

The Gods 232

Chapter 232: But the Trial's Protagonist Is—!

Rewind the clock a little—back to the moment Li Yi and Gao San vanished.

When Gao San squeezed into the ceiling, Li Yi found his opening.

His instantaneous disappearance wasn't because he'd transformed into a pile of poker cards. He'd scattered them as a smokescreen while using a Magician's trick to teleport himself out.

And his destination? The exact spot where he'd knocked on the experimental device outside the door to alert Cheng Shi earlier.

That single knock had been his chance to silently slip a displacement poker card behind the light-blocking cloth.

And so, the Magician's grand escape act played out for a second time.

When Li Yi materialized outside the door, the weight on his chest finally lifted. He felt as if he'd escaped Cheng Shi's clutches at last.

"Phew—even a Magician gets tired sometimes. Time for the curtain call."

Li Yi had only one thought: leave. Get out of this [Chaos]-saturated laboratory as fast as possible. Stop participating in [Deceit]'s civil war. Find a quiet corner and wait for the trial to end.

He was exhausted. This trial had drained him far beyond anything he'd experienced before.

Body and soul.

But when he lifted the light-blocking cloth to leave, he found someone standing before him.

Selius. The very scholar who'd been chatting with them inside the workshop moments ago—now standing right in front of him.

It was him!

The Selius from outside the door!

His expression was completely different from before—darker, more menacing.

Li Yi's pupils contracted violently. With every ounce of willpower, he maintained his composure and managed a thin smile:

"We meet again. How did you know I was here?"

Selius let out a cold laugh. "I didn't. But he told me you were."

The instant those words landed, a splash erupted from behind Li Yi. A pair of dripping wet hands locked around him from behind—seizing him just as Gao San had once seized the attendant—wrapping him in a crushing embrace.

Li Yi blanched in shock. He whipped his head around to find that the experimental device behind him had already shattered open. Another Selius—identical, wearing the same cold smirk—had burst out, and his face was pressed right against Li Yi's neck!

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Selius's slices!

The experimental devices didn't contain ordinary materials—they contained Selius's own slices!

He'd guessed the shattered device wasn't an accident. What he hadn't guessed was that the specimen inside was Selius himself!

And the old man's strength was terrifying—nothing like a frail, elderly scholar.

Li Yi's gaze hardened. A line from the workshop's Selius flashed through his mind:

"At the very least, the mutations of human nature generated many beneficial forces that helped the life forms overcome their fear."

Power!

So after slicing himself, Selius's fragments had also mutated to gain that kind of strength. He was no feeble academic—he was a warrior disguised as a scholar!

At least his slices were!

With both arms pinned and unable to move, Li Yi's mind raced through the available information. Then, his expression grim, he spoke:

"This isn't necessary. There's room for cooperation between us."

Selius regarded him coldly. "You enjoy cooperation?"

"It's not about enjoying it. I simply prefer to resolve differences through cooperation."

"In that case, how am I to know whether you've already cooperated with the me locked inside that room?"

"I"

The instant he heard this, cold sweat poured down Li Yi's back.

'Damn—I've talked myself into a corner.' He hadn't expected the outside Selius to be this cautious, guarding against the possibility that Li Yi was a tool deployed by the Selius inside.

"I didn't—"

Before he could finish, Selius drove a knife-hand strike into Li Yi's gut.

Li Yi grimaced in pain and immediately flung several poker cards, using the opportunity to teleport away.

But Selius's blow had been devastating. Li Yi staggered two steps before coming to a halt in the experiment site's corridor.

Not because his injuries were too severe to run—but because before him, a cacophony of splashing sounds erupted one after another. Dripping-wet Seliuses, one by one, stepped casually out of their cultivation vessels, rolling their wrists.

They weren't even naked. Each wore identical black clothing, its material resembling the prisoner helmet's composition.

'So... that clothing reduces damage?'

There was no time left for guesswork. Every Selius turned in unison to stare at Li Yi. Their identical voices resonated in synchronized harmony, merging into an eerie, terrifying chorus:

"Do you know why the experiment site has so few guards?"

"Because..."

"When there are enough directors, guards become irrelevant."

"Outsider—you should feel honored. Before you stands the great Divinity Germination Experiment, the great Grand Scholar Selius, whose name shall be remembered by history."

"Having witnessed all of this, you can die without regret."

"Shit!"

Li Yi's face turned ink-black. He scanned his surroundings and charged toward the thinnest point in the encirclement.

The Magician was formidable. During his breakout attempt, he took down at least a dozen Seliuses. But two fists can't beat four hands—and there were far more than four hands present. Far more than even forty.

As the siege intensified and his room to maneuver shrank, the Magician finally slipped up.

He turned a fraction too slowly. A Selius behind him locked both his arms again. Countless more swarmed in, and with brutal efficiency they tore the trick-laden Magician to shreds.

The show was over.

Li Yi was dead. At least in Selius's eyes, this experiment material had been erased.

Dozens of Seliuses cleaned the scene, then turned in unison to stare at the wooden door they couldn't enter—apparently waiting for new prey.

What they didn't notice was that among those dozens of Seliuses, one carried a notably darker expression. He silently pulled his soaking wet coat tighter to conceal a faintly glowing green light, then turned to gaze "cooperatively" at that familiar wooden door.

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Gao San had never fled.

No one could have imagined that an Acrobat desperate to escape would instead remain at the scene. With audacious nerve, he'd used his outrageously flexible body and peak-level balance to wedge himself into a gap above the ceiling, motionless and silent, enduring the entire confrontation between Cheng Shi and Selius.

After Cheng Shi and Galusha left one after another, the Iron Law Knights showed no interest in investigating either. The Selius that Montelani and the lord needed was alive and well—whoever had died was irrelevant.

So they didn't even bother to examine the scene. After seeing Galusha off, they simply left—abandoning the mess that no one dared touch or cared to deal with.

Not until the room had been quiet for so long that Gao San felt night must be falling did he finally descend in silence, standing before the dead scholar.

He'd heard everything. Which meant he'd heard the exchange between Cheng Shi and the Fool's Lips.

Now his mind was consumed by it—consumed by that "schizophrenic" teammate, Cheng Shi.

'He seemed to be talking to himself. To another personality? Something called "Brother Mouth"?'

'Is he sick?'

Gao San's expression was gravely serious, because this was no joke.

Said anywhere else, it might have been banter. But here—in a laboratory that stripped apart personalities to produce slices—his behavior only reinforced the possibility that Gao San was one of Cheng Shi's personality slices.

'After five personalities have been sliced off, he still has two left?'

'Is that absurd?'

A faint terror crept through Gao San. In one fleeting instant, a doubt he shouldn't have harbored surfaced in his mind:

'Am I... really me?'

'Am I actually a personality peeled away from Cheng Shi with this Concentric Dagger?'

His gaze fell on the bloodied "dagger." He picked it up cautiously.

It looked like an ordinary scalpel. How had it become a "Concentric Dagger" capable of splitting personalities?

Gao San had stayed hidden—listening only, never looking. So naturally he didn't know Cheng Shi had swapped the real Concentric Dagger with a fake. And he especially didn't know that the replacement was the very scalpel Cheng Shi had used to shake hands with Li Yi when Li Yi was transformed into a rat.

And so, the instant he raised the blade to his eyes for a closer look, it transformed without warning into a poker card. With a sharp whistle, it sliced clean through his throat.

Gao San froze.

The prisoner helmet blocked his view of his own neck. He could only reach up with one hand and gently touch—only to feel a warm liquid.

"Ha? An Acrobat?"

"No—I'm a Clown. The real Clown."

THUD—

The Acrobat never even managed a curtain-call speech. His performance ended just like that—abrupt, premature—all his defiance swallowed and sealed inside.

Six reduced to three. Fate claims one.

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