

## The Gods 238

Chapter 238: How Do You Prove You Are You?

Which kind am I?

Cheng Shi laughed.

'Scholar, you're far too narrow-minded. Why must it be one or the other?'

'Why can't it be both?'

'I'm both a crazed trickster and a pure lunatic. Is that not allowed?'

But Cheng Shi didn't say this aloud. By now, he had already sunk deep into contemplation.

He was thinking about everything he'd experienced before awakening in this laboratory — what it had actually amounted to.

A dream? Or a rehearsal for a trial?

[Chaos] had apparently inserted a fabricated fantasy at the beginning of its trial — a false trial.

The foundation of that false trial was Selius's slice experiment, and every player in that fantasy had been himself — another personality's version of himself!

So that was it! They really had been him all along!

The realization crystallized slowly, and the more he thought about it, the more he recognized that the so-called [Deceit] civil war had been utter nonsense. It had clearly been himself fighting himself!

How blind he'd been! He should have figured it out sooner!

That farce of a "trial" had been fake from the start. Li Yi, Ji Er, Gao San, Zhao Si, Su Wu — all fake, all figments of his own imagination.

Even their professions, their abilities, even the items in their hands — every last detail had been drawn from his own cognition and memories.

No wonder there had been five tricksters!

No wonder there had been five Masters of Deception!

No wonder the Magician had suited his tastes so perfectly!

No wonder these "teammates" couldn't even read!

Because all of it had sprung from his own imagination. They had all been born from his memories and could never have transcended his own understanding!

Under [Chaos]'s will, he had fabricated five opponents out of thin air for himself — and all five were cunning, treacherous, scheming masterminds!

Had it not been for the [Death] Fun Ring in his hand and the divine power of [Fate] coursing through him, the outcome of that imagined civil war would have been genuinely uncertain...

At this thought, Cheng Shi laughed again — a bitter, self-deprecating laugh. He suddenly recalled the prophecy Li Yi had spoken:

Minds that differ, yet hearts as one!

What a phrase — "minds that differ, yet hearts as one." They were all him, so of course their hearts were as one!

This was true chaos — true [Chaos]!

Making it impossible to distinguish false from real, self from other.

Looking back on the day's events, it was like having dreamed within a trial, yet it equally felt like having undergone a trial within a dream.

What a dream within a dream. What a play within a play. What a game within a game!

If this trial hadn't been labeled with [Chaos]'s divine name, Cheng Shi would have sworn his former patron deity had orchestrated it!

Because if this had been a [Deceit] scheme... Cheng Shi wouldn't have been surprised in the slightest.

The Fun God adored this kind of entertainment — fabricating illusions, beguiling hearts.

Had he not swiftly killed every version of "himself" under [Fate]'s blessing, awakening before the slice experiment could succeed, the situation might have become far more complex and terrifying.

A chill ran through Cheng Shi's heart. He couldn't help but wonder: if he'd failed to eliminate every personality slice, would he have truly been turned into a "deathmatch convict" upon reawakening?

At that point, would there truly have been several identical copies of himself running around in this trial?

!!!

So this was what it truly meant — "amid the doubts of others, how do you prove that you are you"!

When multiple slices actually existed, among the countless copies of six players, who could trust whom? Who would dare trust anyone?

To clear the trial, these slices — each convinced they were the real player — would exhaust every method to prove themselves and every means to win others' endorsement. Because they'd already survived a "trial" where self-proof was impossible, and they knew full well how formidable each version of themselves could be!

And those methods and means — it went without saying — would inevitably trigger catastrophic chaos in the real trial.

So this was [Chaos]'s true objective!!!

It was brewing a maelstrom where no one could tell self from other, truth from lie, real from illusion!

Ruthless beyond measure.

Cheng Shi couldn't even imagine how he would have won this trial if he'd truly failed to awaken early and instead dragged those five imaginary tricksters into the real trial — along with every other teammate's slices on top of that.

Rely on the demigod artifact in his hand again?

No. If he'd already lost once, there was no way he could win the real trial.

So, if the one who ultimately proved themselves and cleared the trial had been a counterfeit cultivated from a personality slice — what would have happened to him?

Would he die? Would he vanish? Would he simply cease to exist?

The answer, obviously, was yes.

But also no — because in everyone else's eyes, Cheng Shi would have won.

They would never know that the person who cleared the trial and returned to the rest area was merely Cheng Shi's slice. Even the slice himself wouldn't believe he was a copy. He would only believe that he was Cheng Shi — the same Cheng Shi who had never changed.

At this thought, lingering dread flooded Cheng Shi's heart.

'I'm not complaining, big bro, but I'm technically family. How can you be this ruthless?'

'Don't you know what happens when six tricksters are crammed together? People die!'

'What if the one who dies is me?'

'Or does [Chaos]'s will simply not care which Cheng Shi survives?'

"..."

Setting that aside, considering the "slice war" that had played out within his consciousness — was [Time] truly uninvolved in the form and mechanism of that fantasy?

That was clearly [Time]'s authority of extrapolation!

Everything he'd experienced in the fantasy, every piece of information he'd gathered — all of it had been verified as accurate during this conversation with Selius. That meant it wasn't a wholly fabricated hallucination. At the very least, every story and detail within the "trial" was consistent with reality and logic.

But how was [Chaos] wielding [Time]'s extrapolation so masterfully?!

Had it stolen [Time]'s authority?

How could it possibly steal [Time]'s authority?

'Big bro, isn't your power level a bit over the top?'

'I haven't seen you plundering [Civilization]'s wool, but you've certainly sheared plenty off [Existence].'

'Wait — did [Deceit] turn me into your "envoy" because of this?'

'Huh?'

'Have you two formed a united front against [Existence]?'

"..."

'Great. Just great.'

But if that were the case, had Brother Mouth's awakening also been part of his fantasy?

Could it be affected by an extrapolation of that caliber?

'Brother Mouth?'

'Brother Mouth?'

'Hello?'

No response — but he still couldn't be certain.

After all, it loved playing dead.

"..."

Having finally pieced everything together, Cheng Shi calmed the parade of expressions that had been cycling across his face. He turned to Selius:

"Never mind which kind I am. Since there's nothing wrong with me, let's move on to the next step.

Let's talk about your escape from this place.

That young lady already gave me a complete breakout plan. All you need to do is cooperate unconditionally, and you'll be out of here. So — are you ready?"

Selius's eyes showed no excitement at the prospect of imminent freedom. He studied Cheng Shi — who kept rubbing his nose — and frowned slightly:

"How, exactly, should I cooperate with you?"

"Simple. Cooperate by dying for a moment.

I can carry your soul out of here and find you a new body outside Montrani.

But before that, I need to confirm one thing:

How can you prove that you're truly Selius himself, and not a slice trying to take his place?"

At those words, Selius's composed expression finally darkened.

In that moment, Cheng Shi had thrown the trial's very question back at one of the trial's own NPCs.