

The Gods 220

Chapter 220: Experiment Material?

Hurried footsteps echoed down the corridor of the underground laboratory. Two grim-faced attendants escorted an anxious-looking old man toward the office at a brisk pace.

They had obviously heard the tremendous commotion coming from within.

The old man had a full head of silver hair, wore spectacles, and looked every bit the scholarly type. By any measure, he appeared to be the person in charge of this facility.

The two attendants leading the way, however, were far more enigmatic. Clad entirely in black, not a single inch of skin was visible. Even their faces were hidden—leather hoods covered their heads, leaving only their noses and eyes exposed.

Such attire was especially peculiar in a laboratory buried this deep underground. The place was already hidden and devoid of outsiders, so wrapping themselves up so tightly down here defied all logic.

The attendants moved swiftly, stepping ahead of the old man to push the door open. The instant it swung wide, two identical chants rang out in unison:

"The Inquisitor presides—the time for evidence gathering has come."

"All proof of crime shall be recorded; no trace may be forged."

"The suspect shall here identify himself, abandon futile defense, and collapse into penitent wailing."

"And then!"

"Under the gaze of [Order]..."

"There is no escape!"

The moment the chant concluded, two streaks of white light raced across the room, freezing every inch of the office in place within seconds.

Under [Order]'s influence, time itself seemed to congeal ever so slightly.

Then the old man stepped past the two Arbiters and entered the room.

His gaze flickered first to the documents on the desk, then lifted to the gaping hole in the ceiling. He asked with an expression of utter bewilderment:

"What on earth..."

Before he could finish, the two Arbiters had already darted inside and begun scouring the room. The bolder of the two leaped straight up and vanished into the dark hole in the ceiling, tracing the path upward.

The other attendant remained to investigate, and only after confirming the room was empty did he turn back with a deep frown:

"Mr. Selius, there are no signs of disturbance, but the ceiling collapse is clearly man-made. The laboratory walls would never sustain this kind of damage from residual blast waves, especially this long after the explosion."

"My assessment is that the intruder discovered the laboratory but didn't dare jump down, and has retreated the way they came. Rest assured—the rubble above hasn't been cleared yet, so even if any research data has been lost, it won't have made it to the outside."

"That lord is already handling the uncontrollable experiment materials. We will also ensure that not a single person slips into the laboratory from this direction."

"I'll stand guard here until others arrive to conduct a full investigation. You may return to continue your experiments."

"Please be at ease. That lord will guarantee absolute security here."

Selius took one more look at the experimental data on the desk, nodded solemnly, then departed with his hands clasped behind his back.

Shortly after he left, the attendant who had ventured into the ceiling dropped back down. The moment he landed, he addressed his companion:

"Someone definitely broke in. Can't tell yet whether it's an experiment material or our old friend. This person is persistent—they dug for quite a while through the rubble to get here, never changing direction once. Seems like they had some way to pinpoint the location. But the digging technique is crude—looks more like a hardworking... knight."

"Let's hope it's not our friend Grind. Hopefully he's already backed off."

"But..."

"Sigh. I still think it might be..."

"Because the air is thick with residual lightning element—traces left after a Lightning Punishment."

"Found anything on your end? Mr. Selius, did he..."

"Hm? Figor, why so quiet? That's not like you."

The attendant turned to his companion in confusion—only to discover that Figor had at some point removed his leather hood, revealing a head of soft, golden hair.

"!!!"

"Figor, how could you take that off here—"

Before he could finish, his pupils contracted violently and he threw himself backward at full speed.

But it was too late—"Figor" had already driven a dagger into his abdomen.

"You..."

The attendant staggered back in agonized disbelief, staring at the companion who had just betrayed him. He was about to open his mouth and invoke [Order]'s punishing force when he realized someone had appeared behind him.

Someone shaped like putty.

This rubbery figure pressed soundlessly against his back, and a pair of arms—sticky and serpentine—instantly coiled around his throat, cutting off any further sound.

"Ghhh... ghhh..."

"Figor" walked up to him with a smile, conjured a poker card painted with a mouth out of thin air, and carefully pressed it to the attendant's forehead.

"Allow me to reintroduce myself. My name is Li Yi, and I'm a..."

"Magician."

With that, Li Yi snapped his fingers, transforming the dagger lodged in the attendant's chest back into another poker card, which he swiftly pocketed.

The entire sequence was so silky smooth it was a joy to behold. The only shame was that the star of this performance was a Magician—not a Clown.

And so the Clown was jealous.

"Finished showing off? Can we start the questioning now?"

Cheng Shi—who had watched the entire show from the shadows in the corner—grimaced and clicked his tongue as he stood up.

Li Yi's rather elegant expression instantly soured at those words. He sighed helplessly and silently stepped aside.

"Cheng Shi, the stage is yours."

"Tsk, what's with the reluctance? I said I'd give you your freedom, and you help me with my work. Fair trade, transparent pricing—nobody loses. Right, Brother Gao San?"

Gao San's head—prisoner helmet and all—was plastered octopus-like against the attendant's neck. Though his expression was hidden, his tone alone conveyed an equal measure of resignation.

"Can you hurry up? My mental energy is running low."

Cheng Shi touched his nose with an innocent look. "I'm a Priest, you know. Would I ever let my teammate's mental energy run dry?"

'Heh. Teammate? Priest?'

'What kind of teammate greets people with lightning bolts on first sight?'

'What kind of Priest wields demigod-level offensive power?'

'Guess whether I believe you.'

Gao San rolled his eyes in silence and said nothing more.

'Of the four living people in this room, any two could make a team—even a player and an NPC could be teammates. The only exception is you, Cheng Shi. You could never truly be anyone's teammate.'

'At least not sincerely.'

Of course, open complaints were out of the question—beggars can't be choosers. But silently ripping into him in his own mind? That he could do.

Cheng Shi raised an eyebrow at Gao San and nodded thoughtfully. "I have a feeling you're cursing me, but I have no evidence. Don't ever let me find evidence—otherwise, tsk, tsk, tsk..."

"..."

Gao San wisely shut his mouth. And the moment he fell silent, Cheng Shi—no, the Clown's performance began right on cue.

He walked up to the attendant locked in Gao San's chokehold, let the tip of his scalpel trace slowly across the man's chest, and smiled amiably:

"I ask. You answer. Wrong answer—you die. Understood?"

The attendant's pupils contracted sharply, clearly terrified. Yet he neither nodded nor spoke.

"Good. I like a challenging interrogation. I hope your conviction stays this firm throughout. Now then—let's begin."

"First question. The experiment materials you just mentioned... what are they?"

