

The Gods 266

Chapter 266: Run! The Sighing Sorrow Tide Is Here!

Facing the Big Cat charging straight at him, Cheng Shi's expression turned serious, his eyes sharp.

His only consolation was that he'd planned ahead before entering the trial — he'd put on the warrior mask as always. A blessed Hero of Today might not be entirely outclassed by a shapeshifted Druid in a head-on confrontation.

The Path talent, Reflection of Nihilism, deactivated the previous faith's talent effects upon switching. Cheng Shi had tested this: if he wore a mask while in [Fate] mode and then switched back to [Deceit], the mask was effectively "removed" automatically.

So, in order to continue exploiting the "equip + remove" exchange-rate bug, Cheng Shi had deliberated at length and decided to enter the trial as [Fate] once more.

This way, when he switched to [Deceit] and then back to [Fate] again, he might earn another opportunity to "equip" a different mask.

But there was one thing he had to mention.

Ever since [Fate] had restored Cheng Shi's [Deceit] powers, the target of [Fate]'s Oracle Act prayer had changed...

Instead of the Die of Fate, it had inexplicably shifted to the mask fused into his face.

So now, whenever Cheng Shi needed to perform an Oracle Act, he had to touch his own face, direct his prayer at the vanished mask, and recite:

"Fate like myriad stars — within sight, beyond reach."

Meanwhile his other patron, [Deceit], had just warned him not to whisper [Fate]'s prayers at the mask anymore...

'So which of You am I supposed to listen to, my two Lords?'

'Is using each other's stuff to commit mutual sacrilege really that amusing?'

'How about You two fight it out first?'

'And — do You even care about my feelings?'

'Or is turning me into a clown just another part of Your mutual-desecration foreplay?'

'Don't clowns have dignity!?''

'Masks don't count!!!'

'I see it clearly now. No matter how many clowns are in this world, whenever the spotlight hits the stage, somehow I'm always in it!'

Watching the lightning-fast figure draw closer and closer, Cheng Shi's expression hardened. His lips didn't move as he murmured under his breath:

"Fate—"

But before the second syllable left his mouth, Hong Lin the Big Cat "WHOOSHED" past his flank without the slightest intent to fight.

The ghostly silhouette whipped up a gale, sending rotting leaves spiraling into the air and leaving Cheng Shi genuinely stunned. The wind-shredding roar stretched endlessly beside his ear:

"RUN! The Sighing Sorrow Tide is coming!"

"!?!?"

Cheng Shi's pupils contracted violently. His face turned even graver than before.

So Big Cat hadn't come back to pick a fight — she'd run into the Sighing Sorrow Tide erupting ahead!

And while he stood there dumbstruck, the terrifying mist carrying the power of [Decay] rose silently on the distant horizon. In the blink of an eye, it towered like a hundred-meter wall collapsing, blotting out the world as it "slammed" toward his position.

Its speed didn't look much slower than Big Cat's.

"Shit!"

Cheng Shi panicked. This was his first time seeing the Sighing Sorrow Tide in person.

He'd assumed the [Decay]-infused mist would be something like forest fog — rising slowly, condensing gradually. After all, plenty of intel from the chat channels had described it that way.

But hearsay was hearsay. Without seeing it firsthand, you'd never understand why the Sighing Forest had zero living survivors!

Because the mist surged at an insane speed — like a flash flood erupting from a mountainside. It left Cheng Shi almost no time at all!

'No point agonizing over which God to offend. If I don't activate the Oracle Act now, I won't get another chance to offend either of them.'

So Cheng Shi spun around and ran — praying as he sprinted:

"Fate like myriad stars — within sight, beyond reach!"

Mid-stride, he tossed a die inside his pocket.

The Die of Fate rolled a one without the slightest surprise. The instant the prayer concluded, [Fate]'s divine power flooded his entire body, and his speed spiked.

But the deep layers of rotting leaves carpeting this forest floor were far more treacherous than solid ground. Cheng Shi stumbled through — one foot deep, one foot shallow — his speed still lagging far behind the Sorrow Tide.

The danger was gaining from behind. With no other choice, Cheng Shi shed all pretense, abandoned his dignity, and — emulating Qin Chaoge's earlier technique — dropped to all fours and barreled forward like a beast.

Say what you will — four legs were faster than two. At least under [Fate]'s blessing, this was the closest Cheng Shi had ever come to an arrow-straight stallion at full gallop.

But it still wasn't enough.

The Sighing Sorrow Tide surged forward like a tidal wave from a burst dam — accelerating, relentless. Before long, it was barely ten feet behind him.

Cheng Shi gritted his teeth and ran for his life. He didn't even need to look back — he could feel [Decay]'s power howling and churning right beside him. One misstep, one fractional slowdown, and the devouring mist-wave would swallow him whole!

'It's over. Can't outrun it.'

Seeing no escape from the crisis, Cheng Shi's expression sank. He pulled a bottle of Prosperity of Yesteryear from his storage.

He planned to use the [Prosperity] in the potion to brute-force resist [Decay]'s corrosion the instant the tide swallowed him — then find another way out.

But just then, the bottle of Prosperity of Yesteryear he'd barely gripped was ripped away by an overwhelming force and vanished.

Cheng Shi was startled. He turned his head in disbelief — and saw the Big Cat Hong Lin, who had long since disappeared, back at his side. She was running right on the Sorrow Tide's impact line, matching his pace, and despite clearly sprinting at full tilt, she looked like she was strolling through a garden. Effortless.

The stolen bottle of Prosperity of Yesteryear was dangling from her tail, bouncing up and down with each stride.

!!!

Cheng Shi saw this and his eyes went perfectly round!

This Hong Lin clearly had power to spare!

She wasn't afraid of the Sighing Sorrow Tide at all. That panicked flight had been nothing but another test!

On the verge of life and death — and she was still testing him!

The expression that bloomed across Cheng Shi's face was magnificent. Hong Lin didn't particularly care what he was thinking. She simply clicked her tongue:

"Tsk. Guess you really aren't Zhen Yi. But that speed of yours doesn't look very Fate-Weaver-like either.

Who are you, really?

Tell me the truth. I can give you a hand."

Cheng Shi shot Big Cat a dirty look and said nothing. Instead, brow furrowed, he fired back with a question of his own:

"You didn't find any leads?"

"?" Hong Lin hadn't expected him to still be worrying about the trial's progress at a time like this. Visible surprise crossed her face before she frowned and grunted an affirmative "Mm."

Hearing that single "Mm," Cheng Shi stopped running without a word. He planted his feet and stood still.

Big Cat, suddenly without her parallel target, flinched hard. She overshot by a few strides, wheeled around, and stared in astonishment at Cheng Shi — who had already been swallowed by the Sighing Sorrow Tide.

"Are you insane!?"

'Insane?'

'I couldn't outrun it anyway. How can I not be insane?'

Cheng Shi smiled as if it didn't matter, letting the boundless power of [Decay] flood into his body and begin rotting his flesh.