

## The Gods 260

Chapter 260: A New Trial — Dying Embers [Prosperity]

Clear skies. Bright sunshine.

Standing in the gentle breeze of dawn, Cheng Shi was silently tallying the spoils he'd "looted" from the last trial.

The most precious of all was the Prosperity Vein he'd acquired through a trade. Adding this to equipment would significantly boost its toughness — but unfortunately, Cheng Shi wasn't the type to rely on gear.

His only regularly used weapon was the scalpel, and he treated it as a consumable.

Infusing the Prosperity Vein into a scalpel would be criminally wasteful. Better to save it for now.

The book page that the historian Hua Jiao had left on the ground turned out to be noteworthy too. Cheng Shi had assumed it was a [Memory]-related history book, but it wasn't. It was a Learned Poet's page.

A page recording the [Decay] S-rank talent, "Dyeing Plague."

It was a terrifying area-of-effect attack talent. Before activation, the user could first resonate with a specific element, changing the plague's type to match. Then upon deployment, it created a plague source that continuously emitted the Dyeing Plague.

The moment the plague source touched down, the entire area became a cradle of pestilence — indiscriminately corroding every living thing that set foot within it, until all targets embraced [Decay] and rotted away to nothing.

An extremely vicious means of attack — and exactly why [Decay] mages were universally despised.

It was their exclusive talent, and their offerings to [Decay] were always indiscriminate.

The undisputed king of AoE.

Cheng Shi stowed the book page with a somber expression, silently praying he'd never need to use it.

Among the remaining spoils, the various offensive, defensive, and support items were largely dispensable. The hundred-odd assorted potions, however, did nicely diversify his potion stockpile.

Now, whenever he needed to use some unconventional potions, he finally had both an excuse and a source.

'These were all snatched from other people's hands. Not something I specifically prayed for. Waste not, want not.'

After sorting through everything, Cheng Shi inevitably thought about his teammates from the previous trial. He studied the Concentric Dagger that belonged to Selius, and his thoughts returned to the doctor's insistence on swapping for the other slice-dagger.

When the doctor had learned that the rescue-dagger was the one belonging to the sliced Selius, he'd frozen for a moment. Why? Were the two daggers somehow different?

'The "collector's item" excuse was obviously a cover. The real question is — what's the actual difference?'

Concentric, concentric... used normally, it strips away secondary personalities. Used in reverse, it splits personalities apart. That seemed straightforward enough...

'Wait — hold on!'

Cheng Shi's eyes snapped wide. A realization struck: how could someone as careful and calculating as the sliced Selius — someone who desperately wanted to supplant the original Selius — possibly carry a dagger capable of killing weaker personalities?

That was effectively strapping a bomb to yourself!

So his dagger had to be fundamentally different from the original Selius's dagger!

And connecting that to the doctor's own slice identity, the answer became obvious: the dagger in the sliced Selius's hands wasn't designed to eliminate secondary personalities — it was designed to eliminate the primary personality!

That was why the doctor needed it. Just like the sliced Selius, he wanted to kill his own original!

Whether this "good person" doctor had succeeded or not was anyone's guess.

'Good luck to him. But the odds aren't great. Because... good people don't usually live long.'

"Sigh." Cheng Shi let out a wistful sigh — but then his pupils contracted sharply.

'Oh no. If all those guesses are correct, then the teammates who were "saved" by the sliced Selius's dagger...'

'Their primary personalities were killed, weren't they?'

'Huh?'

'The survivors were all slice personalities?'

'Is that why the doctor said "each to their own fate"?''

'So [Fate]'s prophecy wasn't wrong after all. Only I truly won the trial.'

'As for the teammates who also walked out — they may no longer be the same people who walked in.'

Cheng Shi's expression turned subtly complicated.

'Don't blame me, everyone. I had no idea the two daggers were different.'

'You screwed me over once, I screwed you over once. Call it... ahem... even?'

'And even if it isn't even — what's done is done. Can't exactly give the stuff back now.'

'Moving on.'

Cheng Shi glanced skyward, hurriedly stashed everything away with a slightly guilty conscience, and marveled once again at [Fate].

'Whatever scripts He's been writing... who knows what they're really for.'

'The Concentric Dagger, the Tower of Logic, Galusha...'

'Hopefully I never encounter them again.'

...

Life between trials was uneventful. Especially after Xie Yang had fallen head over heels into his romance, Cheng Shi's daily entertainment had been visibly dwindling.

His neighbor seemed to be perpetually on dates. Every time he came back, his face was beaming with happiness as he tossed out a quick greeting, and the next sighting wouldn't be for another day or two.

Watching him like this, Cheng Shi wondered more than once whether the guy had long since figured out that Xiao Yuan was actually "Little Round" — and was this happy precisely because of it.

After all, it was the apocalypse. Loosening up on gender restrictions a bit wasn't exactly unreasonable.

And so the days slipped by. A few days later, the special trial arrived on schedule.

Cheng Shi lay quietly on the rooftop, watching the notification in his vision slowly turn red.

[Special Trial (Dying Embers [Prosperity]) has been activated]

[Matching teammates (1/6)]

[Trial Objective: In the silent night, ignite a fire that burns across the plains (Time limit: 5 days)]

[Prosperity]!

A [Prosperity] trial!

Cheng Shi's eyebrow rose. A spark of happiness.

Because [Prosperity] trials were generally simple. The goal was to first identify the subject of His attention, then spend the trial's duration ensuring that target maintained a state of [Prosperity].

In plain terms: don't let the [Prosperity]-aligned target die.

That was why Grand Marshal Hu Wei had lost so many points during that earlier [Prosperity] trial when he'd led Cheng Shi's group to kill the pharmacy owner — their actions had run completely counter to the trial objective.

So when Cheng Shi saw it was [Prosperity], genuine relief flooded through him.

The Chosen Ones had returned to their lofty perches. The trial environment was gradually normalizing. On top of that, this was one of the easier trial types. How could he possibly lose?

After so many rounds of scheming, backstabbing, and living on the razor's edge — it was about time he caught a break!

'The Faith Game's matchmaking system can't possibly be as garbage as some of those pre-descent video game matchmakers, right?'

'It's my turn to be carried!'

'In short — no matter what anyone else does, this round I'm going full freeloader!'

'Anyone who tries to stop me from freeloading is getting these hands!'

[Match successful (6/6) — Entering trial]