

## Inevitability 131

### Chapter 131 Night Fight

Under the crimson moon's glow, a gas street lamp illuminated the area from a distance. Lumian identified the footprints and followed them at a measured pace.

Before long, the wet spots dried up entirely, ceasing to provide clues. However, Lumian had memorized the size, sole patterns, and gait characteristics of the four sets of footprints, ensuring he wouldn't confuse them with others.

Even so, tracking them proved challenging. Unlike the ruins of Cordu Village, thousands of people traversed Rue Anarchie and its surroundings daily, leaving countless overlapping footprints that obscured and destroyed each other, making it difficult to pinpoint a target.

Compounding the challenge, vendors littered the streets with trash, and the terrible environment created other distractions. At times, Lumian felt like he was searching for a drop of water in the ocean.

Fortunately, it was midnight, and few pedestrians were out. Most were alcoholics, whose distinct smell and staggered footprints Lumian could dismiss at a glance.

Additionally, Margot and his crew hadn't been gone long, so many traces remained undamaged. Lumian barely managed to keep up.

Occasionally, due to the environment or Margot's caution, the footprints would abruptly vanish. But Lumian remained undeterred. He composed himself, searching forward, left, and right over considerable distances for new traces. Through trial and error, he eventually found the footprints he sought.

Thus, Lumian tracked them to Rue du Rossignol in the market district, stopping in front of a five-story apartment building far from several cheap dance halls.

Margot and his subordinates' footprints led inside.

Upon careful examination, Lumian confirmed that the three thugs had eventually left and walked in different directions.

In other words, Margot was the only one remaining in an apartment room.

He doesn't need his subordinates' protection, confident in his own strength... Lumian silently mused, growing more certain that his target was a Beyonder.

He surveyed the pitch-black corridor, considering how a Hunter might handle corresponding traces before returning to their actual residence. He suspected that even with a carbide lamp and meticulous searching, locating Margot would be near-impossible, and he might even fall into a prearranged trap.

After some contemplation, Lumian formulated a preliminary plan. He averted his gaze and headed to the adjacent street.

Before long, he encountered a staggering drunk man in his twenties who could barely walk.

As the man reached a malfunctioning gas street lamp and began to vomit, Lumian lowered his hat and approached. In a hushed tone, he said, "I want to buy your shirt for 1.5 verl d'or." The drunkard's initial reaction was to question whether he was so intoxicated that he was hallucinating.

He wore a gray-blue tweed shirt he'd purchased from a cheap clothing store in Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman for only 1 verl d'or. Now, someone wanted to spend 1.5 verl d'or, or 30 licks, on this old garment he'd worn for two years!

Am I crazy, or is this guy crazy? The drunkard strained to look up at his counterpart, but the dim light only revealed a shadowy figure in the darkness.

The next moment, two cold coins appeared in his hand.

Instinctively, the drunkard weighed the coins and felt the patterns etched into the metal.

He belched and asked, "Why do you want to buy it?"

"If you're unwilling, I'll find someone else." Lumian feigned taking back the silver coins.

Without further questioning, the drunkard grumbled and slowly removed his coat, emptying the pockets.

As Lumian departed with the clothes, the drunkard looked up with difficulty and waved his hand.

"Haha, lunatic. Lunatic who gives money...

Blargh..."

By the time Lumian returned to the apartment block on Rue du Rossignol, he had changed into a dark-blue cap, a gray-blue tweed coat, faded pants, and a pair of worn, dirty leather shoes.

In addition to items he would use later, he had spent a total of 12 verl d'or.

Lumian glanced at the unlit apartment and suddenly found himself bewildered.

Why do I have to target a Beyonder like Margot?

His three subordinates were hardly innocent, and they were clearly weak. They didn't know how to cover their tracks, so dealing with them shouldn't be much harder than killing a chicken...

The fate of being attacked by the Montsouris ghost wouldn't discriminate!

Why was I fixated on hunting Margot?

I wasn't like this before. When necessary, I could be ruthless, and I could keep things simple. I wouldn't burden myself unnecessarily...

As these thoughts raced through his mind, Lumian's lips curled into a faint smile. He realized he had 'instinctively' chosen more dangerous prey because it appeared more challenging, making him feel more at ease and carefree.

Lumian gazed at his left chest concealed beneath his clothes, suspecting this change resulted from the corruption within his body. After a few seconds of silence, he suppressed a soft chuckle. "From the looks of it, I'm a little crazy..." He didn't plan on changing his target; it was as if he could

already smell the stench of blood. This was both a blessing and a curse. With his cap pulled low, Lumian carried a pile of items and circled to the rear of the target apartment.

He arranged the fatty meat, flammable sofa stuffing, and other items against the wall, creating a fireproof barrier around them.

Next, Lumian struck a match and tossed it onto the pile. The sparks rapidly spread across the most combustible materials, quickly growing and consuming everything around them. Black smoke billowed.

As the dense smoke enveloped the area, Lumian shouted, "Fire! Fire!"

He then raced back to the front of the apartment and retreated into the shadows of a nearby corner.

His plan was simple: since he didn't know which room Margot occupied or what traps he had set, he'd force Margot to reveal himself! If Margot were a Pyromaniac, he'd certainly sense that the flames and smoke below couldn't cause a real inferno. His reaction would differ greatly, allowing Lumian to determine Margot's Sequence and decide whether to proceed or abort the plan.

and With the rising smoke, flickering flames, Lumian's cries, the apartment's tenants and those from neighboring buildings rushed down the stairs to the street.

As the fire wasn't large and the smoke hadn't penetrated the apartment, no one risked jumping out.

Remaining silent, Lumian focused intently on the apartment entrance while others 'replaced' him to shout and search for the fire's origin.

Seconds later, a figure leaped from a second-floor window, landing with ease. It was Margot-dressed in a red shirt and long milky-white pants! Relying on his Beyond abilities and living on a lower floor, Margot hadn't taken the stairs like the other tenants. Instead, he jumped out the window.

Upon landing, he glanced back at the apartment, realizing the fire wasn't serious at all. There had been no need for him to jump out, making him appear panicked and foolish.

In that instant, Margot spotted a figure wearing a peaked cap and gray-blue shirt emerge from a corner.

The figure, head lowered, pointed at Margot and laughed. "Look, this guy is such an idiot!" Margot's emotions erupted with a fury.

His eyes tinted red as he lunged at the man mocking him.

He was fast, but the figure was faster. He had already turned and darted into the nearest alley.

All Margot wanted was to teach the guy a lesson and chase him down.

The pair raced into the dark, deserted alley, one tailing the other.

Tap! Tap! Tap! The figure sprinted to a barricade and vaulted over it with a push from his right hand.

Upon landing, he saw the figure stop and turn around.

The moment he landed, he saw the figure stop and turn around.

Under the crimson moonlight, Margot saw the face beneath the dark-blue cap. It was swathed in layers of white bandages, revealing only nostrils, eyes, and ears. The figure's left hand was similarly

wrapped, gripping a sinister-looking, pewter-black dirk. Margot's pupils widened, and his heart skipped a beat.

He instantly realized he had fallen prey to some kind of Provocation.

Suppressing his unease, Margot drew the black revolver from his waist.

He aimed at Lumian and activated Provocation.

“With that knife? Idiot, this is the age of the gun!”

Bang!

Margot pulled the trigger, sending a bullet straight for Lumian's head.

Lumian suddenly arched backward, as if forming a bridge.

Then, he snapped horizontally, dodging Margot's second bullet. Next, Lumian straightened like a coiled spring and hurled Fallen Mercury at Margot as if it were a flying dagger. Anticipating that his enemy had a Provocation-like ability and possibly poisoned the weapon, Margot dared not confront it head-on. He hastily twisted his body, allowing the pewter-black dirk to sail past him and embed into a crack in the barricade.

As he evaded the attack, Margot saw Lumian pounce on him like a tiger.

Only then did he notice that Lumian's ears were stuffed with thick wads of paper, rendering him almost immune to Margot's Provocation!

The best understanding of a Hunter always came from another Hunter!

This revelation infuriated Margot once more, as if he had been silently 'Provoked' by his opponent's prowess. Bam! Lumian clenched his right fist and struck Margot's temples with a sharp crack.

Margot blocked it with his left arm. Simultaneously, he raised his right hand and aimed the revolver at Lumian's head. Let's see how you dodge at this close range!

In an instant, Lumian leaned forward as if to headbutt Margot's chest and grabbed his right wrist with his left hand.

Meanwhile, his right leg swung up with incredible flexibility.

Not at the back of his head, but at Fallen lodged in a crack in the barricade Mercury, beside him!

The sinister, pewter-black dirk soared into the air, propelled by Lumian's kick, and flew straight toward Margot.

## Chapter 132 Black Scorpion

Crash!

Margot barely managed to dodge the deadly dirk hurtling towards him, but in doing so, he failed to move his revolver in sync with Lumian's rapid motion. The bullet struck the opposite wall, sending stone fragments flying. With a metallic clink, Fallen Mercury zipped past Margot again and landed not far away on the ground.

Lumian straightened up and swiftly stomped his right foot onto the enemy's instep to stop him from raising his knee and slamming it into his abdomen.

In the blink of an eye, Lumian was nearly plastered to his opponent. He either slashed or slammed with both hands, or braced and blocked with his elbows. His feet delivered low kicks or stomps, and his knees jerked forward or bounced around. Margot was too preoccupied fending off these attacks to aim and fire.

The thug felt as if he were caught in a relentless storm of his opponent's blows. Moreover, Lumian stayed close, employing close-quarters combat techniques to prevent him from retreating and using his gun.

For Margot, such a fighting style was both foreign and dangerous.

Crash!

Margot's elbow smashed into the wall, causing the house to shudder.

Whack!

Margot's right wrist was twisted, and the black revolver slipped from his grasp, clattering to the ground.

Wham! Wham! Wham! Lumian unleashed a barrage of hands, elbows, knees, and feet, forcing the enemy to retreat repeatedly.

Towards the end, Margot could only block instinctively, his thoughts unable to keep pace with Lumian's swift movements.

However, he sensed that he had already deciphered the pattern of his opponent's attacks and anticipated the sequences that would follow. He could defend against all onslaughts with his muscle memory alone. In just a moment, he would launch a counterattack!

Instinctively, Margot raised his right foot to block the incoming low kick.

But he met nothing.

Lumian's left foot extended diagonally, defying the limits of human flexibility. He hooked the pewter-black dirk that lay silently beside him.

He had attacked Margot to force him to draw near to Fallen Mercury.

The pewter-black dirk soared up and stabbed Margot's thigh.

Margot found himself pinned down by Lumian while balancing precariously on one foot. He had little recourse but to retract his right foot and twist his body slightly to evade.

Fallen Mercury grazed his thigh and tore through his milky-white pants, leaving a shallow trail of blood.

Wham! Wham! Wham! Lumian went on the offensive once more with the close-quarters combat techniques Aurore had taught him, overwhelming Margot until he had no time to tend to his leg injuries.

Luckily, the wound was superficial and bled only slightly.

Crash!

Margot's back collided with the wall.

Throughout the entire encounter, he hadn't even had a chance to speak. The other party still had his ears plugged, unafraid of any provocation.

Margot's blood boiled, but it only served to fuel his determination. He planned to trade his injuries for an advantage and escape his current predicament.

At that moment, his raised arms met nothing.

He watched in confusion and shock as the strange man with the white bandages on his face voluntarily retreated and created distance. Then, the mysterious man turned and sprinted away. As he ran, he flicked the pewter-black dirk up with his toes and snatched it in his left hand.

Momentarily stunned, Margot was about to give chase when footsteps echoed from the alley.

Hearing the gunshots, two patrolling police officers had rushed over with black semi-automatic revolvers, alerted by nearby residents who had "come downstairs" due to the fire.

"What happened? What's your Poison Spur Mob up to again?" one of the policemen demanded with a frown, recognizing Margot's face. Margot shot a disdainful glance at the two officers in white shirts, black vests, and black uniform coats, and replied, "I was attacked. Officers, you're too late!"

Although he said this, he was secretly relieved the police hadn't arrived later and had scared the mysterious man away. Otherwise, he might have been hunted down.

After all, the strange man was likely a Sequence 8 Provoker. Moreover, his combat techniques were clearly superior to Margot's, and his cunning allowed him to gain the upper hand.

The policeman's face darkened.

"Then follow me back to give a statement. We'll help you find the assailant. Also, is this your gun?"

He pointed at the revolver that had fallen to the ground.

Margot sneered. "Rely on you to find him? Haha, that's the funniest joke I've heard this year! That gun belongs to the assailant. Take it away."

With that, he briefly examined his wound to ensure he wasn't poisoned.

Then, he sauntered out of the alley ahead of the two police officers.

The officer who had first spoken wore an ugly expression. He tried to draw his gun, but his partner held his hand down.

Returning to Rue du Rossignol, Margot's face hardened.

His first instinct was to hurry home and rely on the traps he had set up to guard against a second wave of attacks.

But a few seconds later, Margot dismissed the idea, feeling it wasn't sufficient.

He decided to go to the house of the Poison Spur Mob's boss, 'Black Scorpion' Roger, and inform him of the attack. He would stay there for the night.

That was the safest place for Margot. Margot bandaged the wound on his right leg and sprinted from Rue du Rossignol to Avenue du Marché, making his way to the Suhit steam locomotive, and finally arriving at Unit 126, a three-story building with a small garden in the back.

Before long, he encountered Roger, the Black Scorpion, in the study.

A middle-aged man with firmly set black hair, Roger's slightly plump face was framed by cold, deep blue eyes.

Dressed in aquablue silk pajamas, Roger regarded Margot with a blank expression. "You were attacked?"

"Yes." Margot recounted the events that had transpired.

Roger's blue eyes suddenly darkened, as if connected to a bottomless abyss or an eternally burning hell.

After a moment, he nodded.

"There are no signs of you being cursed. But you have to be careful. Your blood is on that knife."

As Roger spoke, he approached Margot.

"I'll help you eliminate any hidden dangers first."

Margot breathed a sigh of relief. "Thank you, Boss."

He followed Roger out of the study and down the stairs into the basement.

Upon flipping the switch and illuminating the gas wall lamp, Roger pointed at the statue in the center and instructed, "Open it and crawl inside."

The statue depicted a woman with gentle facial features, the folds of her long dress rendered vividly and lifelike.

Margot strode to the statue, pulled open the concealed door at its abdomen, and climbed in.

As the hidden door closed, an eerie silence filled the basement. 'Black Scorpion' Roger gazed at the statue and intoned a word in ancient Hermes.

"New life!"

Ghostly, indistinct black flames erupted from the statue's surface, flowing like water and burning silently. After thirty seconds, Roger said to Margot, "You can come out now."

This ritual was a method for eliminating the hidden dangers of a curse. By entering the female statue's abdomen and reemerging, it symbolized a "rebirth." Coupled with the corresponding Beyonder powers, it could sever any connection with the item that had fallen into the enemy's hands.

"Wait for me in the study. I'll search for clues about the assailant," Roger instructed after ensuring Margot was unharmed.

Margot nodded and hastened out of the basement to the study. He pulled up a chair and settled into it.

As time ticked by, Margot suddenly felt his body becoming unbearably heavy, as if submerged in icy water.

His breathing grew labored.

Margot's pupils dilated, but he saw nothing.

He fought with all his strength, as if restrained by invisible ropes. He could barely move his arms, fingers, and feet.

Thud!

Margot finally collapsed to the floor, but the strange sensation persisted. His face turned an unnatural purple, and his mouth hung open. His thoughts grew increasingly murky. Why... With this question in mind, Margot succumbed to the encroaching darkness.

At the basement door, Roger emerged with a grave expression.

He has potent anti-divination abilities...

This matter isn't simple...

Roger the Black Scorpion contemplated as he returned to the study.

In the next second, his gaze froze. He discovered Margot sprawled on the ground, his face purple and his lower body soaked. He was no longer breathing.

After the Poison Spur Mob leader conducted a ritual to eliminate any lingering dangers of a curse, he mysteriously perished in the safest location of the Poison Spur Mob—right before Roger the Black Scorpion.

Auberge du Coq Doré, Room 207. Lumian, now in fresh attire, nodded with satisfaction.

Fallen Mercury informed him through its vibrations that the fate exchange had been completed.

This meant Margot would instantly be assaulted by the Montsouris ghost. Completing a fate exchange after stabbing someone took time-anywhere between five and thirty minutes, depending on the desired fate, the individual's strength, and their subconscious resistance. If Lumian was the target and he eagerly opened his mind and body, the fate exchange could be achieved swiftly—within seconds or even less than twenty. Gazing at the pewter-black dirk in his hand, Lumian smirked.

“When I have time, I'll teach you Morse code. Otherwise, every time we communicate, I have to constantly narrow down options based on your feedback. It's far too tedious.”

Fallen Mercury's quivering blade stilled, as if stunned.

Lumian, triumphant after a successful hunt, was in high spirits. He teased with a smile, “Do you wonder why you should learn, even as a blade? Ambition is crucial. The same goes for being a blade. Do you want to remain like this forever?”

Then, he inquired, “What fate did you exchange this time?”



Lumian extended his spiritual sense to the pewter-black, patterned dirk.

With Fallen Mercury's assistance, he gradually deciphered the destiny droplets stored within the weapon.

It represented Margot's fate of receiving stacks of cash from his various underlings. "You have a knack for choosing fates." Lumian had been occupied with fighting and had delegated the fate exchange to Fallen Mercury.

He had merely informed it beforehand that he needed money.

After commending Fallen Mercury, Lumian grew pensive. How will this fate manifest after the exchange?

### Chapter 133 Suffering

Lumian couldn't make sense of it, but he didn't dwell on it either. He rolled up his sleeves, baring his right arm, and sliced it with the Fallen Mercury blade.

A brief moment of numbness was followed by a familiar pain, but he didn't flinch. He watched as blood oozed out and stained the silver-black blade crimson.

Almost instantaneously, a mercury illusory river, composed of intricate symbols, materialized before Lumian's eyes. The destiny droplets stored in the evil dirk seeped from its tip and flowed into the shallow wound.

Lumian concentrated, straining to discern the fate he sought to exchange.

He "saw" himself receiving treatment, "saw" himself falling asleep after releasing his emotions, and "saw" himself searching for Osta Trul...

Scenes flashed across Lumian's mind as if he had witnessed them firsthand.

Soon after, he located the fate of venturing outside the catacombs and encountering the Montsouris ghost from several days prior.

He swiftly raised the tip of Fallen Mercury and thrust it towards the complex symbols that appeared to be formed by the mercury river.

That fate proved heavy, and Lumian failed to stir it on his first attempt.

As the illusory river slowly faded, the scene in his mind became increasingly hazy. He hurriedly channeled most of his spirituality into the blade of Fallen Mercury.

At last, with a second stir, the fate of meeting the Montsouris ghost broke free from the illusory, mercury-hued river and shrank into a minuscule droplet, resembling a bead of mercury from a shattered thermometer.

The illusory droplet rapidly merged with the pewter-black dirk.

Only then did Lumian exhale a sigh of relief. He knew he had evaded the Montsouris ghost, and Fallen Mercury could now be deemed a Cursed Blade.

Once he treated the wound, an odd intuition suddenly struck him.

Guided by this intuition, Lumian exited Auberge du Coq Doré again, weaving between raucous drunks and a heated brawl. He returned to Rue du Rossignol and halted outside the alley where he had assaulted Margot.

Furrowing his brow, he cautiously entered and flipped over the barricade.

In the next moment, Lumian's gaze instinctively fell upon the shadow in the corner.

Something lay quietly in the realm of darkness.

Sensing its significance, Lumian hurried over, crouched down, and picked up the object with his gloved left hand.

It was a bulging brown leather wallet.

Margot dropped it? The money his underlings plundered and handed over to him? Lumian roughly grasped how the fate exchange had transpired.

Although he couldn't recall whether Margot had dropped the wallet during their fierce battle or if it had 'fallen' afterwards, it didn't prevent Lumian from claiming the money.

He extracted the thick wad of cash and emptied the gold, silver, and copper coins from the change purse. Then, he tossed the wallet aside and left the alley.

Back in Auberge du Coq Doré Room 207, Lumian lit the carbide lamp and meticulously counted his newfound fortune.

In total, he had acquired 1,265 verl d'or and 15 coppet. Most were banknotes worth 10 verl d'or or less. There was only one 200 verl d'or note, one 100 verl d'or note, and two 50 verl d'or notes. A few Louis d'or were included as well.

Lumian stared at the money for a few seconds before sighing deeply.

Even ten donations from 'benevolent souls' can't compare to taking down a gang leader...

Naturally, not all of the money belonged to Margot. He was merely holding onto it for the Poison Spur Mob.

Lumian grabbed a stack of small bills amounting to 200 verl d'or and left Room 207, climbing the stairs.

In under a minute, he reached the fourth floor and came to a stop in front of Room 8.

He recalled that Margot had visited Auberge du Coq Doré in the evening to collect most of the money from an unlicensed prostitute named Ethans.

At the time, one of Margot's underlings must have been in charge, but the money eventually ended up in Margot's possession. Without knocking, Lumian crouched down and slid the stack of banknotes through the gap beneath the door.

He quickly straightened up, turned towards the stairs, and vanished into the shadowy corridor.

Lumian slept until six o'clock when the cathedral bell chimed.

He had slept soundly the night before, feeling as if the Provoker potion had been somewhat digested.

In the morning, I'll look for Osta Trul and see if Mr. K has replied. I'll also buy some better clothes and cosmetics from Quartier de l'Observatoire... In the afternoon, I'll visit the cheap clothing store at Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman... Lumian wasn't eager to rise. He lay there, quietly contemplating the day's plans. Having escaped the threat of the Montsouris ghost, he placed disguising himself back on his to-do list.

After lingering in bed for a while, he ambled to the washroom to freshen up. Then, he went downstairs and purchased half a liter of apple cider and a loaf of bread with pork sausages from the vendors.

Having sated his hunger, he headed to the nearest cathedral square and found an empty corner to practice the combat techniques Aurore had taught him.

Lumian returned to Auberge du Coq Doré at 9:30 a.m., intending to rest for an hour before seeking out Osta Trul.

Upon entering the motel lobby, he spotted three maids cleaning various filthy areas under Madame Fels's supervision.

The motel owner hires cleaners every Monday... Lumian averted his gaze and walked towards the staircase.

At that moment, footsteps echoed from above.

Within ten seconds, Charlie appeared before Lumian, clad in a linen shirt, dark pants, and strapless leather shoes.

“You didn't go to the hotel?” Lumian asked, puzzled.

Charlie yawned and replied excitedly, “Don't you know? I'm off today. We can take one day off a week and choose whichever day we want.”

Lumian chuckled. “Does this day off result in a reduction in your 'monthly salary' from Madame Alice?”

Charlie grinned sheepishly. “She has her own social engagements.

As they conversed, a foul odor drifted in from the door. The short, disheveled, gray-haired Ruhr and Michel entered the hotel.

“You didn't go to the steam locomotive station?” Charlie greeted them warmly.

Ruhr approached them first, then maintained a respectful distance.

“The market district is a bit chaotic today. We plan to rest for a day.”

“What happened?” Lumian inquired “curiously.”

Ruhr instinctively lowered his voice. “Margot of the Poison Spur Mob is dead. Many gangsters are searching for someone. Other gangs might clash with them at any moment. There are also many police officers present.

“Margot's dead?” Charlie blurted out, astonished.

He had just thought the guy deserved to die yesterday, and now he was dead? Ruhr nodded gravely.

"I've heard several people mention it. Sigh, we can't earn any money today." His wife, Madame Michel, consoled him, "If we don't go out, we don't have to eat lunch. We can save some money." Before Lumian could inquire about the situation outside, Charlie, snapping out of his daze, spun around and dashed upstairs.

Lumian's eyes flickered as he trailed behind.

Thud, thud, thud. Charlie rapidly ascended to the fourth floor and sprinted to Room 8. Taking a deep breath, he slammed the wooden door.

"Who is it?" A slightly hoarse female voice emerged from within.

Charlie announced his name loudly.

"Didn't I say I'm off the clock in the morning? back in the afternoon. Remember, 10 ver! Co d'or. No discount this time!" the female voice responded impatiently, opening the door. This was Lumian's first encounter with the woman named Ethans. Her flaxen hair tumbled to her shoulders, her similarly-colored eyes wary and her face etched with apprehension. She appeared to be twenty-three or twenty-four years old, with average looks that could only be described as delicate. Her face and clothes were clean, and her red dress exposed a generous expanse of fair skin on her chest. Charlie excitedly informed Ethans, "Did you know? Margot is dead! He's really dead!"

"..." Ethans stared, dumbfounded. After several seconds, her slightly hoarse voice turned sharp. "Is that devil truly dead?"

"It's true." Charlie nodded without hesitation.

"You can finally escape that devil! You can finally live like a normal person!" Ethans glanced around, dazed, taking in Lumian's expressionless eyes and Charlie's animated countenance.

"He's dead? He's dead?" She murmured, thinking of the money that had mysteriously appeared in her room.

As she started to believe Margot was indeed dead, her vision blurred.

Tears poured down her cheeks. She couldn't help but squat down and bury her face in her arms.

Her sobbing intensified, becoming more uncontrollable.

At that moment, footsteps echoed from the staircase.

Lumian turned his head and saw a young man in a white shirt, coat, and black jacket approaching.

Behind him were Margot's three thugs. The lad's brown hair was slightly curly, and his face bore prominent creases. He strode up to the weeping Ethans, crouched down, and grinned.

"I'm Wilson from the Poison Spur Mob. From today onwards, I'll take care of you on Margot's behalf."

Charlie's excited expression froze. Ethans's cries halted abruptly. Slowly raising her tear-streaked face, she saw Wilson's smile and the shadow his body cast.

The shadow was so dense that it couldn't be dispelled. Lumian observed quietly, his head imperceptibly raised.

On the way to the first floor, Charlie, who had been silent for a long time, couldn't help but ask, "Is there really no end to the suffering of the poor?"

"I like something Aurore Lee wrote," Lumian replied, his face expressionless. "Sometimes, we're not the ones at fault, but the world."

As soon as he finished speaking, three people stomped up from the first floor. They were police officers in black uniforms, black vests, white shirts, and strapless leather boots.

The 1.85-meter-tall officer leading the group glanced at Charlie and Lumian and suddenly stopped in his tracks.

Pressing down on the gun at his waist, he asked in a deep voice, "Charlie Collent?" Charlie was stunned.

"It's me, Officer. What's the matter?"

The officer gestured at his colleagues and took out steel handcuffs.

As his two colleagues encircled Charlie, he said with a serious expression, "You're suspected of murder. We're arresting you."

"Murder?" Charlie's face displayed shock, fear, and confusion.

Lumian raised his eyebrows in surprise.

As the officer handcuffed Charlie with his colleague's assistance, he informed him, "Madame Alice is dead!"

## Chapter 134 Courtesan

"What?" Charlie's disbelief was palpable.

Lumian shared his surprise, casting a sympathetic glance at Charlie.

He was convinced that Charlie had no reason to kill Madame Alice. After all, while she lived, Charlie stood to gain 500 verl d'or a month for the next six months. According to various publications, this sum was nearly equivalent to the monthly salary of a doctor, lawyer, mid-level civil servant, senior high school teacher, senior engineer, or deputy police lieutenant. For someone who had nearly starved to death and could only find work as an apprentice attendant, it was a small fortune.

As his two colleagues headed upstairs, the officer who had handcuffed Charlie tersely explained, "Madame Alice was discovered dead in her room at the Hôtel du Cygne Blanc this morning. Multiple witnesses confirm you spent the night there and didn't leave until close to midnight."

Charlie's fear and confusion mounted.

“How is this possible? How did she die...”

Muttering to himself, he suddenly turned to the officer, anxiety etched on his face, and insisted, “She was alive when I left! I swear by Saint Viève!”

The officer's deep voice responded, “The preliminary autopsy report places Madame Alice's time of death between 11 p.m. and 1 a.m. last night. Besides you and her, no one else's presence was detected.”

Could the other presence not be human? Lumian mused silently, considering the Montsouris ghost. If it weren't for his lack of an adequate disguise and his desire to avoid the detectives' scrutiny, he would have voiced his thoughts.

“Impossible! This can't be happening!” Charlie's eyes widened, his voice raised in protest.

A police officer, who had slipped away earlier, descended from the fourth floor, a glittering diamond necklace held in his white-gloved left hand.

“Found this!” he informed the lead officer.

The officer nodded without further explanation to Charlie. He stared at him solemnly, declaring, “Charlie Collent, you're under arrest for murder. You have the right to remain silent; anything you say can and will be used against you in court.”

“I didn't do it! Do you hear me? I didn't!” Charlie screamed, struggling futilely.

Despite his protestations, he was led out of Auberge du Coq Doré by the two police officers.

By then, several tenants had been drawn by the commotion to the staircase, where they watched the scene unfold.

Among them was Gabriel, who appeared to have just completed an all-night writing session on his manuscript.

“Do you think Charlie did it?” Lumian asked the playwright, deep in thought as he stared down the now-empty corridor.

Gabriel had emerged earlier and had a rough understanding of Charlie's predicament.

He shook his head, replying, “I don't think Charlie is guilty. He's not a saint, but he's not evil either.”

“Why do you say that?” Lumian inquired, turning to him.

Gabriel adjusted his black-framed glasses.

“Charlie was swindled out of his money and nearly starved, yet he never considered stealing from us.

“That means he either has principles and a moral compass, or he's terrified of the law. In either case, it's enough to prove he wouldn't murder that lady.”

Lumian nodded, then chuckled.

“People can be impulsive and change.”

With that, he climbed the stairs to the fifth floor.

This was the top floor of Auberge du Coq Doré. Large sections of the ceiling overhead showed signs of water damage, as if heavy rain would cause it to leak.

Lumian approached Room 504, Charlie's room, and extracted a small wire he carried with him to unlock the wooden door.

Inside, Charlie's suitcase, bed, and wooden table had been rifled through by the two police officers earlier. Items were strewn about, but they were few and far between.

Lumian recalled that during a conversation with Charlie at the basement bar, he had mentioned pawning his only formal suit and many other belongings while unemployed. He still couldn't afford to retrieve them.

As he entered, his gaze shifted, and Lumian suddenly spotted a portrait.

Taped to the wall opposite the bed, it depicted a woman in a green dress.

The woman appeared to be in her late twenties, with auburn hair, jade-green eyes, and lustrous red lips. She possessed an exquisite beauty, radiating elegance.

Lumian was taken aback. The woman in the painting seemed eerily familiar.

He realized it must be Susanna Matisse, the infamous prostitute Charlie had confused for Saint Viève.

Yet he had never met this woman before, so there was no reason for him to find her familiar.

After some thought, Lumian suddenly remembered something.

During his Summoning Dance in Room 207, he had attracted a translucent figure that was clearly more powerful than the other entities.

The figure, too, was female and bore a striking resemblance to Susanna Matisse in the portrait. However, one had turquoise hair, the other auburn; one's hair was long enough to cover her naked body, while the other's was merely long enough to form a bun.

Moreover, the figure was even more alluring, seemingly capable of stirring hidden desires within anyone. Susanna Matisse's portrait didn't provoke such feelings in Lumian. A consequence of misguided prayers? Lumian silently nodded in agreement.

In the past, he wouldn't have questioned Charlie's actions. If it meant avoiding starvation, Lumian would have prayed sincerely to a prostitute, let alone Trier's guardian angel.

But now, through Aurore's grimoire, Lumian had gained a basic understanding of the entry-level Sequences of the twenty-two divine paths, sacrificial taboos, and associated mystical knowledge. He knew that careless praying could be perilous.

After searching for a while, he left Room 504, grabbed the carbide lamp, and hailed a public carriage on Avenue du Marché, heading toward Quartier de l'Observatoire.

As he ventured into the underground toward the area where Osta Trul typically lurked, Lumian periodically scrutinized the shadows behind the stone pillars.

He laughed at himself, thinking, I won't run into the Montsouris ghost again, will I? If that were the case, he would need to consider whether the Montsouris ghost had a particular connection to something he possessed, or if corruption had indirectly altered his "horoscope," resulting in exceptionally bad luck. Fortunately, Lumian's concerns proved unfounded. He found Osta Trul sitting beneath a stone pillar, a bonfire crackling nearby.

The hooded, black-robed figure glanced at Lumian and offered a genuine smile. "Mr. K has granted you permission to attend our biweekly mysticism gathering at nine o'clock on Wednesday night."

Osta's gaze bore a distinct sincerity, as if to say payment was due.

At 9 p.m. the day after tomorrow... Lumian nodded with a smile.

"Where's the gathering?"

"Meet me at my place an hour beforehand. I'll take you there," Osta replied without hesitation. Lumian tersely acknowledged.

"I'll pay you the rest then."

"Alright." Though Osta seemed slightly disappointed, he acquiesced.

Lumian inquired, "What should I be cautious of at the gathering?"

"Cover your face and hide your identity," Osta advised from experience. "You don't want other attendees exposing you if they're caught by the authorities, do you? Aside from Mr. K, no one should know everything." Lumian grinned, retorting, "You've already seen my face and know my identity. Should I consider burying you in some corner of Underground Trier after the first gathering?" Osta involuntarily shuddered and forced a smile.

"You're quite the joker. But I don't actually know who you are, where you live, or what you do. Besides, it's unlikely that you've shown me your true self."

Taking pleasure in unnerving the other party, Lumian found a rock and sat down. Basking in the warmth of the bonfire, he casually asked, "Have you ever heard of Suzanne Matisse?"

"I have," Osta replied, his excitement evident. "For a time, she was the woman of my dreams. I bought numerous posters and postcards featuring her image. A few years ago, she was Trier's most famous prostitute, the kind who attended high society banquets. She was linked to countless scandals involving members of parliament, high-ranking officials, and the wealthy. Rumor has it that she made hundreds of thousands of *verl d'or* annually, but she's been out of the limelight for the past two or three years. Nana has since taken her place as Trier's renowned courtesan. Sigh, she might have become someone's permanent mistress." Hundreds of thousands of *verl d'or*? Lumian was taken aback.

"A high-level courtesan earns more than most best-selling authors?"



“Isn't that normal?” Osta wore a peculiar expression. “A high-level courtesan can sleep with members of parliament, bankers, and high-ranking officials, but a best-selling author can't[1].”

Amused and self-deprecating, Lumian remarked, “That's true. Poet Boller once said there is no difference between a poet and prostitute. The former sells the product of his imagination, the latter her body.”

“I prefer bodies,” Osta admitted candidly. Lumian inquired again, “Have you heard of the legend of a female ghost? She has turquoise hair, long enough to wrap around her body. Her features are exquisite, capable of enchanting most men and arousing their desires.”

“No.” Osta shook his head. With a wistful expression, he added, “If such a female ghost truly exists, I'd love to encounter her just once.”

Lumian stood up and chuckled. “Then brace yourself for sudden death after doing it dozens of times a night.”

“...” Osta's expression froze.

3 p.m., 27 Avenue du Marché, Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman Police Headquarters. Lumian, having spent nearly 300 verl d'or on three sets of differently graded clothes, affordable cosmetics, and other disguise props, entered the unusually noisy hall. Some people were being brought in, others were fortunate enough to leave, while still others argued loudly, caused a scene, and cursed—some slammed tables and kicked stools...

Lumian, his blond hair neatly combed back, black-framed glasses perched on the bridge of his nose, and a mustache adorning his lips, appeared with overly fair cheeks. Dressed in a black formal suit and carrying a brown briefcase, he approached a male constable overseeing reception.

He stopped before the man, lifted his head slightly, and confidently announced, “I'm Charlie Collent's pro bono lawyer. I'd like to see my client.”

### Chapter 135 Confirming the Situation

The constable set down his newspaper and sized up Lumian, visibly unnerved by his unabashed confidence. He gestured to the notebook and fountain pen before him, saying, “Show me your lawyer's license and register your name and purpose of visit.”

A license? Seriously? Lumian, the phony attorney, felt a surge of panic.

Hadn't he read in countless novels and newspapers that simply identifying oneself as a lawyer was enough to gain access to a client?

As Lumian reached for the black fountain pen, his mind raced, formulating a plan.

He suddenly noticed that the constable across from him had shifted his attention to the recently discarded copy of Youth of Trier, fixated on the annual Trier cycling race.

He doesn't seem to care about the lawyer's license... An idea flashed through Lumian's mind. Mimicking Aurore's penmanship, he scrawled his 'name': "Guillaume Pierre, pro bono lawyer. Meeting client, Charlie Collent."

After jotting it down, Lumian stood and nonchalantly glanced around.

Feigning delight, he raised his arm and exclaimed, "My little cabbage, long time no see!"

Confused faces turned in his direction. Lumian spun back to the registering constable and murmured, "I spotted a friend."

The unspoken message: he'd present his lawyer's license later.

Without waiting for a reply, Lumian strode to a corner of the hall.

The constable gave the register a cursory glance before returning his gaze to Youth of Trier.

Once in the corner, Lumian stole a peek at the preoccupied constable, then turned to the baffled onlookers with an apologetic grin.

"I'm sorry, I mistook you for someone else."

Clutching his briefcase, he approached the police officer he had "chosen" earlier, who was now coming from the registration office.

Lumian lifted his chin and demanded haughtily, "I want to see my client, Charlie Collent."

In the Intis Republic, attorneys held a far higher social status than ordinary constables.

The officer glanced back at the registration office, saw no cause for concern, and nodded.

"I'll contact the person in charge of that case for you."

Fifteen minutes later, Lumian found himself face-to-face with Charlie in a secured room, two officers standing guard at the door.

"Who are you?" Charlie asked, sinking into a chair across the table, his eyes filled with confusion.

His once-rosy cheeks were now pallid, fear etched into every line of his face.

He had heard of pro bono lawyers while chatting with other hotel staff and knew they were provided by government agencies or philanthropic organizations for destitute suspects. He never expected one to arrive just half a day after his arrest.

Lumian grinned, removed his black-framed glasses, winked with his right eye, and spoke in his natural voice, "Don't you recognize me? I'm your pro bono lawyer."

Charlie stared, dumbstruck. After a few seconds of careful scrutiny, a spark of recognition lit up his face.

But before he could speak, Lumian slipped his glasses back on and said, "Quiet. Listen to me."

"Alright, alright." Charlie snapped to attention.

Lumian's smile vanished, replaced by a grave expression.

“I need to know the full details of what happened. That's the only way I can clear your name.”

“Really?” Charlie asked, desperation in his voice, like a drowning man grasping at a lifeline.

Feigning his professionalism, Lumian questioned, “What time did you stay in the room with Mrs. Alice until?”

Charlie rubbed his face, struggling to recall through the haze of confusion and pain, “Madame Alice ordered room service. I entered her room before 8 p.m. and stayed until she was tired. I only left at midnight. At that time, she had just laid down and was still awake. She was still alive!”

From 8 p.m. to midnight? Every day? That 500 verl d'or isn't easy to earn... Lumian mused, then adopted a lawyerly tone, “You have to be honest with me. Hiding anything will only hurt you in the end.”

“I'm not lying. That's really the truth!” Lumian's words, actions, posture, and tone had convinced Charlie that he was truly his defense attorney.

After verifying a few more details, Lumian inquired, “After you gained Madame Alice's favor, did anyone express jealousy?”

“Many. Apprentices and official attendants alike, they were all jealous of me...” Charlie remembered.

They discussed the topic for a while before Lumian produced a photo, handing it to Charlie.

“See if you recognize this person.”

Charlie gasped, “Isn't this Saint Viève?”

Why was she dressed so provocatively, her chest exposed?

“I've confirmed that the portrait in your room isn't Saint Viève. It belongs to the famous courtesan, Susanna Mattise.” Lumian tactfully replaced ‘prostitute’ with ‘courtesan’ to prevent Charlie from becoming overly upset.

“Huh?” Charlie's face contorted with confusion.

I prayed to a courtesan, not an angel?

But why did my luck change for the better?

No, if it had truly improved, I wouldn't have been arrested...

Lumian produced another photo. It still depicted Susanna Mattise, but he had already altered the courtesan's hair color and made a few “edits.”

“Take a look at this and tell me if you recognize this person.”

Charlie scrutinized the image for a few seconds before his expression morphed into one of shock.

“Wh— She! How can this be?”

“So you do know her?” Lumian smirked.

Charlie looked up, his voice hollow, “S-she is... She's the woman from my beautiful dreams.

“Didn't I tell you? I had these amazing dreams for a few days. I dreamed of making love to her. She was so passionate and gentle...

“H-how did you know I dreamed of her? I didn't tell anyone! Why do you have a photo of her?”

Charlie's gaze, now fixed on Lumian, had completely changed.

Is this really the southern kid I know?

Aside from his talent for pranks and good looks, there was nothing extraordinary about him!

Lumian's lips curled into a smile as he gazed back at Charlie.

“Take a closer look at who's in the photo.”

Charlie stared blankly at the image of the green-haired woman.

As he examined it, his expression morphed into sheer terror. He recoiled involuntarily, making the chair creak.

“No, that's impossible! Susanna, Susanna, she's that prostitute!” Charlie shouted, unable to suppress his emotions.

This revelation left him feeling as if he had encountered a malevolent spirit.

After praying to a portrait of a prostitute, he had not only escaped hunger and found a new job but had also dreamed of her and slept with her!

Wasn't this akin to encountering a ghost?

Lumian nodded approvingly.

“Congratulations. At least you're not blind.”

He had intended to help Charlie and divulge information as a prank to frighten him, but the two matters were unrelated.

The door to the interview room creaked open. A constable standing guard outside inquired warily, “What happened? Why are you shouting?”

“I helped him recall some key details,” Lumian explained calmly.

Charlie snapped out of his stupor.

“Yes, I remember something very important.”

And indeed, it was!

The policeman didn't press further and shut the door again.

Seeing this, Charlie leaned forward, gripping the edge of the table, and asked anxiously, “Did I encounter an evil female spirit?”

“It might not be a vengeful or evil spirit,” Lumian said, watching Charlie's expression soften slightly before adding, “It might be even more troublesome than that.”

At those words, Charlie's face turned ashen.

After a brief pause, he asked apprehensively, “You... you mean Madame Alice was killed by that evil spirit?”

“I'm not sure yet.” Lumian stood up. “I need to examine Madame Alice's corpse.”

“You even know how to investigate a corpse to determine the true cause of death?” Charlie found his neighbor increasingly enigmatic.

Lumian smiled but offered no answer.

As Charlie's defense attorney, Lumian had the right to inspect the corpse under police supervision, and he could even enlist the assistance of an independent pathologist. So, after signing two documents under the name Guillaume Pierre, Lumian was escorted to the basement of the market district's police headquarters and into the morgue where the body was kept.

The officer leading him slid open the cabinet, unzipped the body bag, and pointed to the female corpse.

“This is Madame Alice.”

In life, Alice had preserved her appearance quite well, with only faint wrinkles at the corners of her eyes and mouth. Her thick brown eyebrows framed her face, her cheeks sagged slightly, and her skin had taken on a deathly pallor.

Lumian glanced casually at the body and said to the officer, “I'm good.”

He wasn't a pathologist who had come to conduct a genuine examination; his objective was merely to pinpoint the approximate location of Madame Alice's remains.

After exiting the morgue, Lumian turned to the accompanying officer and asked, “Where's the nearest restroom?”

“Take a right at the end of the corridor,” replied the officer, despite his growing impatience.

Lumian hastened his steps and entered the basement restroom.

Once inside, he locked the wooden door and performed the Summoning Dance in the cramped space.

Amidst the frenzied, contorted dance, a chilling wind swept through the restroom. Vague figures materialized one by one, their pale or bluish-white faces staring at Lumian with empty eyes.

These were the lingering obsessions of the departed.

Lumian had never witnessed such a spectacular sight before. For a moment, he felt as if he were surrounded by ghostly specters.

He steadied himself and continued the second half of the dance while searching for Madame Alice.

Soon, he spotted the fierce-looking lady with the thick brown eyebrows.

Lumian unsheathed the ritual silver dagger and inflicted a wound, commanding Madame Alice to attach herself to him.

Madame Alice consumed the drop of blood and entered Lumian's body.

Immediately, Lumian felt a shiver race down his spine, and his chest grew heavy.

His breath came in labored gasps.

Without hesitation, Lumian amplified Madame Alice's obsession, foregoing any selection of her characteristics or abilities.

Almost instantaneously, Lumian's vision dimmed, and he saw Madame Alice lying on the bed, her mouth and nose smothered by a down pillow. However, there was no one pressing down on the pillow in her line of sight!

#### Chapter 136 Initial Summoning Attempt

Lumian, consumed by Madame Alice's fixation, found breathing increasingly difficult. His body ached more intensely, as if he had once again encountered the Montsouris ghost and teetered on the brink of death.

This was a true death experience.

Concerned he might lose control, Lumian chose not to push further. He ordered Madame Alice's lingering spirit to vacate his body.

Gasping for air, he wiped the cold sweat from his brow before reverting to his slightly arrogant novice lawyer persona.

Accompanied by the police officer, he headed back to the interview room.

Charlie sprang to his feet, leaning forward with his hand braced against the table. His face was a mix of anxiety and anticipation.

Without waiting for a question, Lumian seemed to hear Charlie ask, "What's the result?"

Lumian nodded and made a calming motion.

His gesture implied that the autopsy findings aligned with his expectations.

Relief washed over Charlie's face instantly. It was as though he'd expended all his energy in that moment. He slumped back into his chair, physically drained.

In front of the two constables at the door, Lumian declared firmly, "Don't worry about anything else. I've got it covered.

"You only need to do one thing. During the next questioning, recount the entire story to these gentlemen without omitting a single detail, no matter how absurd or implausible it may seem.

"Of course, stick to what happened up until your arrest. There's no need to delve into our conversation."

Since a lawyer-client dialogue might involve courtroom tactics others had no right to know, the two officers at the door didn't find Lumian's last statement odd. After all, Charlie Collent was an unfortunate kid facing a serious criminal case for the first time and requiring a lawyer. He likely didn't know the rules and needed explicit guidance.

Charlie grasped Lumian's message: Don't reveal to the police that I discovered the issue with the portrait!

“Alright.” Charlie wasn't as angry, terrified, or flustered as when he was first arrested and brought to the station, but he wasn't as chatty as usual either.

After departing the market district's police headquarters, Lumian circled twice before finding an alley blocked by a barricade. He changed his clothes, removed his glasses, and altered his makeup style.

Now that I have enough money, I can set up a safe house and a place to switch disguises based on Aurore's novels. Lumian recalled his sister's writing, piecing together the method for handling such matters.

He also fully intended to purchase a copy of Men's Aesthetics.

Mastering makeup without guidance was impossible. He'd mainly relied on his hairstyle, glasses, and attire to conceal his identity.

En route to Auberge du Coq Doré, Lumian contemplated how to extricate Charlie from his dire situation.

Who exactly is Susanna Matisse, or rather, the bizarre creature she morphed into? Why did she murder Madame Alice?

Why did she help Charlie in the past and engage in the act with him in the dream?

The prospect of writing to Madam Magician unsettled Lumian.

Judging by the speed of her previous response and its content, he sensed her indirectness: “Don't bother me unless it's important!”

If Lumian faced an issue involving Susanna Matisse, writing to inquire would be acceptable. However, this predicament only concerned his neighbor.

It was highly likely that the enigmatic, potent woman who detested complications wouldn't respond.

And this could impact her attitude towards Lumian.

If I'm not asking Madam Magician, why not inquire at Mr. K's mysticism gathering? If the attendees are Beyonders at Osta Trul's level, they might not have the answer... As Lumian mulled it over, he ascended the stairs and entered his room.

His gaze fell on the suitcase containing Aurore's grimoires, and he experienced a sudden revelation.

Why should I investigate Susanna Matisse and deal with her personally?

My sole objective is to rescue Charlie!

Even if I can uncover Susanna Matisse's vulnerability and vanquish her, can I coerce a peculiar creature like her to turn herself in at the police station?

If she dares to go, the police won't dare to entertain her. Given her displayed characteristics, wouldn't she indulge in an orgy on the spot?

Lumian rapidly discerned the distinction between goals and means.

There was no need for such effort to exonerate Charlie and secure his release from police headquarters!

He simply had to inform Bureau 8, the Eternal Blazing Sun Church, and the Church of the God of Steam and Machinery that Charlie's case involved Beyonders elements and prompt them to intervene in the investigation!

Even a low-level Beyonders with no intelligence network or mystical powers could detect something amiss with Susanna Matisse. There's no reason why official investigators couldn't uncover the invisible force behind Madame Alice's demise. Eventually, they would not only verify Charlie's innocence but also help him escape Susanna Matisse's grasp and resolve the issue with the strange creature entirely. Lumian had a clear conjecture about the subsequent events after the lunatic upstairs had sought refuge in the cathedral upon encountering the Montsouris ghost.

He had urged Charlie to divulge everything at the market district's police headquarters to attract the attention of official Beyonders.

Nevertheless, he felt compelled to act. He couldn't rely solely on ordinary police officers.

What if they deemed Charlie's story a fabrication intended to mock their intelligence and resorted to violence to coerce a confession on the spot?

Lumian's gaze swept over the crumpled newspaper on the wooden table, recalling how he or his sister had snipped out the *livre bleu's* words and pieced them together to compose a letter seeking assistance from the authorities.

Transform Charlie's experience into a letter and 'deliver' it to a nearby cathedral? Lumian nodded, deciding to execute the plan.

Armed with the plea for help and Charlie's confession, it should pique the interest of official Beyonders.

As he was about to search for appropriate phrases in *Novel Weekly*, Lumian suddenly frowned.

Could the officials link a similar request for help to Cordu? Would they associate me, a wanted criminal, with Charlie?

Lumian didn't know if Ryan and his associates had fully reported their findings to official Beyonders nationwide, but he was unwilling to take that risk.

Imitate Aurore's handwriting?

Unlike a lawyer's signature that doesn't raise suspicion, Ryan and his team suggested that the letter would likely undergo various checks, including divination...

Disguise myself and have someone else write it for me? As his thoughts raced, Lumian suddenly had an idea. I can summon a spirit world creature to write it for me!

If the officials detect any issues, they won't be able to make the spirit world creature identify me since they don't know the summoning incantation!



The more Lumian considered it, the more he believed it was a solid plan. He pulled out a chair, sat down, and began devising the summoning incantation.

The first sentence was undoubtedly, "Spirit wandering in the void."

After some thought, Lumian penned the second sentence.

"The friendly creature that can be subordinated."

Summoned spirit world creatures had to be under Lumian's command to assist him in writing letters. Friendliness provided essential protection for the summoner.

As for the third sentence, Lumian didn't have lofty expectations. He merely needed to incorporate the two aspects of being weak and proficient in Intisian.

After several moments of mental permutation, the third sentence materialized on paper:

"Weakling proficient in Intisian."

Phew... After writing, Lumian exhaled.

He then leafed through Aurore's grimoire and translated the few unmastered words into Hermes.

Immediately after, he set up the altar and commenced the summoning.

Soon, he completed the ritual and observed the candle flame turning a dark green hue and expanding to the size of a human head.

A hazy, translucent figure materialized, its head resembling an ox's and the rest, a dog's.

"Help me write a letter," Lumian said in Hermes as he gazed at the spirit world creature.

The bewildered ox-headed dog didn't respond.

"I order you to help me write a letter," Lumian emphasized in Hermes.

The ox-headed dog appeared dumbstruck, as though it didn't comprehend.

Lumian made several more attempts, but the ox-headed dog remained unresponsive.

Having no other choice, he terminated the summoning early to preserve his spirituality.

He started pondering the issue.

I can't communicate with that guy...

Amenable to subordination doesn't mean it can be communicated with...

With this realization, Lumian modified the second summoning incantation to "A friendly creature that can be communicated with."

Being able to communicate meant being able to make requests!

This time, a colossal "snail" emerged from the dark green flames.

"Hello." Lumian attempted to greet it in Intisian.

The snail emitted an ethereal voice.

“Hello, what's the matter?”

It also spoke Intisian.

“Can you help me write a letter?” Lumian was overjoyed.

The “snail” replied in a troubled tone, “But I don't have any hands.”

“...” Lumian had no choice but to end the summoning.

After some consideration, he changed the phrase “weakling proficient in Intisian” to “weakling who can write Intisian.”

“Can write” covered both the knowledge and necessary physical requirements.

Before long, Lumian completed his third summoning.

He saw a transparent creature resembling a rabbit.

“Can you help me write a letter?” Lumian asked with intense anticipation.

The “rabbit” nodded, picked up the pen on the table, and wrote an Intisian word on the paper.

“A letter.”

“...” Lumian's lips twitched.

This creature didn't seem too bright.

With resolve, Lumian grabbed a pen and paper and scribbled a plea for help, including Susanna Mattise's portrait, details about the wet dream, Madame Alice's death, and Charlie's arrest.

Then, he said to the “rabbit,” “Copy it!”

The “rabbit” took the fountain pen and diligently transcribed it.

Soon, it finished its task.

Lumian examined it and nodded in satisfaction.

In the next second, his smile froze.

Not only had the dimwit copied the entire contents of the letter, but it had also replicated his handwriting.

In other words, it was in Lumian's script!

Lumian took a deep breath and slowly exhaled. He pointed at Novel Weekly and said, “Copy in that font.”

The “rabbit” nodded slowly and rewrote without complaint.

A few minutes later, Lumian received a seemingly printed plea for help.

Chapter 137 Hooha

Lumian examined the letter with gloved hands and breathed a sigh of relief.

No issues this time!

Completing three consecutive spirit world creature summoning rituals had left him feeling drained.

After a moment's consideration, Lumian asked the rabbit-like spirit world creature, "Can you do me another favor?"

The "rabbit" thought seriously for a few seconds before giving a slow nod.

Lumian unzipped his grayish-blue work uniform.

"Then follow me first."

The ethereal and transparent "rabbit" leaped from midair to Lumian's side, assuming the role of a loyal companion.

Lumian sighed quietly and said, "What I mean is, you can hide inside my clothes to avoid detection by any Beyonder with heightened spiritual perception."

The "rabbit" wore a blank expression as it hopped into Lumian's clothes and curled up.

Since it had no true mass or weight, his clothes could be zipped up quickly without leaving a trace.

After stowing the letter in the same pocket, Lumian dissolved the spiritual barrier, removed his gloves, and exited Room 207.

He meandered toward Avenue du Marché, nearing the Suhit steam locomotive station.

It was just past five o'clock, and many people were still at work. The street was neither crowded nor deserted. Groups of passersby headed for the public carriage station sign or searched for the subway entrance. They carried their luggage and walked on foot to nearby streets in search of temporary accommodations for the night.

Lumian patted his right pocket and pointed at the postbox several dozen meters away. Lowering his voice, he said, "See that green metal cylinder?"

He felt a vibration in his pocket. The "rabbit" had responded in kind.

Lumian exhaled in relief and instructed, "Place the letter beside you in that metal cylinder."

Having said that, Lumian massaged his temples and activated his Spirit Vision.

He watched the "rabbit" emerge, enveloping the plea for help. It maneuvered through the crowd and reached the green metal cylinder.

Just as Lumian thought the "rabbit" would deposit the letter in the postbox and successfully complete the mission, the creature entered the postbox with the letter.

Moments later, it exited the postbox and flew back to Lumian, leaving the letter inside.

Lumian closed his eyes and consoled himself, I suppose it's considered tossed in...

He then left Avenue du Marché with the "rabbit" and located a vacant alley. In Hermes language, he informed the "rabbit" that the summoning was over.

After the "rabbit" returned to the spirit world, Lumian finally felt at ease.

He resolved to stop aiding Charlie. The rest would hinge on how the official Beyonders handled the situation.

If it weren't for the fact that this matter is intriguing enough, I wouldn't have bothered to help him. Do I have to battle that enigmatic creature, Susanna Mattise, who's clearly formidable, on his behalf? Lumian mused silently.

He chuckled.

In Cordu, if those crude fellows understood the traits Susanna Mattise exhibited, they would undoubtedly ask slyly whether he wanted to fight her in bed or in the hayloft.

Of course, Lumian could be just as coarse when dealing with them.

On his way back to Rue Anarchie, he discovered a meat patty shop and purchased Red Snapper Hot Beef Meatloaf for dinner.

Paired with the soda sold by street vendors, Lumian navigated the crowd as he ate, occasionally evading hands that covertly reached for his wallet.

Compared to Rouen Meatloaf, Red Snapper Hot Beef Meatloaf was less greasy. The fish was refreshing and delicate, the beef savory and crispy, the dough's subtle sweetness had a bite, and the aroma of spices and fat ignited Lumian's taste buds one by one with a rich texture.

After eating and drinking his fill, he clutched the glass bottle that still contained a third of the pale-red liquid and sighed appreciatively.

No wonder the Trieriens love meatloaves...

When I get the chance, I'll visit Rue Richelieu in the library district and try the first restaurant that created Red Snapper Hot Beef Meatloaf...

Based on the newspapers and magazines he had perused before, he could recite several famous meatloaves off the top of his head.

Degan Meatloaf, Périgueux Meatloaf, Tudenan Cashew Pie, Minced Meat Pie...

Sipping the pomegranate-flavored soda, Lumian turned onto Rue Anarchie.

What met his gaze was a chaotic tableau. The suspected gangsters brandished either axes or clubs, squaring off in the street.

Pedestrians steered clear, and the vendors retreated from Rue Anarchie one by one. The residents of the houses on both sides slammed their windows shut.

Lumian didn't venture further. He backtracked a few steps and found a wall pillar to conceal himself behind as he observed the unfolding scene with interest.

He suspected that his assassination of the Poison Spur Mob's Margot had aroused the suspicions of several gangs in the market district, ultimately escalating into a standoff.

After waiting nearly 15 minutes, Lumian still didn't witness the mobsters erupt into full-scale combat.

His anticipation for the confrontation left him disappointed. He cursed under his breath, "Are you guys going to do this or not? You're blocking the street without fighting. Do you think you have too much time on your hands?"

With that in mind, Lumian glanced at the five-story grayish-white building beside him.

He seriously contemplated finding a room and hurling the empty soda bottle between the two factions, tricking them into believing the opposing mob leader had signaled the start of the battle.

That way, Lumian would have a spectacle to enjoy.

Just as he was about to put his plan into action, a large contingent of police officers in black uniforms appeared at both ends of Rue Anarchie.

Leading them were officers on tall brown or black horses, brandishing shields and clubs. They advanced towards the mobsters, step by step,

exuding an immense pressure that caused many of the gangsters to waver.

When the mounted police charged, the mobsters gathered on Rue Anarchie dispersed. Some fled, while others were beaten to the ground.

Lumian couldn't help but want to applaud. His thirst for excitement was thoroughly quenched.

He had only read about such scenes in novels and news articles, the latter of which often glossed over the gritty details!

In no time, Rue Anarchie returned to its usual cacophony.

Lumian finished his last sip of pomegranate soda and sauntered back to Auberge du Coq Doré, entering Room 207.

Sitting by the bed, he replayed the entire process of writing and posting the letter in his mind to ensure he hadn't overlooked any details that could expose him to the official Beyonders.

After a while, Lumian sighed softly.

“If only I had a messenger. It wouldn't have been so troublesome.”

Unfortunately, obtaining a messenger wasn't easy. Even his sister Aurore didn't have one.

To date, Lumian knew of only two people who possessed a messenger.

One was Madam Magician, and the other was the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society's vice president, Hela, whom Aurore had mentioned.

Hela... Lumian's expression gradually darkened.

If the Aurore in his dream indeed bore some influence from her soul fragment, it was apparent that Aurore trusted the vice president a great deal. Her first move upon encountering a problem was to summon the other party's messenger for assistance.

I wonder if Hela knows Aurore's true identity, or if she discovered through that... that obituary that Aurore has... has already passed on... Lumian muttered to himself.

As he pondered, an idea struck him.

It was actually possible for him to summon Hela's messenger!

The summoning incantation comprised only three sentences. Lumian was certain the last phrase was “a messenger that belongs to Hela.” The first two sentences followed a fixed format and requirements. As long as he attempted a few more combinations, he'd find the correct sequence!

Moreover, under such circumstances, Lumian wouldn't face any danger even if the initial combinations were incorrect. This was because the description of a messenger belonging to Hela eliminated other possibilities.

In other words, he'd either fail to summon it or successfully summon Hela's messenger.

Should I write a letter to Hela and inform her of what happened to Aurore? Lumian found himself momentarily stumped.

Considering that his sister had mentioned "my notebook" when she pushed him away, and that much of the mystical knowledge in her notebook originated from the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society, Lumian quickly made up his mind. If he could establish a connection with this organization, it would aid him in uncovering the crucial information hidden within the Warlock notebook.

He resolved to summon Hela's messenger right away!

Although he still harbored doubts about the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society's vice president, he didn't believe he possessed any value she coveted. Besides, Aurore had trusted Hela while she was alive.

Lumian walked to the wooden table, sat down, and began writing.

"Honorable Madam Hela,

"I apologize for writing you this letter. I am Muggle's younger brother. I regret to inform you that she encountered misfortune and has passed away.

"This involves a catastrophe brought about by worshiping an evil god. Only a few people and I escaped.

"I'm not sure if this matter interests you, so I won't elaborate. I don't wish to waste your time.

"What I want to know is, did Muggle mention anything suspicious to you in the past year?

"..."

After staring at the letter for a few seconds, Lumian slowly exhaled and folded the paper.

He then cleaned the room, set up the altar again, and attempted the first combination.

"The spirit that wanders about the unfounded, a friendly creature that can be subordinated, a messenger that belongs solely to Hela."

After reciting the incantation, Lumian gazed at the dark-green candle flame and patiently awaited the messenger's arrival.

Time ticked by, but nothing happened on the altar.

Undeterred, Lumian spoke again, "I! I summon in my name:

"The spirit wandering above the world;

“The friendly creature that can be subordinated;

“A messenger that belongs solely to Hela...”

The dark green candle flame suddenly flickered and grew larger.

At that moment, not only did the area above remain unlit, but it also grew darker.

In the darkness, a shape quickly materialized.

It was a human-like skull, seemingly forged from pure silver. It emitted a gentle light that dispelled the encroaching darkness.

Pale-white flames burned in the skull's eye sockets, instilling a sense of danger in Lumian.

After staring at Lumian for a few seconds, the pure silver skull opened its mouth and bit down on the airborne letter.

Then, it retreated back into the reassembled darkness.

## Chapter 138 Letter

Lumian completed the ritual on his second attempt. He cleared the wooden table and opened Aurore's grimoire. Under the glow of the carbide lamp, he thumbed through the relevant sections.

In under fifteen minutes, he sensed something. He looked up and fixed his gaze on a spot near the window.

A folded letter lay there, undisturbed.

That fast? Lumian, surprised, reached out and took the letter.

Hela's response, vice president of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society, had arrived sooner than expected.

Lumian unfolded the letter and skimmed the elegantly written words.

“I'm sorry to hear that. Ever since Muggle missed last month's gathering, I've had a bad feeling.

“There are too many dangers in this world. Sometimes, we can't avoid them just because we want to unless we can control everyone around us.

“If you wish, you can tell me about Muggle's misfortune. You don't have to go into great detail. Just tell me the general situation

“From the fact that you can summon my messenger, you should have stepped onto the Beyonder path. I'm not sure if your sister told you that this means you'll always be accompanied by danger and madness, but I have to remind you that restraint and caution are our best friends.

“In the future, if you have any questions about mysticism, you can ask me by writing to me. Although I'm not one of those with vast knowledge, I can answer many questions.

“I've only met Muggle twice in the past year, mainly discussing various matters in the Beyonder domain. What left a deep impression on me was that she mentioned that a friend of hers was affected by a strange dream, hoping to find a solution. If necessary, she wanted to hire a real psychiatrist to treat him”

Lumian silently read Hela's reply, his face twisting with emotion.

Aurore had been searching for a solution to his bizarre dream!

Lumian composed himself and contemplated his response.

Suddenly, he froze.

His brows furrowed as he muttered, “Aurore told Hela about hiring a real psychiatrist

“Considering Madame Susie's description, a true psychiatrist must refer to a specific Sequence of the Spectator pathway

“Only Beyonders skilled in this domain can prevent me from dreaming of the world shrouded in gray fog”

The issue wasn't with the situation. The problem was:

Aurore's grimoire only had Sequence 9 Spectator recorded for the pathway!

Yet, she clearly knew about Psychiatrist!

Lumian quickly recalled the two conversations in his dream.

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Second, Aurore had mentioned that she knew Sequence 9 and Sequence 8 of all pathways and had a certain understanding of them.

Psychiatrist is often associated with hypnosis. Hypnotist is most likely a Sequence of the Spectator pathway as well, perhaps even superior to Psychiatrist

Aurore's grimoire doesn't have records of the corresponding Sequence 8 or Sequence 7 of the Spectator pathway Lumian's expression became grave, intermingled with a twisted thrill.

After so many days, he had finally discovered a discrepancy in Aurore's grimoire!

Previously, he had his suspicions but wasn't certain if there was any hidden anomaly. After all, Aurore in his dream was a figure formed from his memories and impressions under the influence of the soul fragment. Everything she said might not be accurate or complete. It was normal for her not to mention any exceptions explicitly.

Now, Hela's response indirectly confirmed that Aurore truly knew about one or more Sequences within the Spectator pathway and possessed a certain grasp of their related abilities.



Why hadn't Aurore recorded this knowledge in her grimoire? What was the secret behind this inconsistency? Lumian pulled out a blank sheet of paper, his emotions a blend of grief and anticipation.

In under a minute, he wrote, "Honorable Madam Hela,

"The truth is

"My memory of the actual events is fragmented due to the calamity.

"If you could assist me in locating Guillaume Bnet, Pualis de Roquefort, and others, I would be deeply grateful. Their appearances and attributes can be found on the authorities' wanted posters.

"Lastly, I'm curious about the real psychiatrist Muggle intended to hire."

In his letter, Lumian briefly touched upon Cordu. He made no mention of the dream, the loop, or his rescue. He only speculated that Padre Guillaume Bnet, under someone's guidance, had worshipped an evil god and banished Madame Pualis, who followed another sinister deity. Bnet then attempted a ritual with the entire village as a sacrifice. At the crucial moment, Muggle, selected as a vessel, pushed Lumian away, an essential sacrifice, causing the ritual's failure and Cordu's destruction. Finally, the official Beyonders, who had been called for aid, cleaned up the mess.

Lumian reassembled the altar, summoned the silver skull, and handed it the letter.

In less than fifteen minutes, he received a second reply from Hela.

Rather than comparing response speeds between Madam Magician and Madame Hela, Lumian eagerly read the letter's contents.

"I can sense your sorrow and understand your desire to uncover the truth and exact vengeance upon the perpetrator.

"As Muggle's friend, I'll aid you to the best of my ability, including but not limited to locating those individuals.

"I can also offer you a fresh lead on this matter. To my knowledge, Muggle's parents and other family members may still be alive in this world. She had distanced herself from them for some reason and didn't dare return to Trier. I'm unsure if they're in any danger or if they've come into contact with the evil god's followers.

"I don't know which Psychiatrist Muggle sought. Our organization has numerous genuine Psychiatrists, and many gatherings Muggle and I attended don't overlap. I'll assist you by inquiring with members who have interacted with her to see if you can obtain the answer you seek

"Until this investigation is complete, I'll help conceal the fact that Muggle is deceased

"If you relocate in the future, remember to summon my messenger again to prevent me from losing contact with you after obtaining pertinent information"

After reading, Lumian fell silent for a long while before exhaling slowly.

Initially, he'd imagined Madame Hela would invite him to join the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society, taking Aurore's place. In doing so, he could more effectively investigate the Psychiatrist Aurore sought to hire. However, it seemed the organization was highly cautious about recruiting new members. They might even need to meet specific criteria to be considered candidates. For instance, Aurore had mentioned that none of them could return to their hometowns.

Maybe Madame Hela is observing and testing me Lumian reassured himself and resumed studying Aurore's grimoire.

As for Aurore's original family, he was at a loss for where to begin.

Wednesday, 7:50 p.m., 20 Rue des Blouses Blanches.

Lumian rapped on Osta Trul's door, dressed in a grayish-blue worker's uniform and a dark-blue, almost black cap.

Osta, clad in black robes and a hood, opened the wooden door and glanced around. He grinned and remarked, "You're more punctual than I anticipated."

"I honor my promises better than you might think." Lumian strode into the room and handed Osta banknotes and coins worth 80 verl d'or.

Osta accepted it, counting twice with an even broader smile.

As he guided Lumian downstairs, he rambled, "The market district's been somewhat chaotic lately. Baron Brignais didn't even come to me for money."

"A gang leader died," Lumian commented nonchalantly.

Realizing the connection, Osta said regretfully, "Why couldn't Baron Brignais have died?"

"Even if Baron Brignais were dead, there'd still be Baron Guillaume and Baron Pierre. As long as the Savoie Mob exists, you'd have to repay the loan you owe," Lumian taunted.

Osta's expression soured.

Before long, he and Lumian boarded a public carriage. They each paid 30 coppet and found seats.

In about an hour, the carriage arrived at Avenue du Boulevard on the Srenzo River's north bank, Quartier 8, from the Le March du Quartier du Gentleman on the river's south bank.

This was the heart of the entire Intis Republic. The presidential Pavilion of Pleasure, the Grand Palace where Emperor Roselle once resided, and various newspaper headquarters were all here, encircled by upscale residences.

Lumian had previously read in newspapers that the average rent in this district was 4,000 verl d'or annually, roughly 74 verl d'or weekly. The priciest ones could even reach tens of thousands.

Noticing the empty carriage, Lumian lowered his voice and inquired of Osta, "Is Mr. K hosting a gathering on Avenue du Boulevard?"

Osta smirked and replied, "Always. Psychic and Arcane have their headquarters on Avenue du Boulevard as well."

You guys sure know how to hide Lumian gazed at the broad, flat avenue outside the window, the orderly Intis parasol trees lining the street, and the elegant, light-colored buildings behind them.

Just before 8:50 p.m., Osta led Lumian into the six-story beige luxury house at 19 Rue Scheer.

"This is Psychic magazine's headquarters, but they only occupy the top three floors."

Osta didn't ascend the stairs but turned right into a corridor on the ground floor.

Only then did he inform Lumian, "Mr. K wants to see you beforehand."

"Alright." Lumian dipped his head and adjusted his hat, seemingly preoccupied with something.

Osta produced an iron-colored mask and grinned.

"It's time to disguise yourself. You can't let everyone see your true appearance."

In the next instant, Lumian looked up.

His face was shrouded in layers of white bandages, leaving only his eyes, nostrils, and ears exposed.

Upon seeing this, Osta's heart nearly skipped a beat.

#### Chapter 139 Mr. K

Within moments, Osta, who had been on the verge of a complaint, managed to force a smile and said, "You're quite the menacing sight like this."

"It's a classic look in literature," Lumian replied with a deliberately smug tone.

Osta said nothing, opting instead to don his iron mask, concealing his expression.

Taking a few steps forward, he halted and rapped on the door to the right.

Two long pauses, one short pause, and one long pause... Lumian watched Osta Trul's actions with the keen eye of a Hunter.

Within seconds, the dark-red wooden door creaked open.

The first thing Lumian saw was a plush, pale-yellow carpet, followed by classical-styled tables, chairs, sofas, and display shelves.

A figure stood in the shadows cast by gas wall lamps near the floor-to-ceiling windows.

Like Osta Trul, he wore the black robe of an ancient warlock, complete with a large hood. Lumian couldn't help but think, Can you even see the person standing in front of you clearly when you're dressed like this?

"Mr. K, Ciel has arrived," Osta announced respectfully to the nearly six-foot-tall figure as he stepped inside.

Lumian followed closely.

With a clang, the door shut behind him.

Mr. K turned to face Lumian. “Why do you want to attend our gathering?”

His voice was low and gravelly.

“For potion formulas, Beyonder characteristics, mystical items, and mysticism knowledge. It's not like it's for love or faith, right?” Lumian replied with intentional cynicism.

He then chuckled.

“I know that's not what you want to hear, but it doesn't matter. I don't mind telling you about me.”

Lumian's voice deepened.

“In a catastrophe brought on by Beyonder powers, I lost my entire family.

“Not only did it cause me immense pain, but it made me realize that those so-called orthodox gods can't save us!

“From that day on, I sought Beyonder power and a way to forget all pain. I wanted to become powerful enough. I wanted those who brought me misfortune to experience the same torture.”

The hooded Mr. K seemed to stare at Lumian without interruption. As for Osta Trul, he was visibly shocked. Ciel's words revealed raw, unmasked pain. His desire for the Samaritan Women's Spring was genuine!

Once Lumian finished speaking, Mr. K nodded and said, “There are two rules for participating in our gathering:

“Second, don't attempt to follow other participants.”

Only these two? Lumian hadn't expected so few constraints.

He didn't need to think hard to spot several loopholes immediately.

Not attacking directly? Does that mean I can use Provoke to incite the other party to death?

Just because I don't attempt to follow doesn't mean I can't do anything else to the target...

Is selling fake ingredients, fake formulas, fake Beyonder characteristics, and fake mystical items also allowed?

Lumian suppressed his urge to retort and nodded.

“No problem.”

As he responded, he felt Mr. K's gaze on him, scrutinizing every inch of his flesh and skin.

It made him feel like he was in the sights of a venomous snake.

After a few seconds, Mr. K continued, "If you prefer not to disclose what you have and what you're after, you can write down your desired transaction in advance, and my attendant will copy it onto a portable blackboard for all participants to see. If you don't think it matters, you can make your request on the spot.

"Likewise, at the gathering, you can complete transactions through my attendant or directly with the other party.

"Remember, transactions carry risks. I can't guarantee the authenticity of all items, materials, or information. Of course, you can opt to pay me to notarize them, effectively reducing the risk."

A Notary's power? Lumian recalled Aurore's grimoire.

This was Sequence 6 of the Sun pathway, and most Beyonders in this pathway belonged to the Eternal Blazing Sun Church.

Given this, Lumian suspected Mr. K might not be a Notary, but rather possess a related mystical item.

Lumian quickly collected himself and asked Mr. K, "May I write down my requirements now?"

Mr. K nodded and gestured towards a desk on the right side of the room.

"Write them there. My attendant will collect them."

Lumian approached the brown desk, adorned with Psychic, Lotus, Arcane, and other magazines. He unfolded a fragrant letter and picked up a dark-red fountain pen. After some thought, he wrote:

"1. I possess a damaged Beyonder weapon. Seeking someone capable of repairing it. Price negotiable.

"2. Buying information on a peculiar creature. This female-looking entity is suspected to be a Spirit Body. It has long turquoise hair that envelops its body and exudes an alluring aura. It can induce erotic dreams with itself as the central figure. Additional details unknown. Reward depends on the value of information provided, ranging from 10 to 100 verl d'or."

Lumian considered adding a third point about a Provoker's acting experience but decided against it after some thought.

He remembered Aurore mentioning acting techniques, the Law of Beyonder Characteristics Conservation, and other mysticism knowledge in his nightmare. Such knowledge wasn't common among ordinary Beyonders. And he was currently impersonating a newcomer who had just entered the Beyonder world due to a disaster, seeking more knowledge and resources.

If he were to write the word "acting," Mr. K would surely grow suspicious.

Of course, Lumian didn't think of it as a pretense. He genuinely was a novice who had entered the Beyonder world following a disaster and sought more knowledge and resources. However, his involvement in the original disaster was quite high-level, allowing him to encounter powerful

figures like Madam Magician. As a result, he possessed extensive high-end knowledge but lacked common sense, relying on Aurore's grimoire to fill the gaps.

Having set down the letter and pen, Lumian left with Osta and entered a room at the end of the corridor.

The room appeared to be a salon. Sofas, chairs, a round table, a coffee table, barstools, and other furnishings were arranged casually, creating a relaxed atmosphere.

Several gathering attendees had already arrived. Some wore black robes and hoods that nearly covered their faces. Others donned clown or devil makeup, while a few wore crude or intricate masks.

For a moment, Lumian felt as if he had entered a masquerade ball.

He and Osta Trul took separate seats after entering separately.

Lumian chose a barstool, almost tempted to order a glass of absinthe to complete the look.

Soon enough, Mr. K entered and settled into the armchair reserved for the organizer. His masked and gloved attendants brought in a portable blackboard filled with transaction requests.

The first thing Lumian noticed was a request for Beyonder characteristics.

“Warrior pathway Sequence 8 Pugilist Beyonder characteristic, 15,000 verl d'or. Negotiable.”

A Sequence 8 Beyonder characteristic selling for 15,000 verl d'or or more? Lumian was initially stunned, then overwhelmed by heartache and regret, as if he longed to drink from the Fountain of Oblivion.

He had just killed Margot, a Sequence 8 Provoker of the Hunter pathway!

Playing it safe, Lumian hadn't harassed Margot until the Montsouris ghost attacked, leaving the battlefield early.

While he had gained over 1,000 verl d'or from Margot through the fate exchange, it paled in comparison to the worth of the Provoker Beyonder characteristics.

Moments later, Lumian barely pulled himself together.

His actions had been the best course. If he had continued to pester Margot, something might have gone awry or drawn the authorities' attention. While Margot would still be dead, he could have landed in another crisis.

Lumian then examined the other transaction details.

“One Elf's Dark Leaf, 180 verl d'or.”

“Two pages of Emperor Roselle's original diary. 300 verl d'or.”

“Sequence 6 Baron of Corruption potion formula, 65,000 verl d'or.”

“...”

As Lumian scanned the list, he understood why his sister Aurore was so extravagant with her spending.

“Let's begin,” Mr. K rasped, scanning the room.

His attendants read the entries aloud one by one. Some went unanswered, while others were discreetly finalized through the attendants.

Lumian observed quietly, intent on familiarizing himself with these situations and gathering intel.

As the gathering neared its end, the attendant by the portable blackboard finally announced Lumian's first request.

Silence ensued.

After more than ten seconds, a man lounging in a corner divan snickered.

“Most of those skilled in restoring mystical items and Beyonders weapons are found in the God of Steam and Machinery Church. Try looking there.”

His face was smeared with oil paint, as if he were masquerading as a savage from the Southern Continent's forests.

Ignoring the unfunny remark, Mr. K's attendant relayed Lumian's second request.

The gathering's attendees exchanged bewildered glances, as if this strange creature was news to them.

Just a bunch of clueless Low-Sequence Beyonders... Lumian inwardly scoffed in disappointment.

Just then, the man who had joked earlier shared, “This brings something to mind. Heh heh, here's a freebie.

“Where the Srenzo River meets the Ryan River downstream, there's a town called Aunett. Many middle-class Trier folks enjoy sailing and swimming there.

“Early last year, or maybe earlier, three consecutive female deaths occurred. They died of weakness from overindulgence, with no known partners, secret or otherwise. Their only shared trait was telling friends about the vivid, alluring dreams they'd been having recently.”

#### Chapter 140 Painting

The situation bears a resemblance to Charlie's case, but with a crucial difference: these victims are all women, while Charlie is a man...

Could it be that the strange entity believed to be Susanna Mattise isn't constrained by gender? Or is there another, male counterpart to the creature?

The latter seems more probable, given that all three victims in Aunett were female and no males had been targeted.

Yes, there are distinctions between the three women and Charlie. None of them had a partner, either openly or secretly, and Charlie had become Madame Alice's lover not long after invoking Susanna

Mattise. If that hadn't happened, would he have met the same fate as the three victims, drained of life by overindulgence?

Had Madame Alice been a sacrificial substitute? Or had that been merely the beginning?

Lumian pieced together a theory based on the information provided by the man with the painted face.

He hoped the authorities would take this case seriously and not rest until Susanna Mattise had been utterly vanquished.

As for whether the authorities would suspect Beyonders hiding among Charlie's friends due to the letter, Lumian wasn't too concerned. He had intentionally obscured Charlie's information and circumstances in the letter, even inserting a small mistake in a seemingly insignificant detail. The writer appeared to harbor a deep grudge against Susanna Mattise, having tracked her for an extended period, and sought to use Charlie's situation to enlist the help of the authorities for revenge. As a result, the focus was more on Susanna Mattise's issue, with a limited understanding of Charlie.

After the assembled participants discussed the strange case in Aunett, Mr. K's attendant unveiled an object shrouded in a black cloth.

Another attendant introduced, "This is a painting from a friend of one of our participants.

"He was a fellow Beyonder who met an untimely and bizarre end two months ago. Before his death, he created this painting."

With a swift motion, the attendant removed the black cloth, revealing the deceased Beyonder's final masterpiece.

The oil painting was a riot of vivid colors, weaving a surreal and mesmerizing scene.

Towering green weeds reached for the heavens, a golden sun lay hidden in a well, a blood-red river cascaded from the sky, a shadowy figure danced, and white skulls coalesced into clouds...

Merely glancing at the painting left Lumian feeling disoriented.

The attendant who had introduced the painting elaborated, "This artwork bears a potent psychic imprint. It affects the minds of all who view it, inducing confusion and vertigo to varying degrees. Prolonged exposure could even result in mental illness.

"According to the letters and diary entries left by the painting's creator, it may hold clues to the essence of reality and the origins of mysticism.

"This could also be the key to understanding the true nature of his strange demise.

"Any participant interested in studying the painting can negotiate a price."

You want to sell something like this for money? I wouldn't take it even if you offered it for free! Lumian grumbled internally, tearing his gaze away.

He wanted nothing to do with anything that concealed the truth, essence, or origin of the world. As Aurore had once said, one shouldn't look at or study things one shouldn't see or understand.



It was apparent that most of the gathering's participants were reluctant to spend money on such a foreboding painting shrouded in mystery. Ultimately, Mr. K's attendant put it away, once again veiling it with the black cloth.

Following that, the gathering transitioned into an open discussion stage. Attendees engaged in casual conversation about rumors and legends, careful to hide any details of their true identities.

At 10:15, Mr. K declared the gathering over, and the participants dispersed in groups.

As he departed, Lumian detected the organizer sizing him up, scrutinizing his every move.

Will he send someone to follow and investigate me? Lumian couldn't help but wonder.

Rather than being concerned, he was eager for it to happen.

Aside from occasionally summoning a messenger, his behavior was unremarkable. He could withstand any scrutiny!

As long as he refrained from contacting Madam Magician, Lumian believed Mr. K would soon receive an almost entirely truthful report—Ciel, a wild Beyonder lacking common sense in many areas, was suspected to hail from Cordu and sought Guillaume Bénét and his associates. He was also a wanted man.

In this scenario, if Lumian demonstrated his skills and extreme attitude, it wouldn't be long before he received an invitation from Mr. K to join his ranks and become a part of the organization behind him.

Sometimes, “inadvertently” revealing one's vulnerabilities and true circumstances was an effective means of gaining trust.

With that, Lumian and Osta found a concealed corner at 19 Rue Scheer, where they removed their disguises before returning to Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman.

As he made his way towards Rue Anarchie, Lumian's brow furrowed in confusion.

He hadn't noticed anyone tailing him.

Is it because Mr. K has no plans to investigate me, or had the person shadowing me been so skilled and uniquely gifted that I had failed to detect their presence? Lumian pondered the possibilities but ultimately pushed them to the back of his mind.

In any case, he wouldn't fear an investigation, unless Mr. K was in league with the Poison Spur Mob.

Upon entering Auberge du Coq Doré, Lumian noted that he was still early. He crossed the now pristine lobby and descended into the basement bar.

Before he could take in the scene, Charlie's exuberant voice reached his ears.

“Can you believe it? Just three hours ago, I was at police headquarters, accused of murder. Now, here I am, drinking and singing with all of you!

“Ladies and gentlemen, I've had an incredible experience like no other. I bet none of you can top it...”

The apprentice attendant leaped onto a small round table, beer bottle in hand, and addressed the surrounding patrons.

His short brown hair was disheveled, as if it hadn't been tended to in days, and stubble was evident around his mouth.

Already? Lumian had anticipated it would take Charlie another two or three days to be released.

Spotting Lumian from the table, Charlie waved his short arm and called out to the crowd, "I'll share that even stranger encounter with you all later!"

Donning a linen shirt and black pants, he hopped off the table and jogged to the bar counter, beer bottle in hand. He took a seat beside Lumian and said to the ponytailed bartender, Pavard Neeson, "A glass of absinthe! Thank you."

Turning to Lumian, he said, "This one's on me."

Lumian accepted the offer with a calm smile.

"You're looking pretty good."

"Of course. At least I don't have to worry about being hanged. I'd hate for thousands to gather around me as I die, considering how nobody cares about me when I'm alive," Charlie said, relief evident on his face.

Trier's citizens reveled in witnessing the execution of death row inmates.

Whenever someone faced the gallows or a firing squad, the streets would overflow with onlookers.

In the classical era before Emperor Roselle, there even existed a custom centered around this fascination: En route from the prison to the gallows, if any bystander agreed to marry the condemned, their sentence would be commuted, reduced, or even entirely absolved.

"Are you completely fine?" Lumian inquired further.

Charlie took a swig of beer and scanned the room. Lowering his voice, he said, "I can't divulge the specifics. I signed a pledge, a notarized pledge. You can't imagine how powerful that is..."

Charlie caught himself and continued, "The only downside is that I've lost my job again. That blasted foreman thinks I've tarnished the hotel's image. No matter. I'll pawn the diamond necklace tomorrow. The officers have already returned it to me. That money will tide me over for quite some time. I can treat the café waiters on Rue des Blouses Blanches to drinks. I'll surely find a better job!"

He wanted to add, "Let's go together when the time comes," but recalling Ciel's nerve and capabilities, he quietly discarded the idea.

Lumian sipped the absinthe the bartender had slid his way and gestured for Charlie to join him in an empty corner.

Once certain that the noise around them was sufficient to drown out their conversation and that no one was eavesdropping, Lumian asked, "Has the situation with Susanna Matisse been resolved?"

"I don't know." Charlie shook his head. "They did a lot of things, but I can't tell you."

“Did they promise to provide protection for a period of time?” Lumian asked thoughtfully.

Charlie replied awkwardly, “I can't tell you.”

Lumian grinned, retorting, “Seems like there is.”

If they hadn't promised protection, the corresponding words wouldn't exist and wouldn't be restricted by the confidentiality pledge.

“Uh...” Charlie hadn't expected Ciel to guess so accurately.

Lumian inquired, “Did they tell you anything? Share what you can.”

Charlie pondered for a moment and said, “They told me not to panic if I had that dream again. I'm to head to the nearest cathedral after dawn. You don't know about the Eternal Blazing Sun's cathedral, do you? I'm now a true believer of the Eternal Blazing Sun!”

Lumian expressionlessly raised his right hand and traced a triangle on his chest.

“...” Charlie fell silent.

After drinking with Charlie, Lumian returned to Room 207 and continued studying Aurore's grimoire.

He washed up before midnight, lay on the bed, and drifted off to sleep.

Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang!

Lumian was jolted awake by an insistent knocking on the door.

Who could it be? Frowning, he gripped Fallen Mercury and cautiously approached the door, cracking it open.

Charlie stood outside.

Still clad in a linen shirt, black pants, and strapless leather shoes, his face was ashen and fear-stricken.

Upon seeing Lumian, he appeared to regain his composure. Nearly losing control of his voice, he stammered in terror, “I dreamed of that woman again!”