reaction.

'Touch it?'

He crouched down and ran his hand along the ground. Still nothing.

But just as Cheng Shi furrowed his brow, puzzling over how to switch faiths, his shadow suddenly peeled itself off the floor again and extended a single finger toward him.

!!!

The abrupt transformation startled him — but he quickly swallowed, reached out with a slightly trembling hand, and touched his fingertip to the shadow's.

When white fingertip met black, Cheng Shi's vision blurred for an instant, and then—

Nothing happened.

"Hm?" He looked himself over. His body seemed unchanged. But then it hit him — he quickly pulled up his player interface.

[Cheng Shi, Male, 22]

[Path: Void]

...

[Current Faith: Deceit]

...

[Current Ladder of Ascent Score: 169 — Path Ranking: 57]

[Faith Talent:

...

Aspect of Sentient Beings (S): Fate Oathbreaking talent. Passive. The pitiful soul who strayed from fate is bound by the fates of all living things, unable to escape fate's web. Therefore, Special Trial rewards will be replaced with the special item [Masks of the Many Faces]. This talent cannot be replaced by other talents.

...]

!!!

'It's back! Everything is back!'

'I'm a trickster again!'

But this Fate Oathbreaking talent...

Cheng Shi's face fell. His expression turned complicated.

'Just as I suspected. I really was an oathbreaker all along! An oathbreaker who, at the very Path Starting Point, abandoned [Fate] and walked toward [Deceit]!'

Yes — Cheng Shi truly was an oathbreaker. And not just any oathbreaker — he was the very first in the entire Faith Game!

The moment he'd accepted the Die of Fate yet still reached for the mask, at that point before the game had even begun, he had already become an oathbreaker.

Of course, he wasn't the only player to show greed at the Path Starting Point. But players willing to risk death for that greed were exceedingly rare.

Some endured the divine punishment partway before giving up and embracing a single faith to survive. Others died outright — too greedy and unprotected by any God. Among all of them, Cheng Shi was the only one who survived as an oathbreaker.

Perhaps because he was special. Perhaps because he was greedy enough. In any case, [Deceit] took a shine to him and snatched him away from [Fate].

And out of His "care" — yes, care. Definitely not some twisted sense of humor — Cheng Shi's oathbreaking talent had been "painted over" to look like a faith talent. The follower himself had never known the truth.

Not until now, when [Deceit] and [Fate] had compromised with each other, did he finally discover what had been hidden all along.

Well — not entirely. He only knew that from this moment on, he served two patrons. As for the wager between those two patrons and their so-called [Void] Agreement, he remained completely in the dark.

Cheng Shi stared vacantly at his shadow for a long time, unable to quiet his thoughts.

'So now what? What does this make me?'

'Three-time oathbreaker?'

'Ping-pong oathbreaker?'

'I seem to have become a clown who bounces back and forth between [Deceit] and [Fate]...'

'Is this the outcome you wanted, my two Lords?'

'So what am I now?'

'[Deceit]'s Collection? [Fate]'s favored child?'

'Or perhaps... [Void]'s divine favorite?'

'In any case, whatever you call it, this feeling of controlling my own faith...'

'Is so damn incredible!'

"AAAAAAAAAH—"

"Seriously dude, that baboon of yours is getting kinda scary..."

"..."

'You're the baboon! Your whole family are baboons!'