

## Inevitability 161

Chapter 161 Special Traits

It was only when Lumian sprung from the darkness that the man—his gaze fixated solely on Jenna—realized the invasion of his secluded lair.

Bang! Bang! Bang! Lumian stormed in, raining a barrage of fists, elbows, knees, and feet upon the intruder.

The man was taken aback, yet not feeble. His resistance was robust, fending off blows with forearms while retreating. His chest, calves, and thighs bore the brunt of Lumian's missed strikes, but he held his ground.

With a shake of his head, his brown eyes morphed into a haunting green, casting an eerie reflection of Lumian.

Suddenly, Lumian was overwhelmed by a powerful surge of desire. Beside him, “Showy Diva” Jenna radiated a captivating allure as she strained to watch the struggle, her whole being pulsating with magnetism.

This desire exploded within Lumian like a live grenade. He ceased his assault, eyes smoldering with a reddish hue as his breaths quickened. Whirling around, he lunged towards Jenna.

Jenna sensed the abnormality and bellowed out, her voice a mix of anger and fear, “Pull yourself f\*cking together!”

But her words were smothered as Lumian pinned her down.

In tandem with this action, a hard object pressed against Lumian's right side.

What was that? Reacting instinctively, his hand grazed the hilt of the ritual silver dagger he'd strategically placed for self-injury.

A vague understanding of his intent to use it flickered back into his mind.

In the next heartbeat, Lumian—now mostly irrational from his burgeoning desire—seized the handle of the silver dagger and drove it into his own flesh.

The silver tip sliced through cloth, skin, and muscle alike.

Excruciating pain thundered into Lumian's consciousness, restoring some rationality from the grips of his wild desire, allowing him to regain some lucidity.

Pretending nothing had changed, he continued his actions on Jenna, his hands wandering aimlessly.

“Are you f\*cking useless? Can't even handle a pervert!” Jenna scolded, hoping to jolt her lone protector back to reality.

Seeing his opponent under control, the man hastily retrieved his own concealed dagger, preparing to strike Lumian from behind.

Just then, Lumian's hands slid and he steadied himself against the cool cave floor beside Jenna.

With a swift motion, he flexed his waist and kicked his right foot backward.

Whack!

Lumian struck, his attack to the man's groin swift and precise, akin to a whip's snap.

A guttural crunch echoed, the man's visage draining of color as pain contorted his features.

Clatter! His weapon slipped from his grasp.

Not one to squander an advantage, Lumian lunged, ensnaring his prey in a swift embrace.

His right arm snaked up, seizing the man's head and wrenching it with an unyielding force.

Crack!

The man was granted a view of his own back, his focus mercifully diverted from the torment below.

Once his adversary's life was unequivocally extinguished, Lumian withdrew his arms and produced his ritual silver dagger. With a white bandage he had in his possession, he attended to his own wound.

He held no fear of infection—even if such an eventuality arose, his Provoker constitution would endure until the 6 a.m. of the next day.

The primary purpose of his first-aid efforts was to prevent the cave from retaining traces of blood.

Jenna, sprawled on the cold ground, mustered the strength to hoist herself up. She observed as Lumian retracted his deadly grip and the man crumpled lifelessly to the ground.

Just like that? A shiver of shock rippled through her, effectively quelling her previously stoked desires.

She was no naive observer. She had gauged the formidable, almost magical aura of that lecherous man, but he was annihilated in mere seconds by this handsome rural lad!

Barely a heartbeat—eight or nine seconds at most—had transpired before a life was extinguished.

Upon tending to his injury, Lumian collected the man's outer garments and moved towards Jenna. She blinked out of her stupor and queried curiously, “Why are you here?”

Almost reflexively, she added jokingly, “Don't say you're enamored by me and have been trailing me?”

Lumian's response was a soft chuckle as he squatted down, drawing Jenna's hands behind her back.

“What are you doing?” Jenna's voice teetered on panic.

Despite her feeble struggles, Lumian effortlessly secured her wrists using the man's shirt.

In the blink of an eye, he pulled a dark jacket over Jenna's head, blocking her sight completely.

“Dogsh\*t, bastard, pervert, what do you want?” Jenna's words tumbled out, a jumble of anger, anxiety, and confusion.

Lumian dismissed her outburst. Ripping off the remaining piece of his shirt, he wadded it up and thrust it into Jenna's ears and mouth.

“Mmmmm...” Jenna was silenced.

A resignation washed over her as she thought, Fine, I'll endure this like a dog bite. As long as he doesn't kill me...

Yet, her apprehension was met with stillness. Lumian had risen, leaving her side to approach the lifeless form on the cave floor.

Upon purifying his ritual silver dagger and wiping it clean, Lumian circumnavigated the petite cave, weaving a wall of spirituality.

Next, he commenced the Summoning Dance.

His intention was to invoke a spirit via this rite!

Despite this method's efficacy falling notably short compared to traditional psychic spells, the goal of the Summoning Dance wasn't strictly spirit invocation. Nevertheless, it was far better than the alternative—doing nothing.

His spirituality melded with natural forces and diffused in every direction, but was confined within the wall of spirituality enveloping the cave.

Thus, the summoning wouldn't attract any unwanted entities.

In the midst of the chaotic, mesmerizing dance, Lumian perceived the spectral form of the man.

Drawing the ritual silver dagger, he let a droplet of blood fall, commanding the spirit to bond with him.

Almost instantaneously, Lumian was gripped by a chilling sensation as an unusual and fervent heat ignited within him. This was accompanied by an overwhelming desire for women.

Is this an actual side-effect? Does it parallel the insatiable hunger experienced with the mouth-orifice monster? Lumian made a conscious effort to avoid glancing at Jenna, who was now bound and blindfolded, as he noted his newly acquired “head.”

Since the man had recently perished, his other “head” was saturated with lingering emotions such as lust, pain, fury, loathing, and the instinctive urge to utilize his distinctive traits. Also present were traces of obsessions and the most profound memories.

Analyzing the situation, Lumian understood that this pervert possessed far more abilities and traits than the mouth-orifice monster.

“Inciting avarice in others;

“Becoming miserly and greedy, able to detect items that once belonged to him;

“Stimulating others' appetites;

“Maintaining a robust and healthy physical state;

“Existing in perpetual hunger and thirst;

“Constantly utilizing mental faculties to augment strength, reflexes, agility, and resilience;

“Employing one's gaze, speech, and actions to subtly induce a measure of lust in the target.

“Through direct contact and spell-like abilities, the target will experience varying degrees of lust.

“Preparing rape drugs and the like.

“Differentiating hormonal information of various individuals...”

Did Monsieur Ive utilize the first one? This pervert is indeed connected to Monsieur Ive and Susanna Mattise... A constant state of hunger and thirst. No wonder he targeted Jenna and dared to abduct her. Can this be categorized as a negative effect? Indeed, Jenna may not be his first victim... Lumian didn't select any specific trait. He was limited to general observations of the spectral companion and was unable to comprehend any of the more nuanced abilities.

Lumian made an attempt to amplify the man's most profound memories.

Suddenly, he was in the midst of a bustling theater. On stage stood a young woman clad in a divine white dress, her deeply carved features accented by lake-like eyes, crystal clear and rippling with innocence and charm.

Charlotte Calvino... Lumian identified the woman instantly. She was the reigning star of the Théâtre de l'Ancienne Cage à Pigeons.

Simultaneously, Lumian felt the man's excitement, the predatory hunger within him intensifying.

However, with the crowd around, he refrained from any untoward behavior. He bolted to the lavatory as soon as the scene concluded.

As the memory faded, Lumian ceased the Summoning Dance, letting the man's spirit withdraw from his being.

Almost immediately, he performed the Summoning Dance again, inviting the spirit to rejoin him.

This was because each possession allowed Lumian to select only one trait, one memory, or one obsession. Once chosen, it was irrevocable.

Lumian had opted for one of the spirit's most poignant memories.

In the next instant, Jenna appeared before him, giving an overtly dramatic performance on-stage.

"..." The situation became clear to Lumian. He couldn't resist clenching his jaw and cursing, "Is there nothing else in your mind but women, women, women!"

He abandoned the idea of spirit channeling, regretting that he hadn't yet achieved the status of a Contractee, unable to forge a long-term contract with the spirit and borrow a skill. Lumian appraised the man's traits, certain that some of them would prove immensely useful in combat.

If only I could rear this spirit... Lumian sighed, conceding his present limitations.

Subsequently, he dissolved the spiritual barrier, sheathed his ritual silver dagger, and returned to Jenna. He removed the jacket shrouding her eyes and the shirt binding her hands.

Jenna winced, plucking the cloth from her mouth and ears.

She massaged her reddened wrist, throwing a skeptical look at Lumian who was busy searching the pockets of the man's clothing. She inquired, "Why did you blindfold me and block my ears earlier?"

"I was protecting you. You shouldn't see or hear what isn't meant for you," Lumian responded in a half-jesting tone, his search yielding a total of 8 verl d'or coins and three somewhat antiquated metal canisters.

Perceiving no threat from him, Jenna huffed. "What could possibly be unseen or unheard here? Unless you... you didn't... with the corpse..."

Her voice faded as she connected a few dots, roughly guessing that Lumian might have been using some power to extract information from the corpse.

Upon noticing Lumian evaluating the three metal canisters, Jenna deflected the topic and reminisced, "One of these bottles contains a gas that knocks you out, leaving you feeble. That's how he abducted me.

"Also, another bottle has this gas, extremely foul-smelling but strangely enough, it wakes you up. Damn, that pervert deserves being f\*cked by a donkey!

"I don't know what's in the remaining bottle, and I can't distinguish between the other two."

## Chapter 162 Fresh Corpse

Lumian crouched down, clutching the three metal canisters in his hands. He cast a glance at Jenna, a mischievous smile playing on his lips.

"I know just the way to confirm it."

"What..." Jenna's curiosity piqued, but soon a hint of nervousness and panic crept into her expression, triggered by Lumian's enigmatic smile.

Unfazed by her reaction, Lumian responded with a smile of his own.

"Help me determine which canister is which," he suggested.

"What sort of joke is this?" Jenna thought, grateful for the fact that had Lumian not saved her and aware of her own weakened state, she would have unleashed a stream of curses.

However, Lumian's expression turned serious.

"Rest assured, if it contains the gas that knocks you out, the worst that can happen is you fainting again. I won't harm you, and even if I wanted to, you wouldn't be able to resist. Besides, once we ascertain which canister is which, I can use a stimulating gas to revive you and bring you back to normal."

"If luck is on your side and you encounter the stimulating gas, you'll regain most of your strength immediately," Lumian added.

That makes sense. Regardless of the outcome, it can't possibly be harmful. She was almost convinced by Lumian's words.

However, snapping out of her daze, Jenna clenched her teeth and voiced her concerns.

"But what if you end up selecting the other canister? We have no idea what it contains!"

If it turned out to be poisonous gas, there was no one present with the knowledge to treat her.

Lumian responded with a mocking tone, a smile still tugging at the corners of his mouth, "Are you daft? Canisters filled mostly with gas and those containing liquid have a significant weight difference!"

"This particular bottle should be filled with liquid!"

He picked up one of the metal canisters and gave it a slight shake.

He “clearly” heard the unmistakable sloshing sound of liquid inside before pocketing it.

“Is that so...” Although Jenna had been mocked, her attention was focused on the “experiment,” and anger didn't consume her.

After a few seconds of hesitation, she closed her eyes and tilted her head slightly, determined.

“Go ahead, give it a try!”

Lumian stowed one of the metal bottles in his pants pocket, leaving only one in his grasp.

With a leisurely pace, he brought it near Jenna's nose.

In the next moment, Jenna slowly cracked open her eyes.

In an instant, an intensely pungent odor, reminiscent of fermented excrement, assailed Jenna's senses, causing her to sneeze repeatedly. Tears threatened to spill from her eyes, and her nose threatened to drip.

However, each sneeze served as a catalyst, restoring a significant portion of her strength. As Lumian sealed the canister and rose from his crouch, Jenna leaped to her feet, instinctively stretching her limbs.

Jenna happily adjusted her clothing and skirt, muttering to herself, “Seems like luck is on my side!”

On her first attempt, she managed to obtain the canister with the foul-smelling gas.

But then she noticed Lumian's playful expression.

Jenna's heart skipped a beat, sensing that something was off.

Curiosity getting the better of her, she inquired, “Did you already know which gas canister was which from the start?”

Is that the reason he was able to accurately select the metal canister containing the pungent gas?

Lumian grinned and handed the metal canister to Jenna.

“Smell the cap for yourself.”

Jenna eyed the canister suspiciously before cautiously sniffing the bottle.

A faint odor lingered, not particularly stimulating or potent, but still unpleasant.

“The other canister has no scent,” Lumian added with a smile.

Jenna's flushed face turned an even deeper shade of red.

She felt foolish, having believed the words of the other party and willingly taken part in the so-called “experiment.”

Any feelings of gratitude she had prepared were instantly quashed.

Ignoring Jenna's enraged state, Lumian pocketed the 8 verl d'or banknote and marked the metal canister with a scratch before stowing it away.

Though the man possessed the ability to sense the whereabouts of items that had once belonged to him, Lumian wasn't afraid of being tracked since the man was already dead.

As for the function of the liquid in the remaining metal canister, he planned to test it on rats, stray dogs, and other animals.

Having completed the necessary tasks, Lumian pointed at the pervert's lifeless body and instructed Jenna, "Take a good look at him and commit his face to memory. We'll need to investigate who he is."

"He probably has accomplices."

"Alright." Jenna strode toward the corpse, earnestly engraving his face into her memory.

After observing for a while, the recent events flooded back into her mind, fueling her anger. She raised her right leg and ruthlessly kicked the pervert's groin.

Again and again, without restraint.

"Dogsh\*t, pervert, damn your mother, damn your entire family!" Jenna vented her emotions to her heart's content.

Lumian winced, feeling a twinge of pain, as he lowered his head to clean up the remnants at the scene.

Once Jenna had calmed down, he approached her with a large grayish-white cloth bag. As he stuffed the corpse and clothes inside, he casually inquired, "How did he abduct you?"

Jenna smoothed her disheveled brownish-yellow hair and tied it back into a simple ponytail.

Gritting her teeth, she recounted, "I encountered him in an alley next to the Salle de Bal Brise. He claimed to be a fan of my singing and asked for an autograph. The paper he handed me was sprinkled with that odorless gas. As soon as I signed it, I sensed something was wrong and lost most of my strength.

"After that, he attacked me, restrained me, and brought the bottle to my nose. That's when I passed out."

Lumian couldn't help but mock, "Aren't you being too careless?"

Jenna didn't agree.

"I've seen him several times while singing. I was certain that he genuinely enjoyed listening to me. Otherwise, I wouldn't have given him the time of day.

"And, as an unknown singer, it's an honor to have someone ask for your autograph..."

"Besides, the gas doesn't have any smell!"

How could anyone have guarded against this?

Lumian scoffed.

"That's not what I meant. It's obvious that the gas dissipates quickly on paper. It needs to be used within a short period of time to have a certain effect. In other words, that pervert has been tailing you for a while and has probably figured out your routines. Otherwise, he wouldn't have cornered you so accurately in an empty alley and tainted the paper with the gas ten to twenty seconds in advance.

"Didn't you notice despite being followed for so long?"

Jenna fell silent, at times clenching her teeth, at times frustrated.

Lumian shifted his gaze and chuckled.

It was understandable that she didn't notice. That guy could discern hormonal information from different individuals.

If it weren't for the fact that Monsieur Ive was clearly weaker than the pervert and probably hadn't mastered the power of lust, Lumian would have suspected that his identity as a "robber" had been exposed.

He resealed the grayish-white cloth bag and used it to further erase any traces at the scene. Observing this, Jenna lent him a hand.

She's quite skilled at dealing with evidence... Lumian glanced at Jenna and left the cave with the cloth bag slung over his back, harboring some suspicions.

Due to Jenna intentionally not mentioning her unusual behavior under the influence of the pervert, Lumian believed that this Showy Diva had some understanding of the Beyonder world, or she might even be one herself.

And her source of information or power most likely stemmed from "Red Boots" Franca from the Savoie Mob.

When Lumian arrived at his hiding spot, he ignited the carbide lamp and held it in his hand, glancing back at the depths of the path.

The path descended. There was darkness in the distance, a void that swallowed everything as it lay in wait for its prey to approach.

"What are you looking at?" Jenna asked curiously.

She sensed that Ciel was acting mysterious.

Lumian ended his gaze and smiled.

"I'm wondering where we'll end up if we keep going down. Perhaps the Trier from the Fourth Epoch?"

In reality, what he was truly pondering was:

The abnormal ability displayed just now was strikingly similar to Monsieur Ive's. If the two of them were accomplices, would they instinctively choose a familiar place in the underground world for the crime? The same underground destination where Monsieur Ive had entered that night?

If that were the case, perhaps he would uncover something if he continued down this path.

Disappointed, Jenna remarked, "That's not a good place."

Lumian remained silent as he retraced his steps along the path. Lost in her own thoughts, Jenna followed silently, clutching the carbide lamp left behind by the pervert.

Just as he was about to reach the level that roughly replicated the layout aboveground, Lumian halted and said with a contemptuous smile, "Do you need me to escort you to the surface?"

"You're not going back?" Jenna asked, surprised.



Lumian shrugged. "I need to find a suitable place to dispose of this corpse."

Jenna nodded and refrained from prying further. "I can ascend on my own. I've been underground before."

Does that imply you possess the means to protect yourself? Lumian watched Jenna depart with light footsteps, inwardly sighing.

Does every human and dog in Trier have access to Beyonder powers?

Is something amiss with Trier, or is something amiss with me? Why do I always encounter such individuals?

Shaking his head, he hoisted the corpse onto his back. As he dealt with the footprints, he made his way toward the hidden quarry cave where he had previously sought the boon.

Along the way, he performed two instances of anti-tracking to ensure no one was tailing him.

Upon reaching the underground quarry cave, Lumian tossed aside the grayish-white cloth bag containing the corpse and arranged the altar.

Initially, he had intended to visit the nearest hospital morgue during the night to acquire fresh corpses, but now he had a better option!

After setting up the altar, lighting the candles, and constructing a wall of spirituality, Lumian retrieved the pre-drawn faux goatskin adorned with the corresponding symbol.

The central pattern on the paper consisted of a ring formed by thorns, encircled by symbols representing eyes, curves, and rivers.

Just tracing these patterns in Room 207 had drained Lumian's spirituality.

With the faux goatskin in place, Lumian took two steps back and gazed at the flickering candles, preparing for the subsequent incantation.

In this ritual, one couldn't employ the phrase "I! I summon in my name" to beseech oneself. Instead, they had to craft a three-line description of their being and feign the role of a creature from the spirit world.

It could be done in any manner, devoid of any wielding of authority, as long as it could pinpoint the location within the wall of spirituality.

Lumian parted his lips and muttered in Hermes, "Cordu Village's Trickster King, Aurore Lee's younger brother, an entity known as Lumian Lee..."

### Chapter 163 Three Questions

The flame of the orange candle, representing the focal point of the prayer, flickered as though stirred by an unseen breeze. Apart from that, it remained unaffected, maintaining its ordinary hue without any hint of transformation.

Lumian sensed an unusual pulsation deep within his soul, as if a distant cry had reached his ethereal essence.

Temporarily unable to respond, he continued to recite the incantation.

“I implore you,

“I beseech to be bestowed the Prophetic Concoction...”

In this ritualistic spell, words like “help create” couldn't be used. It had to be “bestowed” or “gifted.”

Lumian's spirit trembled with each uttered word, like ripples extending outward, leaving him with an unsettling sensation of both elevation and dizziness.

Taking two steps forward, he surveyed the aquatic monster's flesh, the lizard eyes, and the gray henbane. Retrieving the faux goatskin adorned with enigmatic symbols, he positioned it atop the orange candle's flame, symbolizing the target of his prayer.

Once the faux goatskin was ignited and placed within the natural hollow of the stone altar, Lumian meticulously gathered tulip powder and other ingredients, sprinkling them into the flames.

A peculiar fragrance swiftly permeated the ethereal barrier, causing Lumian to experience hallucinations.

He witnessed a profusion of mystical symbols adorning the faux goatskin, materializing in the void, in constant motion and reconfiguration, perpetually altering their collective form.

Lumian stepped back and scrutinized the diverse materials on the altar. In a resonant voice infused with Hermes' power, he invoked, “Tulip, a herb that belongs to inevitability, please pass your powers to my incantation!

“...”

As Lumian uttered the final word, his spirit's ripples merged, granting him the illusion that he could graze the candle's flame with a mere touch of his palm.

Simultaneously, a searing sensation ignited within his chest, accompanied by a faint hum resonating in his ears. His surroundings spun, akin to being tossed into the air and spun around repeatedly.

Guided by his spirituality, Lumian extended his right hand, pressing it toward the candle's flame.

His vision dimmed as his spirituality surged forth, intertwining with the flames.

The candle's flame promptly expanded, casting a radiant and ethereal glow upon the entire altar.

The disparate ingredients of the Prophetic Concoction, once gathered, stirred and converged. Blood churned, and shadows undulated, crafting an exceptionally sinister tableau.

Struggling to maintain a steady flow of his spiritual essence, Lumian observed the physical components fade into specters, completing their reassembly.

A dark crimson phantom, infused with silver-black tincture, materialized before him, condensing into a murky liquid.

The liquid incessantly bubbled, each burst releasing sinuous tendrils of silver-black light, reminiscent of slithering serpents.

Lumian advanced two steps, seizing a metal canister from the altar. Unscrewing its lid, he positioned it beneath the liquid's surface.

Having placed the vessel containing the Prophetic Concoction back on the altar, Lumian composed himself, preparing his mental state.

As Lumian calmed the ripples within his spirit, he recollected the entire process of the ritual.

If the thorn symbol hadn't reached a certain level of activation, elevating my status, I wouldn't have been able to respond and the endeavor would have failed... I can only perform two similar ritualistic spells consecutively... Lumian ruminated, gradually finding his thoughts settling.

Completing the five ritualistic spells required a minimum of Sequence 7, or even Contractee. Lumian, an Alms Monk of Sequence 8, could only accomplish it by relying on the corruption within his body.

Correspondingly, his spirituality couldn't endure for much longer.

After concluding the ritual and tidying the altar, Lumian dispelled the ethereal barrier and approached the grayish-white cloth bag to drag out the lifeless body.

With gentle care, he twisted the other party's head to its original position and opened the mouth.

Bathed in the glow of the blue carbide lamp, Lumian retrieved the Prophetic Concoction, unscrewed its lid, and poured the dark liquid into the corpse's mouth.

Rather than immediately permeating through the larynx, the liquid remained within, akin to a pool of water.

Suddenly, Lumian sensed the quarry's breeze turning colder, and the carbide lamp's light deepened to a richer blue.

Almost simultaneously, he heard a rumbling sound, witnessing the corpse's throat writhe as it consumed all of the Prophetic Concoction.

In the next moment, the naked corpse sat upright, engulfed in an unnatural darkness that defied illumination.

His eyes snapped open upon his pallid, worn face. The once-brown irises had lost their color, now crystal-clear and devoid of hue.

Within the depths of those translucent eyes, layers of vibrant colors seemed to reside. A pure light hung high, countless nearly imperceptible figures, and flickering silver radiance...

Withstanding the bone-chilling cold, Lumian composed himself and inquired, "Where will Guillaume Bénét, the former padre from Cordu Village in Dariège, Riston Province, Intis Republic, appear in a month?"

During the interim, Lumian had contemplated the three questions he wished to pose.

Four primary rules governed the questioning:

First, it must pertain to the future. Inquiries regarding someone's whereabouts or past actions were forbidden.

Secondly, the description had to be precise enough, or an unanswered query would arise. The name Guillaume Bénét was commonplace in other parts of Intis. Numerous individuals shared the same name. Unless the village of origin was specified, the corpse might reveal the future fate of a different Guillaume Bénét.

Thirdly, regardless of the corpse's country of origin or familiarity with the corresponding language, it would respond in the same language as the question posed.

Lastly, a question could only contain one element requiring an answer. It could not be framed in the manner of “when and where will it be?”

The corpse's pale countenance took on a dark green tinge. It parted its lips and uttered in Intis, “Trier's Quartier de la Princesse Rouge.”

The voice resonated with an illusory and ethereal quality, as if it emanated from another realm. It bore no resemblance to the deceased's living voice.

So, it can only be narrowed down to the Quartier de la Princesse Rouge? Lumian's brow furrowed slightly.

He could comprehend the reason behind it—this was not a Prophetic Concoction obtained from hidden entities. Its creator was essentially an Alms Monk, hence the effects naturally wouldn't be outstanding.

Lumian proceeded to raise his second question.

“Where will I encounter Louis Lund, the former butler of the village administrator in Cordu Village, Dariège, Riston Province, Intis Republic?”

He refrained from mentioning Madame Pualis since he was uncertain of her connection to Madame Night. He feared that her elevated status might interfere with the prophecy's accuracy.

The corpse's eyes remained vacant and translucent as it gazed ahead. It responded with an ethereal voice, “Trier's Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman Avenue du Marché.”

Avenue du Marché? It seems Louis Lund's presence there isn't mere happenstance... Lumian mused, a sense of satisfaction washing over him.

As he contemplated, he noticed the strange visions reflected in the corpse's transparent eyes gradually fading. Acting swiftly, he posed his third question.

“Where will Monsieur Ive, the proprietor of Auberge du Coq Doré in Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman, be from 11 p.m. to 12 p.m. this Sunday?”

Having observed Monsieur Ive previously entering the underground at this time, Lumian sought to ascertain the specifics of his destination.

Considering that Monsieur Ive had recently been “robbed” and had visited the police headquarters, he might refrain from venturing into the underground for the time being. Lumian specified the time as Sunday.

The corpse swiftly replied, “Trier's Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman, Théâtre de l'Ancienne Cage à Pigeons.”

With that, the corpse thudded to the ground and closed its eyes once more, emanating the putrid stench of death.

Théâtre de l'Ancienne Cage à Pigeons once again... Lumian bundled the corpse back into the cloth bag, intending to bury it even deeper underground.

In front of a beige three-story building, a stubbly-bearded tramp found himself cornered by two valets beside a pillar.

“I-I’ll leave now,” he stammered, trembling.

At that moment, a man dressed as a butler approached, his face filled with surprise.

“Master, is that you? Master!”

“What?” The tramp was perplexed.

The butler couldn't contain his excitement.

“Don't you remember? You're the owner of this place, and we are all your loyal servants. You suffered a head injury and lost many memories. One day, you suddenly ran away from home.

“It's been months. I've finally found you! You've returned!”

“I'm not, I'm not...” The tramp remembered his past clearly.

However, the butler and the two valets refused to listen to his explanation. They “encircled” him and led him into the building.

“Madam, Madam, the Master has returned!” the butler shouted with elation.

Before long, the tramp laid eyes upon an elegant and beautiful woman.

She wore a light-green dress, her eyes exuding a mature allure.

Overwhelmed with joy, she burst into tears and threw herself into the tramp's arms.

“You're back! You're finally back!”

As he inhaled the sweet scent of her perfume and felt the softness of her body against his, the tramp attempted to argue that he wasn't her husband, but the words caught in his throat.

In a daze of confusion, he was guided to the dining room. There, under a crystal chandelier, he beheld a sumptuous feast—a dozen oysters, a pot of succulent chicken, a plate of beef stewed with prunes, suet pudding, salad, and a bottle of White Elixir wine...

Simultaneously, the tramp's gaze fell upon the oil paintings adorning the walls of the dining room.

One of them was a portrait, strikingly similar to him.

Could it truly be me? But I recall every experience... Could there be another who bears my resemblance? The tramp grew even more bewildered.

After indulging in a hearty meal and savoring fine wines, he was led to the bedroom. Soon, the beautiful and elegant madam entered, dressed in a silk nightgown.

Her eyes shimmered with tears as she spoke, “Do you still remember my passion?”

The tramp's breathing quickened, and he couldn't resist taking a step forward.

The two of them embraced passionately, tumbling onto the bed, their desires overwhelming them.

In that moment, the tramp began to “believe” that he truly was the owner of this grand house. He had a beautiful wife, a professional butler, and a multitude of servants.

Even if the original master were to return, he would ensure that the other was exposed as a fraud!

Lumian resurfaced and entered Auberge du Coq Doré, carrying the extinguished carbide lamp.

Madame Fels, who manned the front desk, immediately stood up upon seeing him.

“Ciel—Monsieur Ciel, Baron Brignais wishes to meet you at the Salle de Bal Brise after dinner.”

Baron Brignais is seeking me? What could it be about? Lumian nodded.

## Chapter 164 Intelligence

Salle de Bal Brise, the café on the second floor.

Lumian strolled over to Baron Brignais with an air of nonchalance and took a seat.

Not only did he lack any sense of deference or humility, but he also showed a blatant disregard for basic politeness, as if they were equals.

Louis, standing discreetly behind Baron Brignais, silently shook his head.

He had encountered many such individuals before, and their fate had always been the same—either handed over to the police by the Savoie Mob or gravely wounded in a violent gunfight, losing their capabilities in the process. They had no choice but to become subservient, like dogs wagging their tails, in exchange for the gang's protection. Some met their demise due to various reasons, their bodies cast into the dark recesses of the underground world or packed into wooden barrels filled with stones and thrown into the depths of the Srenzo River.

“Good evening, Baron,” Lumian greeted with a disarming smile.

Baron Brignais betrayed no sign of anger on his face. He leisurely took a puff from his mahogany-colored pipe and casually inquired, “Where have you been this afternoon?”

“Underground,” Lumian responded, resembling the corpse that had imbibed the Prophecy Concoction. He answered the other party's questions without any elaboration.

If “Little Minx” Jenna and “Red Boots” Franca concealed the fact that he had dispatched the pervert and saved the former, his response would have been a display of utmost candor.

Baron Brignais appeared momentarily taken aback but refrained from further probing. As he rubbed the mahogany pipe in his hand, he calmly stated, “I have a task for you.”

Without waiting for Lumian to inquire, he explained with a smile, “I hold great expectations for you. I believe you can become a crucial member of our Savoie Mob, entrusted with significant matters.

“However, my favorable opinion alone is insufficient. You must demonstrate strength that surpasses most and make contributions that garner their recognition.”

A carrot dangling before a donkey? Lumian scoffed inwardly.

Outwardly, he deliberately narrowed his eyes.

“And what might this be about?”

Baron Brignais set aside his mahogany pipe, took a sip of his coffee, and adopted a soothing tone as he spoke,

“Assault any prominent member of the Poison Spur Mob. It would be best if you inflict severe injuries. Killing them outright works too.”

Lumian chuckled.

“Just two days ago, you cautioned me against causing a commotion and provoking an all-out conflict between the Poison Spur Mob and us.

“Aren't you concerned that such actions might transpire, ultimately leading to you becoming a target of the police headquarters?”

Although he had intended to lie in wait for the Poison Spur Mob's “Hammer” Ait, Lumian refused to be treated as a fool by Baron Brignais.

“You are far more intelligent than those who surround me.

“For the past two days, I've been closely observing the Poison Spur Mob's reactions, and it seems they have no immediate plans for revenge against you.

“What does that imply?”

“It means they're terrified of our Savoie Mob,” Lumian replied with a jest.

It was, of course, a jest. If the Poison Spur Mob feared the Savoie Mob, they would never have grown to become the second-largest mob in Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman.

Baron Brignais shook his head.

“In the past, they would have undoubtedly retaliated, exacting a higher toll than just medical expenses from our Savoie Mob.

“Moreover, after Margot's demise, they merely put on a show on the surface. In reality, they took no actions that would attract the police's attention. It seemed they were searching for the true assassin amidst the chaos.

“These recurring anomalies lead me to believe that the Poison Spur Mob is preparing for something significant—something very, very important. That's why they remain patient and restrained.

“I can't be certain whether their forthcoming actions will impact our Savoie Mob, but we cannot idly wait for answers.”

At least you're astute... Lumian grudgingly commended Baron Brignais within his thoughts.

With a smile, Lumian posed a question, “Are you suggesting that I eliminate their key members and observe their reactions?”

“If they endure it without retaliation, it signifies a considerably grave problem. We would need to instigate a full-blown conflict and compel them to expose the issue, wouldn't we?”

Baron Brignais chuckled.

“I enjoy conversing with clever individuals.

“So, are you willing to undertake this task?”

Though his tone appeared inquisitive, his posture, gaze, and actions left no doubt that it was an order.

Should Lumian refuse, the Savoie Mob would withdraw its protection.

Lumian chuckled.

“I require information on all the significant members of the Poison Spur Mob—names, appearances, capabilities, distinguishing traits, and whether they have immediate family or spouses...”

Louis, who stood behind Baron Brignais, was taken aback.

Why is he asking about the family members of the Poison Spur Mob leaders? Is he planning to use them?

Among Trier's mobs, an unspoken rule prevailed—one that everyone abided by unless it was an exceptional circumstance: never target family members who weren't involved in the mob.

Most individuals had parents, spouses, and children. If they were to abandon all moral boundaries and kill without hesitation, none would be spared. Everyone would be in jeopardy.

Secondly, dealing with the families of low-ranking mobsters held no value. However, at Baron Brignais's level, his family remained confidential, known to only a select few. Furthermore, they resided outside Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman.

Thirdly, those who held a certain status within the mob could be deemed ruthless. Threatening them with their families would only ignite their fury.

Fourthly, the annihilation of a family would inevitably make headlines, angering the higher-ups at the police headquarters and triggering a severe crackdown.

Thus, it was only in the process of eliminating a faction that they would confront the family of an enemy leader, avoiding the sowing of seeds of animosity and serving as a deterrent to other mobs.

What was Ciel's intention inquiring about the immediate family and wife of a crucial member of the Poison Spur Mob?

Baron Brignais gazed at Lumian for a few moments before a slow smile crept across his face.

“The boss of the Poison Spur Mob is Roger, known as Black Scorpion. He resides at 126 Avenue du Marché. I'm uncertain if he has a wife or immediate family. Even if he does, they aren't in the market district. They might not even be in Trier.

“He possesses sinister spells and magical powers. Even I wouldn't dare to confront him.”

Baron Brignais seized the opportunity to caution Lumian about the formidable strength of “Black Scorpion” Roger. It was wise to avoid any designs against him, for death would be the only outcome.

Sinister spells... A Beyonder focused on spellcasting? Considering Roger's ability to subdue Margot, he must be at least a Sequence 7. He might even possess a mystical artifact or Beyonder weapon... If Beyonders of this caliber lack robust bodies or special life-preserving abilities, they may resort to traps, close-range assassinations, and other methods. If their bodies aren't weak and they excel in close combat, or if they possess a substitution spell like Leah's paper figurine, I'll have hardly any chance of victory. Unless I employ the Luck Enhancement Spell to prearrange his misfortune and make him sufficiently unlucky... Lumian's thoughts raced like lightning, fleeting as they disappeared.



He nodded and inquired, "What about the others?"

Baron Brignais took a leisurely puff on his pipe before responding, "The Poison Spur Mob once had four powerful and significant members who were slightly inferior to us in the market district. However, after Margot's demise at your hands, his replacement, Wilson, is quite feeble. Their overall strength has greatly diminished.

"Roger's deputy, 'Baldy' Harman, is one of them. Initially, he and Roger arrived in the market district, establishing the Salle de Gristmill and gradually recruiting a group of individuals to form the Poison Spur Mob.

"He's highly skilled in combat, on par with Margot in that regard. Additionally, he possesses peculiar abilities. For instance, he can withstand a blade and only suffer minor injuries. At times, he exhibits sudden bursts of violence, as if under the influence of some drug. He can instill fear in others. Oh, and he wields a knife coated with poison.

"He's exceedingly cruel. He doesn't have a family or a mistress, but he takes a keen interest in women. He often dallies with street girls under the Poison Spur Mob.

"His usual residence is 'Black Scorpion' Roger's house. When he seeks the company of a woman, he opts for a relatively clean motel or hotel within the market district."

Lumian listened attentively, gradually formulating a plan.

There's a highly effective trap for 'Baldy' Harman.

Regardless of how Harman acquires such formidable defenses that only result in minor injuries after being slashed, it suggests a high probability that he's willing to trade injuries for victory. He relies heavily on his strengths in this aspect.

If that's the case, I can provide him an opportunity. However, Fallen Mercury will be the one to inflict those minor injuries upon him.

Even minor wounds can bleed!

Baron Brignais continued, "Most of the dancers under the Poison Spur Mob are under the supervision of Castina from Feynapotter. She was abducted to Trier and later became 'Black Scorpion' Roger's mistress.

"'Short-legged Candlestick' was her nickname back when she worked as a dancer, owing to her relatively petite stature."

Lumian envisioned a compact candlestick and formed a rough image of Castina in his mind.

"Castina doesn't engage in frequent fights, but she exhibits remarkable combat skills when she does. She's cold and merciless when dealing with disobedient dancers. Perhaps she's forgotten the hardships she endured," Baron Brignais remarked with a touch of gentlemanly courtesy. "She resides in an apartment at 19 Rue du Rossignol. We're unsure of the specific floor or room she occupies. She often frequents Roger's house."

What right do you have to speak of her like that? Why don't we discuss the person who became a singer at Salle de Bal Brise after her father was forced to die due to a debt? Lumian never believed that mobsters possessed a true conscience.

No matter the camaraderie, loyalty, or care they exhibited toward their peers, they were merely wildflowers adorned with mud. They essentially sought out victims among the dancers, street girls, ordinary individuals persecuted by loan sharks, and the peddlers they extorted.

Brignais proceeded to introduce the final leader of the Poison Spur Mob.

“‘Hammer’ Ait was originally a member of our Savoie Mob. He possessed courage, intellect, and a sturdy physique. I held him in high regard and planned to recommend him to the boss. However, he betrayed us and joined the Poison Spur Mob. He swiftly acquired Beyonder powers.

“I suspect he consumed a potion from the Warrior pathway and has already reached Sequence 8. His towering height, nearly 1.9 meters, and his conduct during conflicts lead me to this deduction.

“‘Hammer’ describes his fists, which possess the hardness and force of iron hammers. He typically fights unarmed, but he’s also adept with a revolver and a dirk.

“He resides at 25 Rue des Pavés, adjacent to Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman. There is a sizable contingent of Poison Spur Mob members in that area.”

Pugilist? Will Beyonder characteristics manifest upon his demise? Lumian nodded and queried Baron Brignais,

“I also require their approximate travel patterns. Additionally, provide me with a revolver, an ample supply of bullets, and a portable weapon. A dirk, dagger, bayonet, or axe will suffice.”

“No problem. I’ll have Louis deliver them to you tomorrow morning.” Baron Brignais nodded with satisfaction.

After observing Ciel depart from the café, Louis lowered his voice and inquired, “Baron, are we truly going to let him confront the leaders of the Poison Spur Mob?”

Baron Brignais chuckled.

“Didn’t you hear my explanation earlier? I didn’t deceive him about this.

“However, the leaders of the Poison Spur Mob are not easily dealt with. Whether he struggles and requires our aid and protection afterward, or if he fails and finds himself on the brink of death, we can crush his arrogance and make him obedient.”

## Chapter 165 Meeting Jenna Again

Louis exclaimed in surprise, “What if Ciel fails and gets done in by the Poison Spur Mob?”

Baron Brignais chuckled and replied, “When has our Savoie Mob ever kept all its members?”

On the way back to Auberge du Coq Doré, Lumian found himself in quite a good mood.

Initially, he had intended to apprehend a significant member of the Poison Spur Mob, probing into their source of power and their affiliation with the wicked deity Madame Pualis worshiped. But now, the Savoie Mob had assigned him a similar task. It aligned perfectly with his desires.

This way, he not only swiftly gained detailed information about multiple targets, saving valuable time, but he could also fully utilize the Savoie Mob’s resources, such as weaponry, manpower, and connections.

A moment ago, Lumian contemplated requesting explosives from Baron Brignais, mulling over the possibility of setting a trap to blow up one of the leaders of the Poison Spur Mob.

In the end, he decided against it. Firstly, he felt it was too brazen and would attract unwanted attention from the police. Secondly, being a wanted criminal, he couldn't afford to be investigated. Thirdly, if he obliterated his target entirely, how could he gather any information?

Of course, he could employ the Summoning Dance and the wall of spirituality to allow the deceased spirit to cling to him and enhance the memories that left the deepest imprints. However, this method was entirely unpredictable. Who knew if those individuals' minds would be as deranged as the previous pervert's? Moreover, each Summoning Dance could only amplify a single memory. If luck wasn't on his side, it could take a significant amount of time to find useful information. This contradicted his intention of swiftly departing from the scene of the assassination.

Initially, Lumian planned to deal with "Hammer" Ait, but upon hearing Baron Brignais's description, he considered "Baldy" Harman as a viable candidate as well.

Compared to Ait, Harman had notable "weaknesses" that Hunters could exploit to set traps!

His power granted him exceptional body resilience. On numerous occasions, he sustained only minor injuries despite being slashed with knives.

Lumian recalled Aurore's words: "Those skilled in swimming are prone to drowning."

In Harman's case, one could interpret it as, "Those adept at blocking weapons with their bodies are more susceptible to perishing by weapons." As for Lumian, he possessed Fallen Mercury, the Cursed Blade.

Furthermore, in comparison to "Hammer" Ait, who frequently traveled with a large entourage and resided within the Poison Spur Mob's settlement, "Baldy" Harman ventured out alone occasionally, seeking street girls and dancers. Consequently, he proved to be a simpler target for assassination. Moreover, he was closer to the core power of the Poison Spur Mob and held more secrets.

However, the conundrum arose. If Lumian were to set a trap and employ Fallen Mercury to deal with "Baldy" Harman, capturing him alive and extracting information would be impossible.

If Lumian could overpower "Baldy" Harman after stabbing him and dragging him to a secluded corner in Underground Trier, why bother stabbing him initially?

If he couldn't, his only recourse would be to stab the enemy and allow him to flee. Alternatively, after his escape, Lumian could await the intervention of the Montsouris ghost to "assist" in the target's demise.

Whether this would implicate the target's family wasn't his concern.

Hence, the pursuit of "Baldy" Harman and "Hammer" Ait presented their respective pros and cons. Lumian was not yet able to reach a decision.

He intended to contemplate his target selection after receiving more detailed information, weapons, and ammunition from Baron Brignais the following morning.

"What's all this?" Lumian inquired curiously as he traversed the lobby.

Weren't these the same elderly folks peddling counterfeit street maîtresse d'atelier photos at Suhit steam locomotive station? Why were they bringing back such a sizable bag?

Ruhr ceased pulling at the cloth bag, wiping the sweat from his forehead. He forced a smile and replied, "Don't you know, Monsieur Ciel? We moonlight as scavengers by night. We salvage discarded items that might still hold value."

Informed by Charlie's "advertisement," the couple was aware of Ciel's newfound leadership role in the Savoie Mob. Consequently, they saw no issue with Ciel seeking answers from them since Auberge du Coq Doré was his turf.

From their perspective, as the guardian of Auberge du Coq Doré, Monsieur Ciel needed to stay informed about the establishment to prevent any mishaps.

Juggling two occupations, one of which involves deception... It certainly reeks of all sorts of rubbish... Lumian pinched his nose and silently muttered. He pondered and asked thoughtfully, "Do you hoard all this trash in your room?"

Ruhr wore an ingratiating smile and confirmed, "Indeed. We visit the waste disposal site every few days. People drop off various items there. Heh heh, while scavengers are filthy, without us, Trier would be overwhelmed by foul odors. Every nook and cranny would be brimming with refuse."

In Trier, scavengers served as supplementary cleaners.

No wonder there's a stench in the room. No wonder you perpetually reek and forgo bathing... As Lumian ascended the stairs at a leisurely pace, he stole a glance at the wrinkled faces and slightly stooped postures of Ruhr and Michel. He casually inquired, "You're not young anymore. Why do you still toil so diligently for money?"

Ruhr and Michel were taken aback, their smiles faltering subtly.

After a brief pause, Ruhr mustered a pained and helpless smile.

"It is precisely because we are old that we must labor so strenuously.

"We arrived in Trier when we were very young and took up various occupations. We had a child, but he did not survive to adulthood. The monthly wages we received merely sustained our survival. As our health began to decline and our strength waned, fear gripped us. We were uncertain of what the future held.

"What if we grow too old to engage in our usual work someday? What would we do? Deplete our meager savings within a few months and rely on the charitable acts of the Church and the government to eke out a meager existence until we perish from hunger?

"I-I do not wish for such a fate..."

Lumian was suddenly reminded of something his sister had once uttered. "Intis is exceedingly harsh now. There is no protection for hardworking individuals in their twilight years."

Stirred by his thoughts, Ruhr continued, "Thankfully, our appetites have diminished with age. We don't eat or sleep much. That leaves us with more time to earn money. We don't have to worry about anything else. We can save most of what we earn.

"In the coming years, we should be able to enjoy a few more good ones by relying on our savings..."

"Heh heh, truth be told, compared to most people, we're considered fortunate. None of them made it to our age."

Madame Michel, standing beside him, wore a wistful expression.

“Once we've saved enough, we'll return to Aurmir and purchase a plot of land to cultivate grapes. Even if we lack the strength in the future, we can hire assistance. We don't have extravagant expenses anyway.”

Aurmir stood as the provincial capital of Champagne Province, renowned as the foremost hub of wine production in the Northern Continent.

Silently, Lumian nodded as he observed the elderly couple laboriously hauling the bag of trash upstairs.

After a brief respite, he put on simple makeup and changed his attire. Clad in a linen shirt, brown overalls, loafers, and a dark bowler hat, he made his way straight to Salle de Gristmill.

Since “Hammer” Ait remained one of his targets, he needed to personally observe him.

It was the late hours of the night, and Salle de Gristmill buzzed with activity. Amid the pulsating music, men and women gyrated on the dance floor, releasing their frustrations.

Concerned about being recognized by the Poison Spur Mob, Lumian approached the bar and ordered a glass of rye beer before making his way to the dance floor. As he swayed to the rhythm, he surveyed his surroundings.

Before long, he spotted “Little Minx” Jenna appearing on the raised wooden platform in front of him.

She wore a similar outfit to the one she had donned in the afternoon, a short white blouse and a flouncy skirt, showcasing her fair chest.

This time, she sported a mole on the bridge of her nose.

It signified audacity.

Impressive mental strength she possesses. Despite the afternoon's events, she's back at work in the evening... Lumian couldn't help but marvel.

In his opinion, since Jenna was “Red Boots” Franca's lover, there was no need for her to be so committed.

The rhythmic drumbeats halted, and all eyes on the dance floor turned to Jenna, panting.

Jenna began with a high-pitched tone.

“Ernest, stay away from my wife and pipe!”

Laughter erupted from the crowd as if a collective realization had struck them.

In sync with the cheerful and bawdy singing, they swayed their bodies gently.

As Jenna sang, she executed high kicks, shifting her position and winking at the audience from different angles, even performing an exaggerated split.

During this display, her gaze briefly crossed paths with Lumian. She appeared momentarily stunned before returning to her normal demeanor.

Once she finished her song, the intense drumbeats resumed. Jenna wasted no time resting. She leaped onto the dance floor, navigating through the sudden eruption of cheers, whistles, and men vying for proximity. She approached Lumian and shouted with a playful smile, “Handsome lion, dance!”

In Intis, the lion was often used to describe alluring men due to their radiant mane, akin to the sun.

Lumian sensed that Jenna had something important to share. He set aside his beer and joined her on the dance floor, engaging in a lively dance with the Showy Diva, face-to-face.

Just as they were about to embrace, Jenna threw herself into Lumian's arms and whispered into his ear, “You're quite the talented dancer. By the way, I've discovered the identity of that pervert. His name is Hedsey. He used to reside in Room 504 at Auberge du Coq Doré.”

Charlie's room? The occupant of Room 504 who put up Susanna Mattise's portrait? Lumian was taken aback.

### Chapter 166 In Return

Lumian had always believed that the tenant, like Charlie, had been enchanted by Susanna Mattise in his dreams. His vitality had been gradually drained, until he met a sudden demise in the room. Monsieur Ive, the hotel owner, had secretly transported the lifeless body to a secluded spot in Underground Trier. Little did he expect that the tenant would transform into a pervert with Beyonder powers. He now roamed Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman, preying on attractive women.

Lumian was convinced that Hedsey's newfound abilities stemmed from a boon granted due to the absence of Beyonder characteristics after death. It was clear that these powers originated from the same source as Susanna Mattise and Monsieur Ive.

In essence, not long after Susanna Mattise's portrait was plastered, something extraordinary had occurred to Hedsey. He had become a devout follower of the Mother Tree of Desire and received two to three boons within a few short months. As a result, he had gained significant strength and mastery over various mystical techniques.

For Beyonders who progressed by consuming potions, such speed was unimaginable, unless they possessed profound understanding and were at a remarkably low level.

However, Hedsey's boons also came with a downside. The recipient would be influenced by the power and gradually deviate from their true self. In certain aspects, they would become increasingly extreme, often engaging in actions that seemed irrational to ordinary individuals and inviting disaster upon themselves.

Both Monsieur Ive's miserliness and Hedsey's insatiable lust for women fell into this category.

Lumian suspected that nearly all boons had similar repercussions to some extent. Over time, they would inexorably draw the recipient closer to the bestower and induce corresponding mutations.

The reason Lumian remained unaffected by the powers of the Dancer and Alms Monk was that they didn't directly come from the hidden entity known as Inevitability, but rather the corruption within his body that had been filtered through the seal. Additionally, Lumian had always maintained a vigilant stance in such matters. He not only refrained from altering his style and way of life to

exploit the traits of the Dancer and Alms Monk for greater control over his strength but at times even went against their influence.

Furthermore, Lumian would advance in Sequence and have a preliminary digestion before obtaining the corresponding boon. He sought to preserve the balance of power within his body.

Lowering his head, Lumian whispered to Jenna in a hushed voice, "How did you discover this?"

As Jenna swayed to the rhythm, she pursed her lips and replied, "It's quite evident that the pervert cannot exist without women. Kidnapping a woman every day and dragging her underground simply isn't feasible, or else he would have been apprehended long ago. Damn it, there must have been several victims. Do those incompetent black-skinned dogs even notice?"

"Then how does he usually solve his problem? Clearly, relying on himself isn't sufficient to satiate his desires. So, I enlisted Franca's help and inquired with the dancers and street girls from the Savoie Mob. I swiftly obtained an answer."

"How can that pervert, who deserves to be f\*cked by a donkey, possess such virility? He can perform multiple times a day!"

"Why doesn't he pursue those wealthy old ladies? Both parties would be satisfied!"

Jenna recounted her investigation with a sense of pride, showcasing her intellect.

Throughout the afternoon, she had been brooding over Lumian's earlier prank, which had made her appear foolish.

Before embracing the beliefs of the Mother Tree of Desire and receiving the boon, Hedsey was a regular visitor to Rue de la Muraille, Rue de Breda, and Rue du Rossignol. However, after obtaining the boon, his mind became consumed with thoughts of women... Lumian couldn't help but acknowledge that Jenna occasionally demonstrated some intelligence.

With that in mind, Lumian decided to share some information.

"That abnormal desire must be a result of his Beyonder powers' influence."

"Beyonder powers..." Jenna glanced up at Lumian.

She had expected him to feign ignorance, just as they did in Underground Trier, where neither side openly acknowledged Hedsey's displayed Beyonder powers. To her surprise, he spoke candidly.

After a brief pause, Jenna, who was dancing closely with Lumian, whispered in confusion, "Why do Beyonder powers make him so perverse?"

Lumian smirked once again. "It's an abnormal Beyonder power."

"Do you think I can't tell that it's abnormal?" Jenna grew infuriated once more.

Lumian chuckled.

"As for why it's abnormal, go back and ask Franca. If Franca doesn't know either, have her inquire with the Boss."

He shared this information with Jenna because he was concerned that there might be more to the issues surrounding Monsieur Ive, Susanna Mattise, Hedsey, and the others.

If the official Beyonders failed to uncover the truth, his only hope lay with Mr. K's finger and the Beyonders associated with the Savoie Mob.

Jenna snorted and dropped the matter. She refocused on dancing with Lumian.

As the music neared its end, she suddenly reached out and touched Lumian's chest.

“Haha, nice bod!” Jenna grinned, then retreated, heading towards the half-height wooden platform in front of the dance floor.

It seemed as though she had finally exacted her revenge for what had transpired underground. She was filled with elation.

Lumian scoffed and left the dance floor, once again picking up his glass of rye beer.

As he listened to the music, he swayed his body gently, all the while observing the situation within Salle de Gristmill.

As Lumian surveyed the area, his attention was drawn to a group of mobsters congregating near the stage. They wore a mishmash of outfits, surrounding a towering man who stood at a staggering height of nearly 1.9 meters.

The burly man bore a striking resemblance to “Giant” Simon. His black shirt and formal attire emphasized his bulging muscles, but the dark-blue canvas pants and strapless black leather boots seemed out of place, creating a peculiar ensemble.

With his tousled brown hair and slightly set-apart brown eyes, his ordinary facial features were complemented by a chiseled jawline. His hands and legs were longer than those of an average person.

“Hammer” Ait... Lumian averted his gaze, suspecting that this man was one of his targets.

In Trier, there weren't many individuals towering at nearly 1.9 meters

Lumian wasn't concerned about “Hammer” Ait and his subordinates recognizing him from this distance. The ballroom was dimly lit, with only the soft glow of gas wall lamps and a chandelier above, providing enough illumination for dancing and discreet conversations. Unless someone was intimately familiar with Lumian or had just seen him, they wouldn't be able to identify him.

Furthermore, Lumian had taken precautions to disguise himself. He hadn't anticipated Jenna recognizing him at first glance either.

After Jenna finished singing another song, “Hammer” Ait led his subordinates off the dance floor and ascended to the second floor.

Lumian continued his observations when he suddenly spotted a familiar figure entering the room.

It was Monsieur Ive, the proprietor of Auberge du Coq Doré, his attire slightly faded from washing.

His anxious and worried expression was evident as his blue eyes scanned the surroundings.

Is he searching for Hedsey? The pervert didn't return after leaving in the afternoon. They suspect something happened to him, so they're scouring the dance halls, seeking clues with the street girls? Lumian withdrew his gaze thoughtfully and shifted his attention back to the dancers on the floor.



Based on the characteristics exhibited by Hedsey's Spirit Body, Lumian sensed that Monsieur Ive was much weaker in comparison. He likely possessed the power of a Sequence 9 boon, focused on greed, possibly with elements of appetite.

As for Hedsey, he was likely on the level of Sequence 8, with a slim chance of being a Sequence 7. Lumian leaned more towards the former, as the few Sequence 7 individuals he had encountered before were formidable adversaries, difficult to overcome even with preparations and traps.

Of course, had Lumian not carefully observed and realized that Hedsey had the ability to trigger others' desires, he might have been swiftly dealt with.

In that environment, without Jenna's presence, Lumian would have relied on his own strength to resist the influence and not completely forget the existence of the enemy. With Showy Diva, it was challenging for him to restrain himself. He had to rely on pain to awaken his senses.

From the corner of his eye, Lumian observed Monsieur Ive engaging in conversation with the part-time street girl dancers. The way they scolded him, wearing expressions of disdain, struck Lumian as amusing.

Is he pretending to negotiate a price in order to gather information about Hedsey's whereabouts?

In the end, he's just too stingy, always bargaining down the other party's offer by half or more, resulting in their scolding?

Heh heh, Charlie was worried that Monsieur Ive, an old widower, wouldn't be willing to spend money on a licensed prostitute and risk contracting a disease. It seems he's overthinking it.

Monsieur Ive can't even bring himself to spend money on an unlicensed street girl!

The negative effects of a boon are truly potent...

Hmm, if there are women in that group who possess the same boons as Hedsey and are on the same level, they should be in a constant state of hunger and thirst. Monsieur Ive wouldn't need to seek out another street girl. Heh heh, he would only end up despising himself for being a man. He would be on the verge of being drained dry, with his desires forcibly aroused.

The best disguises for those women would be dancers and street girls?

Something doesn't add up. If there really were such women, Hedsey wouldn't need to come out and harm others... Could it be that everyone at this level has advanced or died, with no replacements? Or is there an imbalance in the number of men and women? Is Hedsey the one being ostracized?

As Lumian contemplated these thoughts, the band struck up another lively dance tune.

After finishing her song, Jenna leaped off the half-height wooden stage once again and approached Lumian, inviting him to dance.

This elicited boos from the surrounding crowd.

Knowing that Jenna had something else to say, Lumian deliberately maneuvered to provoke those who were jeering.

He stepped onto the dance floor, drew closer to Jenna, and began swaying his hips.

Jenna looked up at him, smiling, and asked, "What brings a Savoie mobster like you to the Salle de Gristmill?"

Lumian clicked his tongue and chuckled.

“Don't you think I'm fond of you? Of course, I'm here to listen to your singing.”

Jenna scoffed.

“Your target is 'Hammer' Ait, isn't it? You want to repeat what happened with Margot?”

“You're quite clever,” Lumian praised in a taunting tone.

Jenna smirked confidently. “I can assist you and provide important information.”

Lumian suppressed his nonchalance and asked thoughtfully, “What do you desire in return?”

Jenna snorted and cursed, “Are you f\*cking underestimating me?”

“Although I didn't thank you this afternoon, I won't forget that you saved me. Coincidentally, I'm familiar with all the dance halls in the market district. Moreover, I just had a chat with Ait about some matters after the performance. I should be able to help you.”

Without waiting for Lumian's response, she gritted her teeth and continued, “'Hammer' resides in the innermost room on the second floor, towards Auberge du Coq Doré. He has ten thugs by his side. Four stationed at the door—two inside and two outside. Two by the window, two near the sofa, and two always behind him. They're all armed.

“The security wasn't this tight before, and there weren't as many people. It's all because of what you did to Margot.

“That room has an attached washroom. It's currently unoccupied. If the window is fully opened, it can just about accommodate a person.

“From the ventilation pipe in the ballroom kitchen, you can climb up to the second floor and bypass the guards stationed at the stairs. Then, enter the adjacent room and leap from the windowsill onto a narrow ledge outside the washroom. It requires considerable skill to pull off successfully.”

## Chapter 167 Convergence

Upon hearing Jenna's account, Lumian instinctively twirled and spun, his surprise evident as he asked, “How do you know all this?”

It made sense that Jenna would have a basic understanding of the room layout and the thugs' positions after venturing to the second-floor room and conferring with “Hammer” Ait. However, how did she know about the ventilation pipe in the ballroom kitchen leading to the second floor? Or jumping from the neighboring windowsill to the washroom? And what about the ledge on the outer wall of that specific room? Were these details within the grasp of an underground singer, known for her bawdy songs and exaggerated performances?

She shouldn't possess such knowledge!

Jenna, her face adorned with black eye shadow and a fake mole, sported a smug expression.

“Don't fret about how I know. I avoid seeing what I shouldn't, hearing what I shouldn't, and asking questions I shouldn't,” she retorted, cleverly turning Lumian's words back on him.

This brought her considerable satisfaction.

Only those planning an assassination or devising an escape in dire circumstances would pay attention to such particulars and observe with a purpose... Which category does Jenna fall into? Her powers of observation in this environment are nearly on par with a Hunter's. Sequences leaning toward assassination required gathering environmental information. Assassination... Lumian's mind raced, concocting a plan to bluff Jenna.

Grinning mischievously, he uttered, "So you're an Assassin."

He stressed the word "Assassin."

Jenna's expression changed, her smile freezing.

"How did you figure it out?" she blurted out, shocked.

"By using my brain," Lumian replied, his smile unwavering.

There were still a few Sequences that excelled at environmental observation. Lumian had taken a bold guess, considering Jenna as an Assassin. He recalled Ryan and his companions mentioning that Demoness was a relatively common pathway in the central and northern regions of Intis, especially Trier. In any case, he had nothing to lose if he was wrong.

Meanwhile, Lumian pondered to himself, Not long after arriving in Trier, I encountered an Assassin and came to her aid. Can this be seen as a manifestation of the convergence of Beyonder characteristics?

Jenna can't have reached Sequence 7; she isn't a Witch. Otherwise, even if weakened by the sedative on the paper, she could have effortlessly overpowered Hedsey with her mystical abilities. The term Witch clearly indicates proficiency in spells and curses, as Aurore's notebook had mentioned.

She is unlikely to be a Sequence 8 Instigator. How could an Instigator be fooled by me repeatedly?

But it isn't out of the question. Perhaps Jenna had been more foolish in the past and relied on the Instigator path to enhance her intelligence? Furthermore, her willingness to provide information on "Hammer" Ait could be interpreted as a form of instigation.

Heh heh, Jenna is a woman, so there's no need to worry about her gender changing after consuming the Witch potion.

Where had Jenna obtained the potion? Had Franca given it to her? Could Franca also be a Beyonder following the Demoness pathway?

If Franca is only a Sequence 8, that would be fine. But what if she were a Sequence 7 Witch? Who knows if Franca had been male or female before? Well, her behavior towards women is certainly peculiar. She is in a romantic relationship with Jenna. Hmm...

Jenna quietly contemplated her recent words, but she didn't uncover any information that might have revealed her own Sequence.

"Although you can fight, I believe there's a high chance you'll be killed on the spot if you engage him in a place like the washroom, which isn't spacious enough."

"Madame, are you persuading me or taunting me? It seems you still possess some potential as an Instigator," Lumian candidly voiced his thoughts, not holding back his criticisms.

He realized that Franca knew “Hammer” Ait better than Baron Brignais. She had mentioned a crucial point that the latter had omitted.

Setting aside the possibility that Franca had a personal grudge against “Hammer” Ait, Franca either had a formidable background or had earned the trust of the boss of the Savoie Mob, gaining access to more mysticism knowledge and Sequence information than Baron Brignais.

Jenna was taken aback. “You know about Instigators?”

Is this still a country bumpkin from the countryside? How does he possess such extensive knowledge about the Beyonder pathways?

Franca had mentioned that he's wanted by the authorities. It seemed he had been involved in a Beyonder incident?

“I know more than you think,” Lumian replied, smiling.

As he spoke, he suddenly recalled a title that had recently belonged to him: “Mysticism Illiterate.”

Lumian swiftly pushed aside his melancholy and earnestly considered Jenna's warning.

Indeed, while Hunters were also skilled in combat and killing as Sequences, if traps and abilities like Provocation were excluded, they still couldn't match the prowess of Pugilists in close combat. Especially in a confined and cramped environment, they couldn't employ their combat intelligence effectively. It would be difficult for them to achieve the feat of the weak defeating the strong.

Taking into account the modifications to his Dancer abilities and the utilization of various unorthodox tactics, Lumian felt he could just about hold his ground. He wouldn't fail immediately. If he wanted to eliminate “Hammer” Ait, he could only rely on Fallen Mercury and escape after a successful strike.

But what set this apart from killing “Baldy” Harman? There was no need to factor in the presence of ten thugs and ten revolvers.

Lumian assessed his possessions to see if anything could be useful in such a battle.

Over 1,700 verl d'or... Fallen Mercury... Blood from the aquatic monster... Poisonous scales from the aquatic monster... A vial of the sedative that rendered Jenna powerless... A bottle of stimulating gas to counteract the effects of the sedative... A bottle of liquid with unknown properties... A dagger left behind by that pervert... A ritual silver dagger... Several white bandages...

As he contemplated, a plan gradually took shape.

As he swayed to the rhythm, he cast a sidelong glance at Jenna and posed his question.

“Is that washroom spacious?”

Jenna made confirmation. “No, it's not. Besides the bathtub, toilet, and sink, it can only accommodate four to five people.”

In other words, if Lumian and “Hammer” Ait engaged in close combat, there wouldn't be room for anyone else.

“Is there a curtain outside the bathtub?” Lumian inquired further.

“Yes,” Jenna pondered for a moment. “Do you have a gun with you? I believe it would be better to use a gun. It's safer and gives you a higher chance of success.”

“I don't,” Lumian replied, shaking his head.

Jenna sneered, “You intend to carry out the plan tonight with just that?”

She paused briefly before continuing, “If you truly wish to kill ‘Hammer’ Ait tonight, I can lend you my revolver.”

“You still have a revolver on you?” Lumian was surprised this time.

He hadn't suspected that Jenna had a concealed revolver.

The Showy Diva wore a short white blouse with a wide collar that allowed her bra to peek out. Her beige fluffy short skirt and black boots that didn't reach her knees added to her attire. Moreover, she kept raising her legs as she danced. It seemed impossible for her to have a gun holster strapped to her inner thigh.

Lumian speculated that the only possible place for her to hide the revolver was within her pair of boots.

Jenna assumed Ciel was questioning why she carried a revolver, so she responded with a disdainful sigh.

“I perform in dance halls in places like the market district. Do you think all those monsters are upstanding citizens? Do you think they won't act impulsively and try something on me? Those pieces of filth have twisted minds all day. When their thoughts are controlled by their desires, they won't consider that I have a connection with Franca and a good relationship with her. Damn it, if deterrence always worked, there wouldn't be so many criminals!”

While speaking, Jenna followed the rhythm of the drums and crouched down, searching inside her boots.

Swiftly standing up, she pressed herself against Lumian. Twisting her body, she slipped her hand into his naturally lowered and swaying palm.

Lumian immediately felt the cold metal texture and the solid wood.

Without missing a beat, Lumian withdrew his hand and discreetly tucked the gun into his pocket.

Afterward, Jenna continued, “I bought it with most of my savings when I first arrived in the market district, before meeting Franca. That blasted black market merchant even tried to bed me, but I kicked his shin, making him scream in pain.”

Carrying a gun for self-defense at all times... You're quite vigilant. Otherwise, those mobsters could have controlled you before meeting Franca. You might have even become a part-time dancer or a street girl... Lumian replied with a smile, “Well done!”

As the accompanying music reached its end, Jenna fell silent.

With the drumbeats fading away, Lumian observed Jenna as she walked toward the stage. He left the dance floor and returned to the outer circle.

Taking advantage of the opportunity to visit the washroom, he carefully examined and familiarized himself with the revolver Jenna had given him.

It was a compact revolver with a short barrel, ideal for concealed carry.

Its color was a dark iron-black, and the grip was crafted from walnut wood. It held a total of six bullets.

After tinkering with the revolver for a while, Lumian realized a predicament.

His shooting experience was lacking. Previously, he had primarily relied on the shotgun's wide spray of pellets.

Oh well. I don't expect to kill Hammer Ait with a single shot. Injuring and weakening him will suffice. At such close range, with my grip and some shooting experience, I can't miss by much...

In an environment like the washroom, there's only one opportunity for a shot. "Hammer" Ait won't provide me with a chance for a second shot... Lumian swiftly made up his mind.

Exiting the washroom, he headed toward the kitchen of the Salle de Gristmill, taking advantage of the absence of people in the vicinity.

#### Chapter 168 Prayer Target

As Lumian made his way, his nimbleness served him well in evading servers bustling with trays of food and busboys returning used utensils.

He pressed forward until he reached the kitchen, only to find it in complete disarray.

Stacks of unwashed utensils lay haphazardly in the sink, coated in layers of greasy oil. Two dishwashing maids stood by, tirelessly scrubbing away at the never-ending pile of dishes.

The stoves emitted fierce yellow flames, turning the small space into a sweltering inferno. Sweat poured down everyone's faces as they toiled away.

Three chefs, adorned in white aprons, each prepared their own dishes. They would occasionally taste their concoctions by dipping their fingers in the sauces or sampling a morsel, wiping their hands casually on their aprons before moving on to the next dish.

Once the chefs approved, the servers would whisk the plates away, oblivious to the fact that their thumbs often grazed the food and thick soups. They paid no mind to it whatsoever.

The kitchen helpers scurried around the chefs, chopping vegetables, handling fish, tidying up ingredients, taking out the trash, and fetching various seasonings and supplies. They never ceased their efforts, yet the kitchen remained in disarray. Vegetable leaves, fish scales, and fruit peels were strewn about, oily and scattered across the floor, near the stoves, and close to the sink.

The clamor of the chefs and kitchen helpers filled the air with shouts and curses, creating a chaotic symphony.

Lumian could easily mistake it for a battlefield if he closed his eyes and listened closely.

Taking advantage of the chaotic scene, Lumian deftly navigated through the busy crowd and reached the cabinet brimming with ingredients. Using partitions, handles, and the grayish-white gas and water pipes, he skillfully ascended to the ceiling and slipped into the ventilation shaft.

The overpowering smell of oil and smoke assailed Lumian's senses, nearly overwhelming him.

But with the tolerance of an Alms Monk toward extreme environments, he pushed himself forward, crawling through the ventilation shaft and occasionally climbing higher.

After about ten seconds, he poked his head out from above a second-floor washroom.

Ensuring the coast was clear, Lumian agilely leaped down and swiftly made his way to the door, carefully scanning both ends of the corridor in secrecy.

The area was eerily silent, with only two henchmen guarding the stairs, their focus solely on the first floor. They paid no mind to what lay behind them.

Relieved, Lumian let out a sigh and pinpointed his target. Crouching down, he leaped to the adjacent room.

Although the door was locked, Lumian encountered no obstacle he couldn't overcome. Utilizing a half-broken wire he had brought along, he managed to pry open the wooden door after a few attempts.

Just as Jenna had described, the washroom attached to "Hammer" Ait's room lacked a protruding window sill. It only had a decorative ledge, barely providing enough space to stand on its side.

Even for a Hunter, leaping from the window sill to the narrow ledge posed a significant challenge, demanding perfect balance.

Fortunately, Lumian possessed the extraordinary flexibility of a Dancer, almost surpassing human limits.

After careful observation, he jumped up and landed precisely on the ledge with his right foot. His left side wavered, threatening to tip him over.

Squatting down, he revealed only half of his head, peering silently into the room.

The washroom door stood ajar, and occasional mobsters passed by.

Lumian exercised patience, studying their movements until he discerned a pattern. Seizing the opportune gap when the washroom door was momentarily unattended, he skillfully pried open the window using Hedsey's dagger and clambered inside.

Maintaining composure and confidence, he swiftly closed the glass window before hurrying to the space beneath the bathtub, concealing himself with the undrawn curtains.

Lumian, having successfully infiltrated the premises, arranged his few essential items in easily accessible positions. He took a moment to double-check their locations, ensuring he wouldn't fumble in a state of panic.

Standing there motionless, he strained his ears to catch the activities in the adjacent room.

"Hammer" Ait occasionally inquired about their recent earnings to the dance hall manager, scolded his subordinates with anger, or engaged in flirtatious exchanges with the star dancer, accompanied by seemingly intimate gestures.

After a while, when the dance hall manager and the star dancer departed, Ait seemed to rise from his seat and began pacing slowly.

He addressed the mobsters in the room, saying, "In the following days, send out all your boys and have them 'visit' every individual within our territory. I want you to ensure that we know who can be elected as the market district's member of parliament in next week's election!"

Oh, so your mob is meddling in the parliamentary elections? Lumian felt a mixture of surprise and lack thereof.

The growth of Trier's mobs was impossible without some form of backing. They either maintained favorable relations with the police department and influential figures within it, enjoyed protection from powerful political figures, or acted as the black-gloved enforcers for influential merchants. The latter undoubtedly had connections to high-ranking government officials, upper echelons of the Churches, and military generals.

Lumian had never anticipated that the mastermind behind the Poison Spur Mob possessed the audacity to vie for a parliamentary seat. He had initially assumed their ambitions would extend no further than becoming the market district's police commissioner or a member of the Trier City Council.

Intis functioned as a parliamentary republic, where members of parliament represented various constituencies and formed the National Convention. This Convention held the authority to appoint the president, prime minister, who in turn appointed ministers—although their decisions required approval from the Convention.

The National Convention also possessed the power to legislate, declare war, and determine the government's budget. Each member of parliament held considerable influence and authority.

At present, the National Convention consisted of over 300 individuals, with one-tenth of them being former nobles. The Sauron family, once part of the royal lineage, served as their leaders. The remaining seats were allocated based on the economic status of different provinces and territories, particularly the prosperous Trier Greater Region.

Trier, whether in terms of population or economic prowess, stood unrivaled in Intis and the Greater Trier Region. It held nearly 40 seats in the National Convention.

These approximately 40 seats were distributed among 20 districts, accommodating as few as one member of parliament or as many as four to five. These representatives also held *ex officio* positions as councilors in the City Council.

The Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman, a relatively small constituency, possessed only one seat in the National Convention. The individual chosen to fill this seat would wield immense power and influence within the region.

Currently, the ruling National Party, the popular Enlightenment Party, and the Revolutionary Party, seeking to address existing flaws, were vigorously preparing for the upcoming National Convention elections.

The party that secured a simple majority in the Convention would become the new ruling party. Otherwise, they would have to negotiate, compromise, and form a coalition with another party.

In addition to the National Party, the Enlightenment Party, and the Revolutionary Party, Intis also had the Emperor Party (restorationists who advocated Roselle's rule) and the Carbonari. They voiced discontentment with the current system and sought to bring about change through force.

The mobsters replied one after another, assuring “Hammer” Ait that nothing would go awry.

However, they remained tight-lipped about which faction or candidate they supported, leaving Lumian feeling a sense of disappointment.



Tell me!

After briefing them on the election, “Hammer” Ait instructed his subordinates, saying, “Leave for a while. Return only when I summon you.”

What is his plan? Lumian's eavesdropping had taken him by surprise.

Soon enough, the mobsters vacated the room, leaving “Hammer” Ait alone.

Lumian refrained from taking immediate action. After careful analysis, he believed that the confrontation between him and Hammer Ait in the washroom would have a more targeted impact than engaging outside, even without resorting to the use of Fallen Mercury.

The room beyond fell into an eerie silence. Lumian strained his ears and managed to catch faint voices.

It seemed like “Hammer” Ait was muttering to himself, “Protector of Evil People... The Lady who Births Deities...”

The Lady who Births Deities? That sounds impressive... Is Ait praying to some secret entity? There are about four or five sentences, and it's more of a description? It deviates from the usual three-stanza template... Lumian made a rough guess at what “Hammer” Ait was up to.

As for whom he was praying to, Lumian couldn't even begin to speculate based on the fragmented description he barely heard.

It lay beyond the scope of his current knowledge in mysticism.

Lumian felt a vague sense of malevolence emanating from the room outside.

Indeed, it was as if the room itself had turned wicked.

Holding his breath, Lumian composed himself, refraining from listening to the turmoil outside.

After a while, the sinister atmosphere dissipated, and everything returned to normal.

Lumian let out a slow exhale, heating up his palm.

At that moment, “Hammer” Ait summoned his subordinates, who had previously left the room, to return.

Lumian continued to bide his time.

Seconds turned into minutes until finally, he heard the heaviest footsteps approaching the washroom.

They belonged to “Hammer” Ait. Lumian had already distinguished their sound.

Swiftly, he retrieved a metal canister marked with a symbol.

Unscrewing the cap, he inserted a thin, pre-kneaded paper ball into the bottle.

Seconds before the footsteps drew near the washroom, Lumian retrieved the paper ball and twisted the cap shut.

He then tore the paper ball in two and inserted each piece into his nostrils.

The stench, reminiscent of fermented excrement, assaulted Lumian's senses, nearly bringing him to tears. His right hand instinctively moved to remove the thin paper ball.

With great resolve and the endurance of an Alms Monk accustomed to extreme environments, Lumian exercised control. His expression contorted, and his muscles twitched ever so slightly as he stood there, retrieving another metal canister filled mostly with gas. He unscrewed its cap.

Clang!

“Hammer” Ait shut the washroom door and approached the toilet bowl.

The space now became partially enclosed. Only the gaps between the door and windows allowed a hint of fresh air to seep in.

Yes, a gruesome encounter awaits him... Lumian observed the fluctuations in his target's luck, silently tossing the open metal canister into the air, allowing the colorless and odorless gas within to disperse and fill the washroom.

This was the sedative concocted by the perverted Hedsey. Even catching a whiff of it at close range could severely weaken an Assassin's strength!

It was ideal for a confined, partially enclosed space like the washroom.

This was the trap Lumian had set for “Hammer” Ait!

Of course, it would take some time for the gas to spread throughout the washroom and take effect to a certain extent. After all, Lumian himself wasn't breathing it in at close proximity.

What Lumian needed to do next was to prevent “Hammer” Ait from leaving the washroom or allow anyone outside to open the door.

He placed the open metal canister by the edge of the bathtub and retrieved Jenna's revolver, aiming it at the toilet bowl through the curtain.

Chapter 169 Battle in the Room

The rush of water persisted, and Lumian grew anxious, fearing that “Hammer” Ait might sense danger. He needed to calculate the height just right before pulling the trigger.

Bang!

The bullet tore through the drapes, leaving behind searing scorch marks.

“Hammer” Ait's hair stood on end before any of this happened. He paid no mind to the fact that he was mid-stream and promptly collapsed to the side.

Yellowish liquid splattered in all directions. The bullet grazed Ait's arm, striking the wall and narrowly missing Lumian on the rebound.

Lumian's revolver flew from his grip after a missed shot. He seized the edges of the curtain, yanked it off, and used it to ensnare Ait.

Before Ait could recover from the agonizing cramps, darkness enveloped his vision, and he found himself wrapped in a cream-colored shower curtain.

Unfazed, he rolled and concealed himself beside the bathtub. Then, he grasped the shower curtain with both hands, using it as an improvised weapon.

With a soft whoosh, the curtain, now wrapped around Lumian's fist, veered off course, thwarting his attempt to strike Ait's head.

Ait seized the moment and rose, inadvertently tearing his pants in the process.

He swung his heavy fist at Lumian, hammer-like.

Lumian quickly raised his arm to shield himself, realizing that his opponent possessed exceptional strength—he couldn't withstand it.

Forced to retreat a step in order to regain his balance, Lumian found himself on the backfoot. Ait wasted no time, relentlessly bombarding him with a flurry of punches from both hands.

Leveraging his height, long arms, and superior strength, Ait employed straightforward punches akin to cannonballs, neglecting any fancy techniques.

It was only then that he could clearly discern the assailant's visage.

Golden hair tinged with black, bright and light-blue eyes, nostrils stuffed with bits of white paper—creating a peculiar sight.

Ciel? The same Ciel who killed Margot and gravely injured Wilson? Ait felt initial surprise, followed swiftly by delight.

He isn't that formidable. I can take him down completely!

The washroom proved confining, with Lumian enduring the putrid stench. He suffered two blows from the towering 1.9-meter giant before finding himself forced two steps back, cornered near the door.

At that moment, the mobsters outside heard the gunshots and hurriedly approached. One of them gripped the handle and pushed open the door.

Just as Ait's leg aimed for a low kick, Lumian's left leg suddenly swung back, forcefully striking the door.

With a resounding clang, the partially opened wooden door snapped shut again, narrowly missing the mobster's nose.

Realizing they couldn't breach the door for the time being, the mobsters drew their revolvers and aimed at the wooden barrier from various heights, but they dared not open fire.

Capitalizing on his kick against the rear door, Lumian contorted his body, evading Ait's straight punch and positioning himself beside his adversary.

Delivering a series of rapid strikes—punches, elbows, knees, and kicks—Lumian sought to disrupt the enemy's assault before they could fully unleash their power.

It resembled a Pugilist, the kind who habitually expelled force with grunts of “Heh!” and “Hah!”, but now capable of only a single “Heh!” Each time Ait tried to strike with force, Lumian took the initiative and forcefully blocked him.

After altering his combat strategy, Lumian managed to narrow the strength gap between them. Not only did he regain some control, but he also utilized his greater agility to shift his body and change positions.

Soon enough, the figure blocking the washroom entrance turned out to be Ait, his back against the door.

Worried that his subordinates might lack intelligence and open fire from outside, accidentally killing him, Ait quickly diverted his attention and shouted, “Do not fire!”

Despite Ciel utilizing his technique to bridge the gap, Ait remained unfazed. He exuded immense confidence.

As long as he acted in a normal manner, he was certain he could eliminate his opponent in the confined washroom environment. The only uncertainty was the duration it would take.

Nevertheless, Ait remained vigilant. He continued to unleash powerful punches and kicks, attempting to force Lumian toward the window, creating an opportunity for his subordinates to enter.

Fearing that Lumian possessed some kind of Beyonder power, Ait believed that using the threat of a revolver would expedite the process of dispatching his enemy.

Bam! Bam! Bam! Bam! Bam! Bam! Lumian faced the relentless onslaught of the Pugilist's full-powered attacks without showing any signs of surrender. However, he found it increasingly strenuous.

Throughout this ordeal, Ait's eyes darted to his surroundings, wary of potential traps or powerful allies lying in ambush.

His gaze swept across the edge of the bathtub and landed on an open metal canister.

What purpose does it serve? Before Ait could ponder further, Lumian's mocking smile appeared, accompanied by a curse as he struggled to block Ait's onslaught.

“Useless piece of junk! What are you waiting for? Those outside, come in and lend a hand!”

A buzzing anger surged within Ait.

He discarded all other concerns and launched an unusually ferocious attack.

Provocation!

Lumian had added Provocation to those two sentences!

Confronted with the raging “Hammer” Ait and his devastating blows, Lumian fought desperately to hold his ground. Occasionally, he relied on the flexibility of a Dancer to shift positions.

Unbeknownst to him, he was gradually being pushed toward the wall with the window.

This allowed the washroom door to open, but the mobsters outside hesitated, fearing they might collide with “Hammer” if they kicked it open. They cautiously pushed it inward, inch by inch.

In that moment, Lumian, nearly overcome by the putrid odor, keenly sensed Ait's waning strength and slower attacks.

The sedative took effect! Lumian swiftly dodged to the side, regaining his balance. He threw a powerful punch, channeling all the strength from his arm and waist, launching a counterattack.

Bang!

Ait's arm, which had blocked the blow, visibly trembled, and his eyes betrayed a mix of surprise and panic.

Why? Why have I grown so weak?

Why have my reflexes slowed?

As Lumian grasped the state of his opponent, he unleashed two consecutive straight punches, forcefully parting the enemy's arms.

Without hesitation, he closed the distance and adjusted his body slightly. With a swift motion, he drove his left elbow into Ait's chest.

Caught off guard, Ait failed to react in time, unable to dodge the strike. The elbow connected, cracking his sternum. His vision darkened, and he struggled to catch his breath.

Lumian didn't grant him a moment's respite. He smoothly shifted his body, allowing his poised right fist to collide with Ait's abdomen.

He hadn't harbored any lofty expectations of rendering Ait unconscious solely with the sedative. After all, the other party possessed the ability to resist the effects of certain Beyonder powers through sheer physical and mental fortitude, suggesting a high resistance to the sedative. Furthermore, despite the compactness and semi-enclosed nature of the washroom, with its bathtub, toilet bowl, and sink, the drug's potency would be greatly diminished.

Lumian aimed to exploit the drug's influence to weaken Ait's combat prowess, slowing his reactions and substantially reducing his strength.

In doing so, the tide of victory would tip towards him uncontrollably!

Pfft!

Ait, reeling from the blow to his abdomen, instinctively curled up, becoming shorter than Lumian.

Seizing the opportunity, Lumian raised his fists and swiftly hammered them behind Ait's ears.

Bang!

Amidst the cacophony, Ait's vision faded to black, and he slumped unconscious.

It was the combined effect of a potent strike and the sedative.

Lumian squatted down, using "Hammer" as a shield.

The mobsters had already held the washroom door open for several seconds, but with Ait obstructing Lumian from their view, they refrained from opening fire.

Now, they witnessed their towering boss, Hammer, being taken down by the assailant.

Lumian clasped Ait and offered a smirk to the group gathered at the door.

"Go ahead! Fire! Why aren't you firing?"

One of the mobsters caught sight of the assailant's distinctive blonde and black hair, coupled with his rather handsome face, and suddenly pieced together a series of connections.

"Ciel? You're Ciel?" he exclaimed, his surprise evident.

The same Ciel who killed Boss Margot and threw Boss Wilson off the fourth floor?

Ciel of the Savoie Mob?

He's back at it?

Lumian keenly sensed the mobsters' profound fear. He grinned and gave Ait's shoulder a friendly pat, brushing off the dust.

Then, he took hold of Ait and proceeded towards the washroom door, one step at a time.

Simultaneously, he curled his lips into a smile.

“You've got two options. One, leave this room now and seek help from your Poison Spur Mob boss. Two, meet your demise here, one by one, at my hands.”

As he spoke, he advanced, a cold gaze sweeping across the faces of each mobster, as if contemplating the best way to eliminate them.

The mobsters couldn't help but tremble, as a similar thought crossed their minds: Regardless, Boss Hammer has been apprehended. If we open fire, we'll only harm him. It might be wiser to seek help from the boss!

“Well?” Lumian snorted, urging them to decide.

With a swift swoosh, the first mobster turned on his heels and fled the room. The others followed suit, abandoning any notion of confrontation.

When no one remained, Lumian let out a silent sigh of relief.

If those men had truly steeled themselves, their hearts unswayed by fear, the confined space of the washroom and their ten firearms would have posed a lethal threat.

Of course, Ait could forget about survival as well.

They have no more than four minutes to reach Avenue du Marché from here... I must conclude the interrogation before “Black Scorpion” Roger and his comrades depart, granting me ample time to escape the scene and locate Baron Brignais at Salle de Bal Brise... Just four minutes... As Lumian assessed the current situation, he squatted down and propped Ait against the washroom's door panel.

Then, he dislocated his captive's shoulder joints and bound his legs together using a shower curtain. Opening the window, he allowed the breeze to circulate from both sides.

With these tasks completed, Lumian removed the paper balls from his own nose, retrieved the metal canister containing the pungent gas, and held it to Ait's nostrils.

Achoo!

Ait sneezed, his eyes fluttering open.

Lumian promptly stowed away the metal canister, capping it, ensuring the other party remained in a weakened state.

“What do you want?” Ait asked, fear and anxiety evident in his eyes as he recognized the person before him.

## Chapter 170 Nightstalkers

Lumian brandished Hedsey's dagger, a sly grin forming on his face.

“I've got a question for you.”

“You could've come straight to me. No need for all this,” Ait instinctively tried to stall for time.

With a quick glance, he scanned the room from the corner of his eye, but there were no lifeless bodies to be found.

Based on his combat with Ciel, Ait knew it was impossible for the other party to eliminate ten armed thugs without a single one escaping.

In fact, even Ait himself wouldn't dare to face the encirclement of ten revolvers in such a confined space. He might take down three or four of them, but he would surely meet his demise.

If Ait, with his abilities, couldn't pull it off, there was no way Ciel—who he believed to be somewhat weaker and reliant on cunning strategies—could achieve such a feat.

Given the circumstances, Ait assumed most of his ten subordinates had fled, while a few might have sought assistance from the Black Scorpion.

With this realization, a strong desire to survive surged within Ait.

As long as I don't anger Ciel and can buy myself six to seven minutes, there's a good chance I'll be saved!

“If I hadn't done this, how else could I have crossed paths with you, considering my relationship with your Poison Spur Mob?” Lumian deliberately created the illusion that he didn't intend to spill blood.

He raised the dagger, emphasizing his point.

“Enough with the games. Answer my questions. You know I'm not a patient person. If you refuse or lie, I'll end your life right here. I can always ask 'Baldy' Harman later. After all, there are plenty of folks in your Poison Spur Mob who know about those matters.”

Lumian had compelled the mobsters to depart, not only due to the situation but also to seize control of the situation.

If he didn't make Ait believe he still had a fighting chance, prying answers from him in a short amount of time without employing mystical means would be futile.

A person who clung to hope would fear death all the more!

Ait promptly responded, “Alright!”

He resolved to divulge some information, delving into the details, hoping to hold out for those crucial six to seven minutes.

Naturally, he contemplated whether Ciel might abandon the inquiry at the last moment and execute him. Yet, aside from cooperating, Ait had no other choice. He could only hope the information he shared would be valuable enough to captivate Ciel's interest and prevent an untimely demise.

About three minutes... Lumian silently counted the seconds and posed his next question.

“Have you encountered Louis Lund?”

Ait hesitated.

In a swift motion, Lumian swung the dagger, piercing Ait's shoulder and eliciting a gush of crimson blood.

Ait, his expression contorted, felt the unyielding ruthlessness emanating from Lumian and sensed the specter of impending death drawing near. Fear gripped his heart.

He blurted out, “Yes! Wanted posters for Louis Lund can be found in Salle de Gristmill and many other places. The moment I laid eyes on him at the Boss's hideout, I recognized him.”

Ait realized he couldn't rely on silence and hesitation to gain more time. That would only lead to uncontrollable consequences.

Lying was also risky since he couldn't be certain which questions Ciel was using to test his honesty.

In comparison, offering convoluted yet seemingly valuable information would be more likely to appease the other party.

As expected... Lumian was delighted.

Having confirmed the connection between Louis Lund and the Poison Spur Mob's “Black Scorpion” Roger, Lumian had achieved his objective for this operation. The remaining questions were just an added bonus. It would be nice to get answers, but it wouldn't be a deal-breaker if he didn't.

“Why did he go to 'Black Scorpion' Roger?” Lumian inquired further.

Ait shook his head.

“I'm not aware of the specifics, but I've heard that the lady Louis Lund is loyal to has arrived in Trier. She wants our Poison Spur Mob and their respective spheres of influence to coordinate efforts and avoid conflicts.

“Our boss, with the approval of Madame Moon, took charge of the liaison.”

“Madame Moon?” Lumian never expected another Madame Moon to enter the picture.

He didn't even know what was happening with Madame Night.

“Madame Moon is the one the Poison Spur Mob swears loyalty to. Well, our boss has mentioned that she's not just a Madame anymore, but a Lady who Births Deities. We often offer prayers to her. I haven't seen her myself; only the Boss and Baldy have.”



Not Madame... From Madame Moon to Lady who Births Deities... Had she received more boons and elevated her status? Lumian nodded in understanding.

“What's the relationship between Madame Moon and Madame Night?”

“They both belong to an organization called the Nightstalkers. Madame Moon appears to be the leader, or at least a significant figure at the leadership level.” Ait provided a convoluted description of what he knew.

A secret organization that believes in some hidden existence? Lumian redirected the conversation to the matter that intrigued him the most.

“Will Louis Lund visit 'Black Scorpion' Roger again?”

“He'll likely come back next week to check if everyone has followed through on their agreements and if any adjustments are needed. I don't know the exact timing,” Ait honestly responded.

I'll have the chance to reunite with Louis Lund on Avenue du Marché next week? And I'll be stationed there permanently after Sunday! Lumian felt a surge of delight and excitement.

He then pressed on, asking,

“What kind of power does 'Black Scorpion' Roger possess?”

“H-he's a Heretic Spellmaster,” Ait stammered instinctively. “Our boss said it himself. The essence of a Heretic Spellmaster is using their life force to cast spells. It can be their own life force or someone else's, but it seems they need to be controlled beforehand.”

So he truly is a Heretic Spellmaster... Truly wicked and cruel... Lumian recalled the battle with the midwife.

Observing Lumian's lack of surprise, Ait felt a sense of relief for not lying. He continued, “I've witnessed him using a few spells. One is a peculiar curse, another involves manipulating blood, then there's a kind of black flame that weakens people, and finally, he has some effects on corpses and ghosts. I don't know much else.”

There's at least one more—the ability to create a 'turf' filled with undead creatures, allowing him to share damage and mysteriously teleport... Lumian silently muttered, his gaze fixed on Ait, gesturing for him to continue.

Ait steeled himself and spoke.

“Our boss also mentioned that if we perform well, he might receive more boons and become a Sower.”

Having said that, Ait regretted his decision not to choose a boon back then and instead opt for a potion. It had caused his progress to be hindered by the need for ingredients and other factors. The hope of reaching Sequence 7 seemed distant.

As long as one contributed enough and their body could withstand it, they could attain more boons.

A Sower? A symbol of abundance and life? Hmm, when Madame Pualis was still Pulitt, he had many illegitimate children. He was despised by countless people in the Dariège area, to the point that his family had to disown him and pretend he had gone missing... Could this be a manifestation of a Sower's powers? Did Pulitt lose control under the influence of the boons? And after becoming a Sower, it appears that he underwent a gender transformation. Is that the level equivalent to the Madames, or is it one Sequence higher than them? Lumian's mind raced with numerous thoughts.

Observing Lumian's expression, Ait continued speaking.

“I don't know what comes after Sower. All I know is that Wilson is a Villain, equivalent to Sequence 9. Harman is a Gardener, and his strength is similar to mine, but he possesses extensive knowledge of botany. He can create potions with magical effects. Yes, he has a potion that temporarily hardens his skin like tree bark. I tried slashing him with a knife, but he only suffered minor injuries. He also has medicines to treat various illnesses and injuries.”

So, becoming a Heretic Spellmaster requires being a Gardener. No wonder the midwife used those giant scissors as a weapon... Fortunately, I obtained this information. If I had assassinated “Baldy” Harman without giving him time to react, he wouldn't have used his body to shield Fallen Mercury... Targeted intelligence is truly valuable... Lumian sighed with a mix of emotions.

Ait pondered for a moment and continued, “Harman once mentioned that the spiritual monsters born from trees and flowers become highly frightened when they see him since he is a Gardener and responsible for their pruning.”

Ait, who was trying to buy more time, quickly brought up another topic.

“Our boss mentioned that among the unrecognized paramount beings, only three can bestow godhood without much difficulty. One is the Great Mother of our faith, another has 'Desire' and 'Tree' in its name, and the third appears to be a mysterious fog. As for the other beings, if they wish to grant godhood, they have to perform a very, very complex ritual that would easily be discovered and destroyed.”

The Mother Tree of Desire? What sets them apart from the being with the name Inevitability? Why can they bestow godhood without the need for an extensive ritual? Heh heh, I wonder what will happen when a Gardener encounters a Fallen Tree Spirit, the latter undergoing a suppression brought about by their inherent order in the hierarchy? Lumian's thoughts raced, and he suddenly changed the subject.

“Who is the candidate for parliament you support?”

“It's Hugues Artois from the Enlightenment Party.” Ait's anticipation grew as he noticed that quite some time had passed.

If those rascals hurry, they'll meet the Boss!

Ait, who was waiting for Lumian to ask about the Poison Spur Mob's recent plans, suddenly saw the other party raise his right hand and swing his dagger.

With a soft sound, the dagger pierced Ait's temples and stirred them a few times.

Ait's mouth hung open in horror, and his eyes grew desperate and unfocused.

With a thud, he collapsed, no longer drawing breath.

Lumian left the dagger lodged in Ait's head and swiftly bandaged his wounds. He then stowed away his belongings, shouldered the lifeless body, and pushed open the room's window before leaping down.

Since it was only the second floor, his landing was steady, and he broke into a run.

Instead of taking the most direct route, Lumian opted for a detour through Rue du Rossignol, making his way to Avenue du Marché.

The late-night atmosphere offered scarce street lamps, casting a pitch-black darkness that seemed to consume anyone on the road.

It took Lumian over two minutes to carry Ait's corpse to the entrance of Salle de Bal Brise.

The two mobsters guarding the entrance were about to halt him when they recognized Ciel's face.

As a result, they ceased their interference and allowed him to enter.

In the second-floor café, Louis approached Baron Brignais's side, carrying a stack of papers, a black revolver, a bayonet, and a bag of bullets.

“Baron, I have everything prepared for Ciel.”

More information and weapons.

Baron Brignais nodded.

“Send them to Auberge du Coq Doré tomorrow morning.”

After issuing the instructions, Baron Brignais spoke with anticipation, “I wonder what kind of performance he will stage for us and when he will make his move. Do you think he will choose 'Hammer' Ait, 'Baldy' Harman, or 'Short-legged Candlestick'...”

Before Baron Brignais could finish his sentence, the sound of approaching footsteps interrupted him.

The mobster guarding the first-floor entrance wore a terrified expression as he addressed Baron Brignais, “C-Ciel is here! He—he's carrying someone—or rather, a corpse!”

At that moment, Lumian emerged from the staircase, a smile on his face. His steps seemed heavier than usual.

“That is?” Baron Brignais looked at the lifeless body trailing behind Ciel, a mixture of confusion and seriousness on his face.

Lumian tossed the corpse to the ground, clapped his hands, and grinned.

“'Hammer' Ait.”