

The Gods 221

Chapter 221: The Life Assimilation Experiment!

Three deceivers had pulled off a flawless coordinated strike.

The instant the two Arbiters entered, the trio concealed beneath the Silent Lizard Skin went entirely undetected.

And when the old scholar departed, the Acrobat Gao San slipped out in a flash and snapped Figor's neck. Simultaneously, Cheng Shi opened the rat cage and released Li Yi, who scurried to the corpse on his own and peeled the Soul Parasitism Card from his body to press it against the dead man.

In that moment, Li Yi was "reborn."

What happened next was already known—the hapless attendant had been ambushed by his own "ally" without the slightest chance.

Now he watched the gleaming blade tip wander lazily across his body, his expression shifting between dark and uncertain.

Clearly, this was a knight of faith. But no amount of faith could withstand a devil's interrogation—and Cheng Shi happened to be the devil who understood the human heart best.

"I can tell. You're not afraid of death. That's fine—I dabble in psychology, and I know everyone fears something."

"Your faith seems unshakable. But as it happens, I have something that can soften that kind of conviction."

With that, Cheng Shi produced from his personal storage... a black pill.

"Know what this is?"

"Chaotic Sediment. A specialty of the Afterglow Church."

"You might not know what the Afterglow Church is yet, but I'll tell you—they're a pack of lunatics hiding underground, mass-producing chaos. Lucky souls watched over by [Chaos]."

"Oh, right—at this point in time, [Chaos] probably hasn't arrived yet, so you likely haven't heard His divine name. No matter. His envoy, Lord Ultraman, has already brought His will here—right to the Grand Tribunal."

"All you need to know is that He is [Order]'s lifelong nemesis, the nightmare of all order, the end of everything structured."

"And right now, the moment you swallow this 'Chaotic Sediment'... you'll be just like them. You'll abandon [Order] completely, embrace [Chaos], and everything you currently believe in and wish to protect will become everything you despise and seek to destroy."

"Interesting, isn't it?"

"One more chance. Ready to talk now?"

Cheng Shi held the "Chaotic Sediment" in one hand while the other picked at his iron nose hole, rolling the pill across the attendant's trembling cheeks and colorless lips.

Being force-fed a drug was frightening enough on its own. But when the interrogator in front of you also happened to be a weirdo who picked at his iron nose hole, the oppressive terror multiplied instantly.

After all, you can never predict what kinds of depraved things a madman will subject you to.

Seeing the attendant maintain his silence, Cheng Shi pressed on:

"Alright then. Let's be practical. If you answer my questions truthfully, at the very least... you'll die by my hand."

"Rather than by the hands of those so-called friends of yours. That way you can at least preserve your final dignity. How about it?"

A kaleidoscope of emotions flashed through the attendant's eyes. He stared at Cheng Shi with a mixture of terror and fury. Their gazes locked for barely a second before he crumbled—defeated by those pure, impossibly un-demonic eyes.

"I'll talk... I'll talk!"

"Don't turn me into one of His followers. Please—don't push me toward [Chaos]."

Cheng Shi raised an eyebrow and beamed.

"That depends on whether what you tell me is true or false."

"It's true... all of it is true. I've long been fed up with guarding these things that blaspheme my Lord in this sunless pit..."

"They're blaspheming [Order]. They're scorning the law. They're... exploiting the rules..."

"The experiment materials I mentioned... are all the deathmatch convicts!"

"Including you..."

The moment those words left his mouth, all three deceivers narrowed their eyes in unison. They looked first at the attendant, then quickly at each other.

Both Li Yi and Gao San gave Cheng Shi a subtle nod—meaning the prisoner had not lied.

'Interesting. The Tower of Logic is using the Grand Tribunal's prisoners as test subjects?'

'Who gave them the nerve?'

'That lord—Figor mentioned "that lord" before he died. Who is he?'

'The puppet master secretly colluding with the Tower of Logic? Or a mole the Tower planted inside the Grand Tribunal?'

This was shaping up to be quite the story—enough to make Cheng Shi want to pull up a chair and listen at leisure.

The attendant had no choice left. Under the threat of forced apostasy and the unblinking scrutiny of three deceivers, he laid out everything happening inside this underground laboratory, truthfully and in full.

His name was Niske, and he had originally served in the Iron Law Knights.

One day, he and several other Iron Law Knights had been selected by a First Class Inquisitor for a "Special Law Mission." Their destination was this place—a secret laboratory beneath the Montelani Colosseum.

The laboratory had no name. Its existence wasn't officially recorded anywhere in the Grand Tribunal's archives. During their first years here, Niske and his companions had no idea why the Inquisitors had secretly built this facility. All they knew was that at the end of the same year the New Law Faction introduced the Deathmatch Sentence, the laboratory was completed almost simultaneously with the Montelani Colosseum. From that point on, more and more people across High Mountain Prefecture found themselves sentenced to deathmatch.

But the so-called Deathmatch Sentence was never a genuine punishment. It was a cover story—a facade to disguise the laboratory's output.

Because this laboratory was shipping out test subjects wearing mysterious helmets: all the deathmatch convicts, including Cheng Shi's current identity!

The experiment itself was not especially complex in concept. It had a straightforward name:

The Life Assimilation Experiment!

The experiment was led by Selius—the elderly man who had just left.

While none of the underground laboratory's guards knew his true identity, the sheer volume of obvious "evidence" made it easy for anyone to guess he was a scholar from the Tower of Logic.

In truth, before the civil war erupted on the surface, relations between the Grand Tribunal and the Tower of Logic had been amicable. The two followed different faiths, but they shared many similarities in their vision for building [Civilization], and cooperated frequently.

That "courteous friendship" had evaporated after the Tower of Logic's civil war broke out first—and at this very moment, the Tower was already deep in the throes of conflict.

Selius had arrived at the Grand Tribunal before that period.

Of course, all the information about Selius was Niske's speculation. The only things he could state with certainty pertained to the experiment itself.

The experiment's purpose was simple: forward-thinking Inquisitors wanted to prepare defenses against the Tower of Logic's war spilling over into Grand Tribunal territory. So they had preemptively tested and manufactured a batch of killing weapons designed for warfare.

Yes—killing weapons.

Killing weapons akin to the Tower of Logic's own War Machine Pawns.

The only difference was that the Tower's War Machine Pawns were built using the Mechanical Engineering Department's "truth," whereas the weapons produced here relied on the Life Extension Department's "truth."

Selius was a Grand Scholar of the Life Extension Department.

The experiment's procedure involved injecting a mysterious drug called "Life Assimilation Agent" into several "lucky souls" who'd been arrested for violating the new laws, transforming them into so-called "Life Assimilation Bodies."

When one assimilation body killed another from the same batch, the "assimilation force" embedded deep within the victor would comprehensively plunder the dead one's power—pouring and stacking it onto the survivor's life force in a manner that elevated them to an entirely higher level.

This process resembled "reproduction" and "inheritance" between parallel life forms.

Through this iterative culling, the final survivor would become a war machine of extraordinary constitution and outstanding power. Moreover, the Life Assimilation Agent had been laced with controllable biological defects from the start, so under specific commands, these ultimate survivors would become the most lethal, most obedient soldiers imaginable.

That was the experiment in its entirety.

By the time Cheng Shi and the others had heard all of this, the deep furrows between their brows showed no sign of relaxing.

The attendant named Niske had spoken truthfully—or at least, he believed everything he said was true.

But even from a cursory listen, Cheng Shi found numerous points he couldn't reconcile. For instance:

If the goal was to have strangers slaughter each other, why force them to wear helmets that appeared expensive to produce and even contained the power of [Prosperity]?

Also, if mutual killing was the objective, why have them fight in sequential order? Wouldn't a free-for-all melee better provoke the "weapon's" ferocity?

And a group deathmatch format would obviously draw bigger audiences—and fetch higher ticket prices, to boot.

Furthermore, from a purely experimental standpoint, if death itself generated the desired results, why make these people fight publicly under thousands of eyes? Wouldn't it be more efficient to simply force mechanical slaughter behind closed doors?

There were far too many questions, but Niske could answer only so many. He had long been tormented by the inner conflict of "worshipping [Order] while secretly helping break order," and had paid little attention to the laboratory's finer details. Faced with Cheng Shi's barrage of questions, he stammered and stumbled without producing useful answers.

But this much was enough. Cheng Shi now wanted the answer to just one more question:

"The lord you mentioned—the First Class Inquisitor who stationed you here. Who is he?"

Niske's face went white. He shook his head.

"No—it's not him. The lord I speak of is..."

"One of the three most exalted, most distinguished beings in existence..."

"The Favored One of [Order]. The Supreme Inquisitor of the Grand Tribunal. The true master of the Iron Law Knights. Lord Keinlaur."

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