

The Gods 223

Chapter 223: How Do You Know You're Li Yi?

After extracting the laboratory's patrol layout, the three departed.

They walked out the door openly, then navigated through the deserted corridor, heading straight for the largest experiment site.

The closer they drew to that mysterious laboratory, the stronger the unease coiling in Cheng Shi's gut. He couldn't shake the feeling that a massive trap was waiting for him inside, though he couldn't articulate exactly why.

And so, each guarding against the other two while simultaneously watching their surroundings, the three pushed through the laboratory door and entered.

The instant they stepped inside, the lights switched on in sequence—from the entrance to the depths.

All three halted. Their spines went rigid.

Before them sprawled an enormous laboratory filled with countless experimental devices. Massive cylindrical units stood in dense, overlapping rows—too many to count—each covered by a black light-blocking cloth.

At the tops of these devices, pipes of indistinguishable colors tangled together like gnarled tree roots, forming the laboratory's ceiling. These pipelines converged to pump a yellowish-green liquid into the devices, while the far ends vanished into the laboratory's "distant" depths.

Out of pure caution, the instant Cheng Shi passed through the door he tried to subtly shuffle his feet so as to "push" both teammates ahead of him. But the other two had the exact same idea—and the result was three sets of footsteps falling perfectly in sync at the moment the door opened.

They stepped in as one, then retreated as one.

"..."

"..."

"..."

[Silence] had arrived uninvited.

Cheng Shi stared wordlessly at Li Yi and Gao San, then extended his hand in an "after you" gesture. The implication was clear—this, too, was part of the partnership.

Li Yi gave a dry laugh and mimicked the gesture right back. The meaning was equally obvious: when it came to point duty, a Singer couldn't compare with a Warrior.

Seeing that refusal was no longer an option, Gao San's eyelid twitched violently. His face dark with displeasure, he lifted a foot and walked in.

"It's automatic lighting. No need to be this cautious—come in already."

"You first. A scholar of [Truth] should naturally be the first to approach truth."

Gao San ground his teeth. "I'm a Warrior of [Deceit]!"

Cheng Shi flashed a textbook smile and pointed at the ear hole on his prisoner helmet, indicating that he'd gone deaf. Just now.

"..."

There was simply no reasoning with a master of shamelessness. Gao San stepped inside, and when no alarms or traps triggered, his stride grew bolder.

He crossed to the first device in two-and-a-half steps, ripped the black cloth off without a word.

As the fabric drifted down, a cylindrical glass cultivation vessel of staggering diameter appeared before them.

It was filled to the brim with a sickly yellowish-green liquid, and floating within that nauseating fluid was a completely naked human body.

White hair. Aged. Withered and gaunt.

No—that was no corpse. Because the instant Gao San tore the cloth away, the old man in the tank snapped open a pair of blood-red eyes.

"Shit!"

Even with his guard up, the sight made Gao San jump. His pupils contracted violently, his body shuddered, and he instinctively morphed into his rubbery form and backflipped away. His peripheral vision swept the area—only to find that his two teammates who'd been right beside him had vanished.

His heart clenched even harder at that.

But when his toes touched down and he steadied himself enough to look back, he discovered that his so-called teammates—Li Yi and Cheng Shi—were still at the entrance, leaning against the doorframe, having never come in at all.

They'd been watching his performance the entire time. Like spectators at a puppet show.

"..."

Gao San's expression had descended to a level beyond description.

Even without seeing his face, Cheng Shi could tell this teammate was on the verge of a complete emotional meltdown. With the fragile partnership about to collapse, he "dutifully" steered things back on track.

"Tsk—you startled me. I thought a monster was going to crawl out, but it's just a person."

He sauntered in with clicking sounds of fascination, hands clasped behind his back like a retiree browsing a pet market, his gaze locked unblinkingly on the "test subject" inside the cultivation vessel.

He was curious whether this subject had been captured or "manufactured." Cheng Shi knew that he and the other deathmatch convicts were also test subjects—the only difference being that they wore prisoner helmets, while this red-eyed old man inside the tank did not.

But the person before him didn't look like a freshly bred creation.

'Surely no experiment would manufacture an elderly man?'

"Are they cultivating human life?"

"No—that doesn't seem right either. Is this a captured deathmatch convict?"

Li Yi walked in as well, studying the old man for a moment. Noting that although the man's eyes were open, his face remained expressionless and his gaze vacant, Li Yi concluded he possessed no self-awareness.

After a moment's thought, Li Yi moved to the second device in the row and pulled its cover down. Another completely naked test subject appeared before them.

This one was a red-haired Bomeadean young man. Bomeadeans were a common race in the southern reaches of the Land of Hope—fair-skinned, tall, freckled, and easy to distinguish.

Like the old man, this red-haired subject quietly opened his eyes the moment the cloth fell away. His hollow gaze drifted toward the three as if waiting for something—but the spark of expectation in his eyes extinguished almost immediately.

"Removing the cloth is probably one step of the experimental procedure. We simply didn't follow up with the next operation. So based on your knowledge—what kind of experiment is this?"

Cheng Shi speculated aloud as he walked, inspecting the surroundings with keen interest. Then he pulled the cover from the second device in the old man's column.

But the instant the black cloth fell, Cheng Shi's mind went white. He froze as if struck by lightning.

His arm hung rigid in midair. His spine locked tight. His pupils contracted violently. He had seen something impossible.

Li Yi and Gao San looked over—and were equally struck speechless with horror.

Because inside the second tank in that vertical column floated another old man—identical in every way to the first.

White hair. Aged. Withered and gaunt. Virtually a copy-and-paste.

Cheng Shi's face darkened as he stared at the figure before him. His heart dropped with a thud.

'This is bad. Things are heading in a deeply disturbing direction.'

The moment Gao San registered the old man's features, he used his agile Acrobat skills to rip the covers off every device in the horizontal row—over a dozen in a single sweep.

Li Yi, with wordless coordination, simultaneously tore down the cloths from several vertical columns. When dozens of tanks brimming with yellowish-green liquid stood exposed, the atmosphere in the laboratory underwent an irreversible, subtle shift.

All three unconsciously stepped backward toward their respective sides.

Because they saw that within each vertical column, there were multiple identical duplicates—some three or four, some six or seven—matching the exact number of same-colored prison-garbed deathmatch convicts from the prison above.

The only difference was that these "same-colored" test subjects wore no prisoner helmets—and they all looked exactly the same.

"Interesting. I can confirm that I am Li Yi—and that I really am Li Yi. But you two..."

"Who exactly are you?"

Li Yi drew a dagger-shaped poker card with grave caution and held it in his palm.

Cheng Shi's heart was burdened beyond measure—yet his surface still wore a smile.

"How do you know you're Li Yi? Perhaps..."

"I'm the real Li Yi."

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