

The Gods 233

Chapter 233: Six Down to Two

The Seliuses outside the door waited a long time but no second prey appeared. Instead, little Galusha arrived.

The moment she showed up, the "hunt" was called off.

There was no choice. No matter how desperately these slices wanted to kill the original Selius, none of them dared act in front of Galusha. After all, this experiment was still being conducted within the Grand Tribunal's territory, and her grandfather was the experiment's benefactor—the sole benefactor.

The plan to replace the original might be tacitly approved by Keinlaur, but it absolutely could not be initiated in front of the girl. She had a special bond with Selius.

The very first time Galusha visited the laboratory to consult the real Selius, this scholar of the Tower of Logic—skilled at identifying patterns—had noticed her problem:

She was a little girl starved of familial warmth. She craved love and affection.

Out of practical consideration, Selius had filled that void with the image of a kindly old teacher. Whatever motive lay behind his "good deed," Galusha was grateful.

Because of this, no one dared speak ill of Selius in her presence—much less kill him.

But also because of this, the Supreme Inquisitor had not only tacitly approved the slices' replacement plan but also tolerated the Tower of Logic's assassination—because...

[Order] has no need for sentiment.

And so, the moment Galusha appeared, every Selius slice withdrew. They retreated into their experimental devices, standing obediently in place as the glass enclosures regenerated around them.

But one Selius did not retreat into a cultivation vessel as planned. That was Li Yi, the Magician.

When the light-blocking cloth dropped, he pressed himself against the device and stood still—but never stepped inside. He waited until the little girl and every knight had left the experiment site, then slipped back out from beneath the cloth and crept away through the shadows.

Li Yi's heart was pounding. He knew this mysterious laboratory surely had ways of detecting intruders, yet his exit was inexplicably smooth—a mystery he could only attribute to the little girl who'd entered the workshop.

'She's probably very important.'

'If I kidnapped her—'

'Forget it. Don't court death.'

Li Yi dismissed the thought. He followed the shadows through the experiment site toward the exit. Just when he was about to leave, he hesitated.

In most trials, it was rare to encounter a laboratory of this scale, and rarer still to find one with so few guards. This facility probably still contained some "treasures" worth the risk of investigating.

He stood flush against the wall and deliberated for a long time before deciding to gamble.

He left a poker card on the floor beneath his feet, retraced his steps, and turned into a room that looked very much like a storage warehouse.

When the Magician pushed the door open and saw countless luminous containers arrayed inside, he knew he'd made the right call.

Germinating Divinity!

No—more accurately, semi-finished products extremely close to Germinating Divinity!

Selius had clearly achieved certain results, and those results were casually displayed in a room no different from a warehouse—with absolutely no one guarding them!

Just as Selius had said: when there are enough "directors," guards become irrelevant.

Besides, his current appearance was that of a Selius. Browsing one's own warehouse was perfectly natural.

Li Yi began strolling through the shelves, scanning his surroundings warily while examining the faintly glowing orbs floating within the containers.

The shelves were covered in dense data and text. He couldn't read any of it, and could only guess from a few recognizable numerical symbols that these were the specimens' characteristic data and mutation probabilities.

He searched and searched until, at the very back of the warehouse, he found a relatively complete pale-red orb of light. The numbers beneath it were clearly larger than those on every other shelf.

This was obviously a higher-grade Germinating Divinity. According to Selius, if he consumed this divinity, could he become "that one with a sliver of possibility of becoming Him"?

'That is Him—even if only an embryo!'

'But it's still a chance to draw closer to Them!'

Once that thought took root, it spiraled relentlessly through Li Yi's mind.

He nearly lost control of his desire, reaching toward the container—but after a prolonged inner struggle, he pulled back.

Because he'd thought of something else:

"Becoming a sliver of possibility of Him" was enormously risky!

Setting aside the question of how he could possibly contain a Germinating Divinity mutated from someone else's Common Recognition—the simple fact that this result sat in such a conspicuous location proved the success rate had to be abysmal.

If it weren't, Selius would have long since "enjoyed" the Germinating Divinity extracted into this container, rather than leaving it here waiting for some destined person.

Li Yi's eyes had turned crimson with greed. He suppressed every impulse with all his might, withdrew his vein-bulging hand with a tremor, and let out a bitter sigh through clenched teeth:

"Huff—forget it. Can't force it."

He cast one final look at the luminous container before him, steeled his heart, and teleported himself to a spot outside the experiment site.

After he departed, in the silent warehouse, in a darkened corner untouched by any glow, a Selius with an unreadable expression slowly emerged from the shadows.

"A pity. Almost got to observe a new experiment."

"But no matter. Go ahead and scout the path first—let's see what that Supreme Inquisitor's real attitude is toward me, toward this laboratory."

His eerie gaze flicked toward the warehouse door. Then Selius once again melted back into the darkness.

Li Yi had escaped. He'd finally escaped.

He fled the terrifying, sinister laboratory, sprinting up the tunnel until he reached the depths of the abandoned mine.

But when he found the mine's only elevator, confusion seized him. There was one thing he couldn't figure out:

'If not a single Iron Law Knight stood guard outside the laboratory, why is one here?'

'And his attire looks different from all the others.'

Before Li Yi could speak first, the knight addressed him. His voice carried an air of authority:

"Mr. Selius, the lord does not wish for you to appear anywhere outside the laboratory. Please turn back the way you came. Don't make this difficult for me."

Li Yi frowned and deliberately blurred his voice:

"Lady Galusha has summoned me. I'm responding to her invitation, within regulation. If you have doubts, you may consult your superiors."

"Mr. Selius—please don't take me for a fool. Lady Galusha would not summon you at this time." The knight touched his nose, his eyes dripping with contempt, and flatly refused.

Li Yi's eyes went wide with stunned fury:

"Cheng Shi!"

"You're still alive!?"

"Don't take me for a fool either!"

"You don't even bother hiding that nose-touching tic—are you deliberately mocking me!?"

"Oh dear, you caught me~"

The Iron Law Knight grinned like a villain and pulled off the black hood, revealing a face beneath it that was, frankly, rather handsome.

It was Cheng Shi!

He hadn't left either.

Or rather—once he'd learned this was the only exit from the laboratory besides backtracking through the rubble, he'd "moved in." Right beside the mine elevator.

As for the reason...

[Fate]'s prophecy told him that only one would walk out of this trial alive. So he'd waited—waited for Fate to deliver the rabbit to his stake.

And it seemed Fate had kept its appointment.

The rabbit was here.

Wearing a scholar's face, but clearly the same one as before.

Although... "still alive"—what was that supposed to mean?

'Oh. I see. Someone took the hit for me.'

'Wonder who was kind enough to do that?'

"Tsk—you really did tamper with my scalpel."

Cheng Shi's tone carried a trace of wistfulness. He hadn't actually intended to kill Li Yi. He'd felt Li Yi wasn't a truly rotten person—someone with potential for continued cooperation.

And as a Magician, Li Yi fit the image of what Cheng Shi had always imagined a Magician should be. It stirred in him that rare feeling of one kindred spirit recognizing another.

But it seemed the Magician didn't share the sentiment.

'What a shame. You really can't trust a liar.'

Li Yi saw the complexity in Cheng Shi's expression. He frowned, took a cautious step back, and produced several poker cards. His tone was guarded:

"No more acting. We've never trusted each other. What exactly do you want—"

BOOM—

Thunder's roar erupted through the subterranean mine.

The Hero of Today didn't lack the will to unleash his might—he simply refused to give the Magician any chance for another "vanishing act."

This Thundering Judgment was devastatingly decisive, blazingly fast, its timing so unexpected that no one could have reacted—not even a Magician with a bag full of tricks!

And so there was no rain of poker cards. No vanishing act. The cornered Magician, with nowhere left to run, finally met his show's finale.

Li Yi was dead. Clean and quick.

Cheng Shi withdrew his hand, scoffed, and turned to leave.

'The moment you tampered with my scalpel and turned your killing intent on me, you should've known this day would come.'

'Besides, I've seen too many poker shows. Getting a bit tired of them.'

It had to be said—[Fate] had indeed delivered that dead rabbit to his doorstep. The scripts He wrote always seemed to be complete ones.

"Farewell, my dear Mr. Magician."

As Cheng Shi's figure vanished into the mine shaft, this trial of [Chaos] drew to a close...

Six reduced to two. One from each branch of [Void].

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