

The Gods 243

Chapter 243: Cheng Shi — One Blessed by [Fate]...

"The Concentric Dagger!?"

The tall, thin teammate put on his glasses and stared at Cheng Shi in astonishment.

"You haven't split?"

Cheng Shi froze, then hurriedly began rubbing his face: "Of course I have! But we've already reached a consensus, so our movements are perfectly synchronized."

"..."

That didn't look remotely like symptoms of dissociative identity disorder. It looked more like genuine stupidity.

"Then this... where did it come from?"

"I woke up a bit earlier and snatched this dagger from Selius."

"And where's Selius?"

Cheng Shi gave an awkward laugh: "Take a wild guess how I snatched it."

"..." Got it.

The teammate nodded, took the Concentric Dagger from Cheng Shi's palm, and cleared his throat:

"Everyone — you should all recognize Selius's Concentric Dagger from that extrapolation. It can—"

"Never seen it!" The big man roared in whatever breath he could spare between attempts to strangle himself, cutting the bespectacled teammate off.

"..."

The bespectacled teammate paused but showed no irritation. Instead, he nodded with remarkable patience and explained:

"This is the primary tool for conducting the slice experiment.

It can be used to separate a subject's personalities — with two methods of application, forward and reverse.

In the forward application, you insert the dagger into the subject's heart using a specific technique, then withdraw it one second before death. This sequentially dissolves the subject's other personalities.

But the timing of the withdrawal is critical. One second too early and the remaining personalities will be warped by the dagger's power. One second too late and the subject's body becomes an empty, consciousnessless shell.

In the reverse application — which is what everyone already knows as the slicing method — a complete personality is divided into multiple fragments."

It wasn't only the players who were awake. After the teammate finished his explanation, nearly every conscious person in the room turned to look at him, their confused and frightened gazes tinged with skepticism.

But Cheng Shi knew the man wasn't lying. During his own hands-on study of the slice experiment, he'd already figured out the dagger's functions.

Unfortunately, he only knew the reverse application — not the forward one.

This teammate who claimed to be a slice certainly knew quite a lot.

Noticing the subtle look Cheng Shi was giving him, the bespectacled teammate smiled without a trace of guilt:

"I'm a follower of [Truth]. I know a thing or two about Selius's slice experiment, which is how I happen to know the forward application of the Concentric Dagger.

Allow me to introduce myself. Li Zhi — the 'zhi' as in 'obsession.' Surgeon. 2119.

Oh, and I've also discovered a new identity of mine, which is...

Someone else's personality slice."

He finished the introduction with a smile, seemingly unbothered by his status as a slice.

But his composed, friendly demeanor genuinely baffled Cheng Shi. It was rare to encounter someone this emotionally stable in a trial.

Especially when his warm smile and the goodwill he radiated didn't appear to be an act.

In the Faith Game — particularly at the higher tiers — a "normal" person was the abnormal one.

"You're... a priest?" Cheng Shi was taken aback to meet a fellow professional.

"Yes. An authentic, genuine priest."

As he spoke, he reached out and lightly touched the back of Cheng Shi's hand. A wave of healing light instantly enveloped Cheng Shi, and his chaotic thoughts gradually settled.

A Calming Spell. This teammate really was a priest!

Li Zhi didn't just give Cheng Shi a Calming Spell — he cast one on every single person in the laboratory. Then, holding the Concentric Dagger aloft, he called out:

"Anyone who wishes to be free of this dissociative state — come to me and we'll give it a try. I'll do my best to keep you alive.

But I must be clear: the procedure still carries risks."

"Me! I'll go! Kill these invaders trying to take over my body!"

"Hmph — bring it. Stab me. Let's see who survives to the end!"

The first to respond weren't the players, but the Land of Hope locals.

They surged toward Li Zhi, eager for him to perform a "purification surgery."

And Li Zhi didn't disappoint. With meticulous patience and nimble precision, he arranged the approaching experiment materials on the nearest operating tables, then began resetting their personalities with the dagger.

His technique was extraordinarily delicate, his movements pinpoint accurate, and his perception of others' vital states remarkably keen. Under his care, several fractured subjects were restored to single-personality status before long.

They cried out with pale faces that they were the final victor — oblivious to the fact that no observer could tell which personality had actually persevered to the end.

It wasn't until more than a dozen locals had undergone personality purification that a player finally decided to take the gamble.

The burly man who'd been the first to open his eyes steeled himself and shuffled over to Li Zhi on unsteady legs, his three internal personalities still wrestling for control of his body.

"Do it, priest. I'll be the last one standing — and when I am, I'll make sure to express my gratitude properly."

"Song Yi. Remember — my name is Song Yi. Trap-Breaking Warrior."

"Heh. I've heard your final words, gentlemen. Let's begin, priest."

Li Zhi shook his head with a wry smile. He slowly slid the Concentric Dagger into the teammate's heart, his arm perfectly steady.

Before long, the big man's complexion shifted rapidly and his vital signs plummeted. But the surgeon remained unfazed, expression unchanging as he waited for the dagger to kill off the other personalities — even when the man clutched his wrist in a death grip, Li Zhi didn't flinch.

Not until the precise moment when the man was on the verge of blacking out did Li Zhi decisively withdraw the blade and immediately cast a healing spell.

Song Yi clutched his chest, gasping for breath. The surgery was clearly a success.

Cheng Shi found this quite entertaining and asked from the sidelines:

"Hey, warrior — are you the one who promised gratitude, or the one who introduced himself?"

Song Yi, still deathly pale, replied: "I told you — those were their last words. Heh. Two overconfident idiots. I'm the primary personality!"

Oh my — it was the third one who survived.

Cheng Shi clicked his tongue in amusement, privately thinking he'd found the self-introduction Song Yi a bit more endearing.

Li Zhi tilted his head toward Cheng Shi and asked curiously:

"You're not going to purify your other personalities?"

Cheng Shi blinked, then said while rubbing his nose: "I think this is fine the way it is. The more the merrier."

"..."

Li Zhi was momentarily stumped. His gaze flicked to Cheng Shi's nose-rubbing hand, and something thoughtful crossed his expression before he nodded and returned to operating on the others.

The remaining teammates, having seen Song Yi survive unscathed, dragged themselves over to the doctor. Clearly, they'd decided to trust this stranger and let him purify their extra personalities.

Li Zhi truly operated like a dedicated physician — turning no one away. It wasn't until every awakened experiment material had been freed from their fractured state that he finally collapsed to the ground, panting.

Cheng Shi regarded him with genuine respect. No matter who he was — or rather, no matter whose slice he was — in this moment, he truly deserved the title of "doctor."

"Brother, I won't forget you. Li Zhi — good name. If we meet again, Song Yi will repay the favor without hesitation."

"Thank you. I don't believe there are good people left in this world, but right here, right now, I have no choice but to say it — thank you.

Yu Gui. Death Weaver. 2047. I'm grateful to have met you."

"Good heavens. I thought four days of fighting in the Colosseum was exhausting enough, but the trial's greatest challenge was saved for the very end.

It's truly... terrifying in hindsight. Thank you, doctor.

Wei Youxue. Bard. 2313. Thank you, my teammate, for giving me the chance to keep broadening my horizons."

"Sure enough, combat classes can brute-force their way through a problem or two. Singers like Youxue and me — when it came to fighting, we were ready to use our teeth.

Hua Jiao. You can call me Hua Jiao. I agree with the Death Weaver — good people don't exist in this world. But to stay alive, getting played isn't exactly unacceptable.

All in all, thank you, good Mister Priest."

What a fascinating group this was. With the trial nearly over, six people had gathered to introduce themselves to one another.

But as Cheng Shi's gaze swept across his teammates, a quiet unease stirred in his mind.

Logically, only one hour of the trial remained. The end was in sight. And yet, that prophecy...

Yes — the prophecy he'd made while playing the role of Prophet in the imagined trial. It clearly foretold an ending that wasn't entirely pleasant.

Could that prophecy have only applied to the extrapolated fantasy?

No — because Cheng Shi remembered that when he'd made the prediction, he'd spoken of the next trial, not some fantasy or extrapolation. So...

Was the script's finale still hiding a surprise?

His brow furrowed deeply at the thought. And right then, everyone's eyes turned to him — the teammate who'd claimed "the more the merrier" and refused the surgery.

Cheng Shi felt their gazes, paused for a beat, then rubbed his nose with an embarrassed grin:

"Ahem, my turn, huh? Cheng Shi. One blessed by [Fate]—"

Before he could finish, the laboratory door swung open without warning.

"Who are you people? Where did Grandpa Selius go?"

"...?"

Hearing that familiar voice, Cheng Shi's face crumbled.

'Blessed my ass!'