

CIRCLE OF INEVITABILITY

Chapter 14: Different Monster

After a bout of searching, Lumian stumbled upon a considerable number of gold coins, silver coins, and copper coins. In total, there were 197 verl d'or and 25 coppet.

Among them, Louis d'or alone constituted five.

As for the paper bills, he only discovered some suspected remnants.

Aside from money, Lumian also discovered a small blue book.

The book had a grayish-blue cover and measured approximately 21 by 28.5 centimeters, a typical size found in Intis villages and towns.

It was based on the calendar and blended with the religious teachings of the two major Churches. It had a rather positive effect on guiding farmers and herders to farm, produce, and graze to enrich their spiritual lives.

Naturally, even though it had been nearly two centuries since Emperor Roselle advocated compulsory education, there were still a large number of farmers, herdsman, and workers who knew no more than a handful of words and were illiterate. They could only rely on the explanations of certain people around them to obtain the instructions they needed from the blue book, literally known as *livre bleu*.

Lumian flipped through a few pages nonchalantly and realized that the *livre bleu* was no different from his own. It was just that it appeared a little older overall.

There's the livre bleu and so much verl d'or; this family is undoubtedly well-to-do in the countryside. There aren't more than five such families in Cordu... Lumian discarded the *livre bleu* and placed the gold coins, silver coins, and copper coins into different pockets. Some were stashed deep in the cotton shirt's pocket, some were tucked into his pants pocket, and some were haphazardly stuffed into the pocket of his leather jacket. Even though Lumian knew that this wealth couldn't be brought to reality, he couldn't resist collecting it for safekeeping.

These little trinkets of gold, silver, or copper were simply irresistible.

During his days as a vagrant, he cherished every coin he came across, even if it was just a copper or a lick. He often fought with others for them and took risks to obtain them.

After scouting the area, Lumian hoisted his axe and crept towards the collapsed building closer to the reddish-brown mountain peak.

He proceeded deeper and deeper. Every time he traversed the empty space in the center of the ring, he was apprehensive that dozens of monsters would suddenly ambush him in an area without cover.

In the faint gray fog, Lumian crouched down and sneaked behind a half-collapsed stone wall. He squatted there and utilized it to conceal his form.

He cautiously poked his head out and surveyed the area ahead.

It was a narrow strip between two rows of destroyed buildings. There were no trees, no weeds, just gravel, crevices, and dirt.

Suddenly, a figure jumped into Lumian's line of sight.

It stood in the opposing building, staring at something.

This figure was garbed in a black robe with a hood. From the back, there was nothing peculiar. It appeared to be an ordinary human.

Lumian's heart constricted as he became even more watchful.

In such a dream ruin, the appearance of a regular person was far more terrifying than the appearance of a monster!

As if sensing that someone was observing him, the figure swiveled around slowly.

Lumian snuck a quick glance before retracting his head hastily. He leaned against the wall and didn't dare to budge.

With just one look, he had the impression that he had descended into hell or an abyss.

The figure was indeed a human, but 'he' had three faces and six eyes!

The face in front had cloudy eyes, sparse eyebrows, and numerous wrinkles. He was evidently an old man.

The left side was a chiseled face with sharp-looking blue eyes and a thick, black beard, making him appear like a burly man.

The skin on the right side was smooth and delicate, like a peeled egg. The blue eyes exuded obvious innocence and ignorance. It didn't seem a day over five years of age.

What kind of monster is this... Lumian attempted to regulate his breathing to prevent his heart from racing.

Such a monster had never surfaced, even in Aurore's horror tales. Only in the deepest and most absurd nightmares could it be encountered.

Although it was not good to judge a 'person' by their appearance, Lumian instinctively sensed that the three-faced monster was far more powerful than the skinless monster from earlier!

Furthermore, there was a high probability that it had exceptional abilities.

Eternal Blazing Sun. Great Father, please protect me from being discovered by it... Upon witnessing this scene, Lumian couldn't help but pray to the Eternal Blazing Sun.

If he weren't still clutching an axe in one hand and was in a perilous environment, he would have extended his arms, a gesture symbolizing the adoration of the sun.

At that moment, time appeared to stand still. Lumian believed he might be hallucinating.

It was as if someone's stare pierced through the wall and landed on his back.

His back stiffened instantly and felt somewhat warm.

In just a second or two, the illusion vanished, and heavy footsteps receded into the distance.

Lumian waited a while until the footsteps dissipated completely. Then, he gradually straightened his knees, turned around, and poked his head out to survey the area ahead.

The monster was farther away, having arrived behind the collapsed building whose two sides still stood. Half of its body was visible in the faint gray mist.

It still had his back to Lumian, as though it had transformed into a statue.

Lumian breathed a sigh of relief.

He didn't have the confidence to confront such a monster.

It's definitely impossible to venture deeper into the ruins from here... Should I circumvent it?

Won't there be comparable monsters elsewhere?

The closer I approach that mountain peak, the more potent the monsters that emerge?

Lumian retracted his body and deliberated for a while before deciding to conclude the night.

He intended to inquire with the woman who gave him the tarot card after daybreak to see if there was a means of dealing with the three-faced monster. If there was no alternative, he would consider taking a detour.

He arched his back, detached from the wall, and headed in the direction he came from.

At that moment, he had a notion.

If I slumber in these ruins, will I be able to escape the dream?

Considering the possibility of numerous monsters in the vicinity, he suppressed the urge to experiment, for now.

On the way back, he hastily searched every destroyed building he passed, but he couldn't unearth any useful written information. There were only a few coins.

After retreating for a while, Lumian conceived a notion and decided to take a detour. He approached the burnt-out house that he encountered first from the side, where he had buried the skinless monster.

He wanted to see if the monster's demise would be detected by its kin and if it would result in any changes.

After locating the spot and concealing himself, Lumian poked his head out from the side and scrutinized the target area.

In the following moment, he caught sight of another "figure."

The figure was half-human and half-beast. Its legs were bent forward as it squatted there and inspected the skinless monster's cadaver.

It had already removed the stone bricks and wooden blocks that Lumian had stacked.

It wore a dark jacket and relatively snug muddy pants. Its black hair that hung to its neck was unkempt and greasy, and it carried a shotgun on its back.

A shotgun!

Lumian averted his gaze hastily and withdrew his head.

These monsters are truly absurd!

They actually know how to wield a shotgun...

At that moment, Lumian felt like he was a hunter, hunting in the mountains with his weapon and comrades, only to discover that the rabbit opposite him was clutching a water-cooled machine gun and targeting them. He considered it ridiculous and immersion-breaking, as well as disappointing.

As time elapsed, he waited patiently for the monster with the shotgun to depart.

Finally, he discerned a faint sound of movement, gradually receding.

Lumian stuck his head out cautiously once again and examined the monster that was half-human and half-beast.

"It" moved like a cat towards the back of the building.

Initially, Lumian's heart eased, but then his eyes widened.

He realized that the path the monster took was precisely the same as the route he took when he ventured deep into the ruins!

It's tracking me!

It has an extraordinary tracking ability!

Lumian made a subconscious evaluation.

He was exceedingly grateful that he had opted for a detour when he returned. Otherwise, he would have certainly collided with it and might have even been ambushed!

As soon as the monster vanished, Lumian sprang up and dashed towards his house.

The crimson fire that reflected in the glass window on the ground floor of the house was akin to sunlight that could dispel darkness.

Lumian sprinted all the way to his two-story building, yanked open the unlatched door, and rushed inside.

After locking the door, he gazed at the ruins through the window.

Far from the gray mist, at the edge of the ruins, there stood a faint figure, but it didn't approach.

Phew. Lumian exhaled and planned to extinguish the fire, ascend upstairs to slumber, and exit the dream.

He glanced at the still-burning fire and murmured to himself, *It can still burn for a while... I can experiment and see if it continues to burn until it extinguishes after I depart the dream, or if it is frozen in time the moment I leave...*

Lumian had previously verified through the rain that the wilderness where the ruins were located was undergoing natural development. It had nothing to do with whether he was dreaming or not, but whether the same situation was transpiring in his house or the so-called safe zone remained to be verified.

He acted on his notion. He added a few more coals to the fire and fiddled with them. Then, he carried the axe and steel fork to the second floor and entered the bedroom.

...

When Lumian awoke, it was just after daybreak.

He inspected his shirt-like pajamas. As anticipated, he was disheartened to discover that the gold coins, silver coins, and copper coins did not accompany him into reality.

Lumian exited the bed and stretched his body. He sauntered to the desk and extended his hand to draw the curtains.

Amidst the sound, a mild and refreshing radiance trickled in.

As the window opened, fresh and organic air invaded Lumian's nostrils. He couldn't help but extend himself, feeling that waking up early was quite pleasant at times.

Of course, this was also owing to the "Patriotic Public Health Campaign" that Emperor Roselle had launched. It was also thanks to the subsequent rulers who had preserved it and only altered its name.

He surveyed his surroundings, sometimes gazing at the far-off forest, sometimes scrutinizing the orange-red clouds in the sky, and sometimes observing the weeds outside the house.

Suddenly, Lumian's stare froze.

He spied a larger bird perched on an elm tree not far away.

It had a pointed beak, a feline face, brown feathers with scattered spots, brownish-yellow eyes combined with black pupils, giving it a sharp appearance.

It was an owl.

It appeared to be observing Lumian.