

The Gods 225

Chapter 225: Life Assimilation Experiment!?! Nonsense—This Is Clearly...

Inside the experiment site.

Li Yi and Cheng Shi exchanged a glance, each reading the same confusion in the other's eyes.

They were puzzled by Selius's demeanor. Logically, a scholar encountering two intruders who should never have appeared here shouldn't be this composed.

Li Yi alone might have been one thing—after all, his current body belonged to a knight. But Cheng Shi was still wearing a prisoner helmet!

He was a deathmatch convict manufactured by this very laboratory!

When a person realizes their fate is being controlled by a stranger, the "controlled party" will inevitably resist on instinct, and the destructive urge born from that realization tends to be at its most violent.

Yet Selius clearly wasn't afraid of Cheng Shi, the prisoner. From that fact alone, both men understood this laboratory wouldn't be so simple.

Selius definitely had a trump card for self-preservation—and they might already have stepped into the scholar's trap.

But overthinking was pointless in this situation. Only by probing would they get the answers they wanted. After a moment's thought, Cheng Shi picked at his nose hole and spoke:

"Mr. Selius, our intrusion was an accident. I was simply blown here by the aftershock of the Colosseum explosion. I happened to befriend this knight, and along the way discovered that the test subjects here bear a resemblance to me..."

"So we took the liberty of searching, hoping to find a method to remove our prison—Gladiator Masks."

Li Yi was genuinely speechless. He'd seen deceivers who lied shamelessly before, but never one who could lie this smoothly while touching his helmet.

Selius studied Cheng Shi with evident amusement for a moment, then replied with a smile of his own:

"Then you've come to the wrong place. This is the experiment site—where materials are generated. Removing the Gladiator Mask requires the experiment workshop next door. If you truly want it off, follow me."

With that, Selius simply turned his back and walked away unhurriedly, as though he didn't view Cheng Shi and Li Yi as threats to the laboratory but rather as visitors.

Li Yi frowned and whispered: "It could be a trap."

'Even an idiot knows it's a trap.'

Cheng Shi had no intention of humoring the scholar. He pointed in the direction Gao San had run, spun on his heel, and motioned for Li Yi to follow.

Li Yi understood and fell in silently behind him.

Strangely, the departing Selius made no move to stop them. He merely sighed with a disappointed expression upon hearing them leave.

Cheng Shi and Li Yi dashed forward, nerves wound tight, until they reached the wooden door. Hearing Gao San's voice faintly from within, they confirmed there was no immediate danger and decided to push the door open.

The instant they stepped inside and saw the two familiar figures in the room, both their pupils contracted sharply.

Because seated at the warmly lit experiment table were Gao San and... Selius.

Another Selius.

"You—"

"You—"

Gao San looked at the two stunned newcomers and actually spoke on Selius's behalf: "Don't attack. Mr. Selius means no harm."

"..."

If those words hadn't come from a deceiver who possessed the Master of Deception talent, Cheng Shi would never have believed them.

'What do you mean, no harm? The other Selius showing up out there was the biggest harm of all.'

"So many guests today. I hadn't expected the Iron Law Knights to join this game as well."

"Is this one... also here to remove their Gladiator Mask?"

Cheng Shi was silent for a beat, then uttered a single word: "Yes."

"Then why has this knight come?"

'Why? Are you asking a few too many questions?'

Cheng Shi frowned, let a gleaming scalpel slide from his sleeve, and with a flick of his wrist embedded it in the experiment table.

"Drop the kindly-old-grandfather act. Let's cut straight to the point. I just saw another you—another Selius. So which one is real? Him or you? Or perhaps..."

"Neither of you is real?"

"Another... Selius?"

The scholar hadn't even reacted before the Warrior was startled first.

Gao San leaped backward, assumed a fighting stance, and his gaze toward Selius lost every trace of friendliness.

Selius looked at Cheng Shi pensively and nodded.

"So you've met him. Indeed—he is Selius, just as I am. But he and I are also different, because he is a replacement."

"?"

"A replacement? What replacement? Are you talking about those... experimental duplicates?" Li Yi's question tumbled out instinctively. He stepped from the doorway into the room.

Seeing Li Yi move, Cheng Shi glanced behind himself. Finding no one there, he quickly followed suit and shut the door.

The instant the door closed, a scholar with salt-and-pepper hair emerged from the walkway between the experimental devices. His expression was unreadable as he stared at the wooden door.

Inside the room, Selius's gaze briefly flickered past the two newcomers toward the door—but Cheng Shi had closed it too quickly for him to see what he'd been looking for.

He sighed softly and addressed the group:

"Yes. What you call 'experimental duplicates' have a more academic designation. We generally refer to them as..."

"Slices."

"!!!"

The air in the room crystallized. The three deceivers once again grew wary and suspicious of each other at those two words.

"Slices?"

"Yes. Slices." Selius seemed unbothered by the atmosphere. Smiling, he pulled a small wooden figure from a drawer beneath the table. Every gaze in the room sharpened, following his movements.

This was not, in fact, a figurine carved from a solid block of wood. It was composed of a dozen or so horizontal cross-sections of varying sizes stacked together to form a human shape.

Selius deftly disassembled the figure, then spread each cross-section across the table. With the patience of a professor lecturing his students, he explained:

"See—these are slices. But not traditional flesh-and-blood slices. These are life slices that contain the experiment material's biological foundation, faith consciousness, and fragmented memories."

"You can think of them simply as a personality fragment split off from the experiment material. The difference is that this fragment possesses a physical vessel of flesh and blood, so once cultivated, it can grow back into a complete... 'him.'"

Cheng Shi's heart trembled. His peripheral vision drifted toward the door as he wondered whether the countless experimental devices outside all housed specimens cultivated from these slices.

"So the deathmatch convicts were never captured at all? They were cultivated from slices?"

"Yes and no. The deathmatch convicts were indeed captured. Only the remaining 'hims' were cultivated from slices." Selius pointed meaningfully at the door. "The experiment requires a large volume of slices. But if all slices are harvested from a single individual, that person's traces of existence will grow thinner and thinner—because you cannot control the experimental attrition. Even the most perfectly extracted slice will inevitably strip away a sliver of personality or memory from the original..."

"Therefore, to complete this experiment, the Grand Tribunal's benefactor exploited [Order]'s own rules to establish the Deathmatch Sentence as new law. This way, the laboratory could legally and legitimately acquire enough experiment materials."

"Benefactor... what a novel choice of words. So why would the Grand Tribunal's benefactor sponsor a scholar from the Tower of Logic? And you, scholar—why are you explaining all of this to us?"

"What are you scheming—or what are you stalling for?"

As Cheng Shi's voice trailed off, Li Yi and Gao San both edged backward again, scanning their surroundings with guarded eyes.

"I'm not scheming anything."

"You're lying!" Li Yi cut through it with iron certainty—because Master of Deception told him Selius had just lied.

"Oh? Very well—I am indeed scheming something," Selius conceded with a casual smile. "But what I'm scheming has nothing to do with anyone present. Relax—I have no intention of harming you."

Cheng Shi frowned and looked to Li Yi, who nodded silently.

That was the truth.

This scholar genuinely harbored no hostile intent.

"Then what exactly is this experiment? And what is the Deathmatch Final really about?"

"Perhaps once I tell you the experiment's name, you'll be able to guess what this trial is truly doing."

"Because its name says it all. It's called..."

"The Divinity Germination Experiment."

"!!!!!"

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