

The Gods 246

Chapter 246: Trial Cleared — Reborn!

By now, it was painfully obvious to everyone — this terrifying high-scoring teammate had clearly woken up early and turned the entire laboratory into a trap!

"The more the merrier" — what utter rubbish! All lies!

They could only count their blessings that this man wasn't completely evil. At least he hadn't slaughtered every last teammate while waiting for the others to finish their experiments. But that "compensation"...

Had to be paid. No choice.

The screaming Trap-Breaking Warrior was living proof — nonpayment would be fatal.

Hua Jiao's expression cycled through several shades before he reluctantly reached into his personal space, pulled out a single page, and set it at his feet.

"One sheet of paper — that can't be enough, can it?"

At Cheng Shi's mocking jab, the Historian's entire body shuddered. He hastily produced an assortment of vials and containers.

Cheng Shi raised an eyebrow. There was some good stuff in there.

"Fine. Get lost."

Hua Jiao retreated with the utmost caution, then vanished through the doorway in a flash.

The others followed suit, setting down their compensation with colorful expressions before filing out of the laboratory. Only the surgeon remained — after casting a life-sustaining healing spell on Song Yi, he turned to Cheng Shi with a smile:

"I know you're not a bad person.

I've seen my share of robberies, but one as creative as yours? That's a rare find.

Don't frown — I'm not stalling for time. I'll leave my share of the compensation, and I can even cover Song Yi's portion.

But beyond that, I have one small request."

Cheng Shi tilted his chin, signaling him to continue.

"That Concentric Dagger... the one you used to save them. I noticed you put it away."

'Sharp eyes, doctor. But that was mine to begin with.' Cheng Shi pursed his lips, noncommittal.

"What — you want it?"

"Yes. I'd like to trade something for it."

"This Concentric Dagger is quite valuable. There's only one."

"No — there are two in this laboratory. One belonged to Selius, and one belonged to slice-Selius."

"..."

'Damn. I've been plundering so routinely I forgot they'd also explored this place during the extrapolation.'

"Ahem. This Concentric Dagger is quite valuable. There are only two."

"..." Li Zhi was dumbfounded. He'd rarely encountered a trading partner this shameless. "I only need one. The one from slice-Selius's hand. I have something that should more than match your asking price."

With that, he placed a leaf shimmering with emerald light on the ground at his feet.

Cheng Shi glanced at it, and his heart skipped. He had a strong suspicion of what it was.

Li Zhi was observant. He smiled:

"Guessed it, haven't you? Correct — it's a Prosperity Vein. But it's not from the fantasy trial just now. I earned it before. This item is essentially the pinnacle of A-grade artifacts. It can be smelted into your equipment to increase its toughness.

You're a warrior. You'll absolutely find a use for it. No warrior can turn it down — and one Concentric Dagger is more than enough for you."

Cheng Shi frowned, puzzled: "Why does it have to be the slice's dagger specifically?"

"Personal collection reasons. It makes no difference to you. I trust you can tell I'm not lying."

'I can't tell. But I can guess.'

Li Zhi genuinely didn't seem to be lying, and Cheng Shi was genuinely interested in the Prosperity Vein.

After a moment's deliberation, he nodded and tossed the Concentric Dagger that had belonged to slice-Selius over to Li Zhi.

He hadn't needed to make this deal. The surgeon couldn't possibly beat him in a fight. But Cheng Shi had a certain admiration for this kind, lawful, and emotionally stable fellow priest. He was willing to trade with an "imperfect good man."

Li Zhi received the dagger like it was a priceless treasure, overjoyed beyond measure — until he noticed the bloodstains on the blade. Then he froze.

"Isn't this the one you used to save people just now?"

Cheng Shi nodded affirmatively: "That's right. This is the one."

"You..." Li Zhi's expression turned to bewildered shock. He was stunned.

"?" Cheng Shi's brow furrowed, eyes narrowing.

"It's nothing. What's done is done.

Everyone has their own fate.

You don't seem to be deceiving me. Very well — deal done. As for my compensation and Song Yi's, these potions should suffice."

With that, Li Zhi set down a generous pile of potions, then quietly pulled the barely breathing Trap-Breaking Warrior away.

'You're actually a pretty decent person.'

Cheng Shi surveyed the loot spread across the floor, pouted, and swept it all into his personal space.

A rough count: just over a hundred assorted potions, plus a dozen or so high-grade items of various oddities.

'Tsk. What a loss.'

'After all that — I still ended up connected to Galusha.'

'I can only hope she didn't notice me.'

'Dammit. Now I see the truth. Fate really is a... uh... a, well, a fine patron.'

Cheng Shi's face was a mask of awkwardness when his vision went dark.

[Special Trial (Rebirth [Chaos]) — Challenge Successful]

[Calculating score and settling rewards...]

[Player: Cheng Shi — Performance Rating: S]

[Item Acquired: Smog Bomb [Corruption] (A) x1]

[Item Acquired: Iron Law Lance (B) x1]

[Item Acquired: Sly Smile Clown Card (B) x1]

[Food Acquired: Air-Dried Slice Jerky (B) x10]

[Item Acquired: Slice Experiment Blurred Manuscript (C) x5]

[Road to Ascension +12]

[Ladder of Ascent +3]

[Current Road to Ascension Score: 2168 — Global Ranking: 428,647]

[Current Ladder of Ascent Score: 169 — Path Ranking: 41]

[Trial Cleared. Exiting now.]

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The instant everyone vanished, Melina pushed open the door of the research workshop, her expression grim.

She'd heard Galusha's cry and come searching — but before she could find Galusha, she'd stumbled upon this room full of... mountains of corpses and seas of blood.

"What is..."

"No — Galusha!"

Melina vanished from where she stood and materialized at the door of the slice experiment chamber. She screamed Galusha's name — but the little girl lying on the floor, her eyes drained of all color, would never answer again.

"How... how could this happen..."

Melina crumpled to her knees like a woman struck by lightning. She stared blankly as she gathered Galusha's body into her arms, stunned to discover that she — a daughter of the Tower of Logic — was shedding a tear for this little girl of the Grand Tribunal.

The crystalline drop traced down her cheek and happened to fall into Galusha's eye. But the ripple could no longer stir a surface long since gone still.

"I... you... Galusha... rest in peace..."

"Boom—"

Melina left.

The moment she learned Selius was dead, the desire to depart had taken root. With Galusha's death on top of that, she had no reason left to stay in Montrani.

It was time to go home — back to the place where [Truth] flowed free.

And so she set fire to the laboratory. Set fire to every experiment material that had watched Galusha die while trembling and doing nothing. With a blaze that burned without order, she gave the little girl one final farewell.

Goodbye, Galusha.

Farewell forever, Montrani.

...

Montrani — the Tribunal of Justice.

Inside a hidden alcove behind a false wall in a suite, within an antiquated experiment apparatus, a little girl curled into a ball suddenly snapped open a pair of scarlet eyes.

Seeing the girl stir in bewildered awakening, a stern, cold voice echoed through the cramped space:

"It seems [Truth] is not entirely useless after all.

Welcome home, little Galusha."