

The Gods 33

Chapter 33: Everything Is [Fate]'s Choice

“What’s wrong with her?”

Cheng Shi rolled his eyes, his disdain unmistakable.

Fang Shiqing, taken aback by Xu Lu’s extreme reaction, asked in confusion:

“How can you be so sure this is fake? Xu Lu, you saw Cheng Shi’s entire reasoning process. If you have any doubts, just say them—you don’t need to act like this.”

“I...”

Seeing Xu Lu stammering, Fang Shiqing knew something was bothering her deep down. She gently encouraged her:

“Go ahead and say it. We still have time.”

Xu Lu glanced at the time, bit her lip, then firmly declared:

“My patron gave me a new command earlier. He said:

[Do not let the follower of [Time] deceive you.]”

“!?!”

Both Fang Shiqing and Cheng Shi were shocked.

Cheng Shi was surprised because her patron seemed to have made a cognitive error.

After all, he wasn't even a real [Time] follower.

Fang Shiqing, on the other hand, was startled because there was a chance Xu Lu could be telling the truth.

"You..."

"Sister Fang, I know you look down on me. You think I'm foolish, weak, and a burden.

But I can tell—you've been trying to protect me.

That's why I'm telling you this:

Cheng Shi is a huge liar! He wants to kill everyone here!

He killed Ah Ming and Huang Bo, and he even killed Bai Ling. Now, it's your turn!

Sister Fang, come with me! Don't believe him!

Everything he's said is a lie!"

Fang Shiqing turned to look at Cheng Shi, only to see him suddenly relax, as if he had been relieved of some burden.

"Oh, so that's where [Fate]'s prophecy comes in. Big Sis, it's decision time for you now.

Hahaha, who will you trust? Her or me? One choice out of two."

With that, Cheng Shi strolled over to the Final Gate and waited silently.

“Even you...”

Fang Shiqing gripped her book tightly, her gaze flickering with uncertainty.

“Cheng Shi, what was your command from your god?”

Cheng Shi narrowed his eyes for a moment, then smiled.

“Ah, so you guessed, huh?”

Yes, I did receive a command as soon as we entered the third memory. [Time] spoke to me.

He said: [Kill that follower of [Fate].]”

“.....”

“It’s you! It really is you!

Sister Fang, wasn’t I right?! He does want to kill me!

But he lied! He wants to kill all of us!

He’s already started! Only the two of us are left.

Sister Fang, I’m trying to save you! Please, believe me! He wants to kill you!

Why won’t you come over here!?

Fang Shiqing! You think you're so smart?

You think every choice you make is the right one?

You idiot! You call yourself a follower of [Truth], but you can't even see that he's manipulating you. I'm the only one saving you!

You!!! Fang Shiqing, what are you doing?! Come back!

He's going to kill you! Come back!"

Seeing Fang Shiqing choose to walk toward Cheng Shi, Xu Lu finally snapped. Her face twisted in rage as she turned and bolted.

"Everyone should just die! You idiots, just go die!"

Cheng Shi watched Fang Shiqing approach him, amused.

"Big Sis, why didn't you choose your little sidekick?"

Fang Shiqing sighed.

"I'll borrow one of Xu Lu's lines: if you wanted to kill her, you wouldn't need to go through all this trouble."

Cheng Shi laughed heartily.

"Not going to save her?"

Fang Shiqing glanced back at Xu Lu's retreating figure, then shook her head.

“The Torchbearer’s job is to pass on the flame. People like her...

Forget it. It’s time to let go of my need to help everyone and respect the fates of others.”

Cheng Shi shrugged. “Yeah, respect their fate.”

He emphasized the word fate with a hint of irony.

Fang Shiqing understood the double meaning behind his words but didn’t bring up trying to recruit him again. Instead, she extended her hand toward Cheng Shi.

Cheng Shi blinked in confusion, unsure of what she was doing. But instinctively, he placed his hand on hers.

Their warm hands clasped tightly together.

Of course, not in a romantic way—it was a handshake.

Fang Shiqing had initially reached out with her palm open, but Cheng Shi forced it into a handshake.

“.....”

For a moment, Fang Shiqing’s face flushed with rare embarrassment, but she quickly composed herself and smiled naturally, reminding him:

“My compensation?”

Only then did Cheng Shi realize she was asking for the payment he owed her for the “Eternal Prison” page.

Damn. He felt his toes curling in embarrassment.

“Oh, haha, of course, of course.”

Cheng Shi quickly pulled his hand back and reached into his personal storage space. He pulled out a...

Mask of the Many Faces.

This one was a golden mask with a radiant smile, surprisingly hefty.

The moment Fang Shiqing took it, a description popped into her mind:

—

Mask of Joy (S): When you wear this mask, your mood will be forcibly shifted to joy. If you use this mask in conjunction with a summoning spell, the summoning will replace the summoned entity with the one who gave you the mask.

—

“?”

Fang Shiqing blinked, taking a moment to fully grasp what “replace the summoned entity with the one who gave you the mask” meant.

Wasn’t that... Cheng Shi?

She glanced at Cheng Shi, who looked a bit embarrassed.

It certainly wasn't the most appropriate gift to give a lady.

But... it was useful.

Essentially, Fang Shiqing now had the ability to summon Cheng Shi—the “Forgotten Doctor”—for assistance in the future. Though whether or not he would have the same incredible problem-solving abilities when summoned remained to be seen.

Fang Shiqing stroked the mask, smiling warmly.

“Thank you, I'll accept it.”

Cheng Shi awkwardly pulled his hand back, unsure of what else to say.

I just wanted you to check what this thing does...

I was actually going to give you a healing spell with the “Shared Divine Grace” effect for your book...

But you just kept holding the mask and stroking it. Can I get it back?

“.....”

Sigh, never mind.

Considering she had saved his life, this mask—which had no practical use or clear description—would be his parting gift.

“Well, think of it as a bonus gift. I'll give you a healing spell to copy over.”

“More?”

“Uh?”

“Oh, okay then.” Fang Shiqing laughed, pulling out her book to start copying Cheng Shi’s skills.

Once everything was settled, she closed her book and decisively stepped through the Final Gate.

“Goodbye, Cheng Shi.”

Cheng Shi watched her disappear through the gate, shaking his head with a smile.

There wouldn’t be another meeting.

Once Fang Shiqing had fully passed through, Cheng Shi’s eyes sharpened. He looked in the direction Xu Lu had fled and began striding after her.

“You think you can run after being drugged by me, prophet girl?”

...

Xu Lu hadn’t run very far. She had collapsed in a small garden near the banquet hall, unconscious.

The drug had been administered when Cheng Shi grabbed her arm and pulled her away from the first Final Gate.

Even in that “rescue” moment, Cheng Shi hadn’t forgotten to coat his hand in some drugged potion before grabbing her.

Of course, he hadn’t planned this from the start.

It was just a precaution, something he did out of habit.

He hadn't expected to use it so soon.

Cheng Shi's claim to Fang Shiqing that "[Time] gave him a command" had been complete nonsense—after all, he wasn't even a follower of [Time].

But to his surprise, after Fang Shiqing left the trial, Cheng Shi really did receive a divine command.

Except it wasn't from [Time], but from his own patron, [Deceit].

—

[Kill that follower of [Fate].]

—

The exact same command he had made up.

It was as if [Deceit] had been watching his performance and decided to echo his words.

“?”

Wait a minute, you're not [Fate], so what's your deal?

“.....”

Cheng Shi was at a loss for words.

By the time he arrived at the garden, Xu Lu was still lying on the ground, unconscious.

He grabbed her by the collar and dragged her back toward the Final Gate.

Although several servants watched from a distance, none dared approach under Cheng Shi's piercing gaze.

Cheng Shi walked the entire way, while Xu Lu bounced along, her body smacking against the ground with each step.

When they reached the Final Gate, Xu Lu groaned in pain as she slowly regained consciousness.

As soon as she saw Cheng Shi's face, she screamed in terror, curling into a ball.

"Stay away from me!! Ahhh!!!

Don't kill me!!

Please, I was wrong! Don't kill me!!"

Cheng Shi stared down at her coldly, a mocking smile curling his lips.

"You? You think you're worth killing?"

With one swift motion, he grabbed Xu Lu by the throat, lifting her off the ground as he sneered:

"I've killed plenty of people, and I've seen countless deaths.

But I still think that sometimes, death is too straightforward.

Lacking in... elegance.

Wouldn't you agree, prophet girl?"

Before Xu Lu could respond, Cheng Shi shoved her head through the Memory Gate, throwing her inside.

Once that was done, he pulled out his die with an amused grin and said:

"Instead of killing the follower of [Fate], it might be more fun to disrupt her destiny."

Cheng Shi gazed at the die expectantly.

But the die didn't move. It remained still, unresponsive.

"Tch, boring."

Cheng Shi pocketed the die and strode out of the trial.

—

[Special Trial (Eternal Night's Labyrinth [Memory]) Challenge Cleared]

[Scoring in progress, calculating rewards...]

[Player: Cheng Shi, Performance Score: S]

[Reward Item: Mask of Hope (S) x1]

[Reward Item: Mask of Regret (A) x1]

[Reward Item: Mask of Disdain (B) x1]

[Reward Item: Mask of Relief (A) x1]

[Path to Godhood +9]

[Ladder of Ascent +3]

[Current Path to Godhood Score: 2125, Global Rank: 464024]

[Current Ladder of Ascent Score: 161, Fate Path Rank: 64]

[Trial complete, exiting...]