

Inevitability 241

Chapter 241 Indomitable Spirit

After hearing Lumian's words, Franca exclaimed, "Dammit! Are we dealing with those lot again? What's Hugues Artois up to?"

"I can't quite fathom the purpose behind causing a chemical plant explosion either.. Maybe it's just a coincidence. Bono Goodville and Hugues Artois have quite a good relationship. It's not unusual for him to pay a visit, but it just so happens that there was an explosion at the chemical plant today," Lumian pondered before speaking.

He couldn't dismiss every coincidence in life, but he also couldn't treat each one as a problem.

Franca nodded thoughtfully and remarked, "True enough.

"However, I must remind you that the chemical plant explosion isn't meaningless. It may have already resulted in numerous deaths, and that holds great significance for certain dark rituals. The living are always the third-best sacrifice."

"Could this also be part of a ritual?" Lumian was somewhat taken aback.

Franca corrected him, "There's no real distinction between using a knife to sacrifice someone and using a chemical plant explosion to kill the intended victim as part of a ritual for the deity the host desires to invoke. Your understanding of ritualistic magic is still too narrow. Some rituals may indeed require such explosions to be effective."

It's akin to the Substitution Spell, requiring a substitute to assume the identity to be replaced for an extended period before the ritual. Lumian grasped the idea.

Franca let out a sigh.

"This is merely my conjecture. It doesn't necessarily mean it's true. However, we must alert the official Beyonders to be vigilant for signs of a ritual and to investigate the role of the member of parliament's office in this catastrophe.

"F*ck, if that bloke wasn't a member of parliament, I'd have captured him tonight, strung him up from the ceiling, and given him a thrashing. I'd interrogate him about his intentions and his connection to those heretics.

"Sigh, in that explosion just now, countless individuals lost their parents, spouses, siblings, or children. I wonder how many people are praying, worrying, and suffering for their injured loved ones."

"Like Jenna," Lumian interjected.

Franca was momentarily stunned. "What did you say?"

“Jenna's mother works at the Goodville Chemical Factory. Didn't you know?” Lumian inquired.

Franca was taken aback before asking with concern, “How is her mother?”

Lumian briefly recounted how he had accompanied Jenna to Rue Saint-Hilaire in search of Elodie and had used the last bit of healing agent to save her from near death.

Franca let out a sigh of relief and expressed in anguish, “Why wasn't I there! Why wasn't I there!”

Lumian's lips twitched as he calmly said, “You still have a chance. Jenna is fretting over the subsequent medical expenses.”

“I'll go to the Holy Palace Hospital right away!” Franca's eyes lit up, and she was about to dash out of the apartment.

Lumian hastily called out to her, “Don't forget to bring the Poison Spur Mob's healing agent with you. I'm concerned that her condition might worsen.”

Just like Monsieur Ruhr.

Without waiting for Franca's response, he added, “Also, help Jenna bring the dress she wore this morning.”

“Right... I need to borrow 4,000 verl d'or from you and offer half of the Harvest Sacrifice as collateral. I've already gathered the supplementary ingredients for the Pyromaniac potion.”

“So soon?” Franca exclaimed, taken aback. “I haven't even begun searching for you!”

Lumian smirked once again.

“Last night, I ran into Boss at the entrance of the member of parliament's office and confessed my plans to advance and about the advance on my pay. I requested he keep an eye on the supplementary ingredients for the Pyromaniac potion.”

The more Franca listened, the more complicated her expression became.

“You're more cunning than I realized, kid... Confiding in Gardner about this matter is indeed the best approach.

“However, can't you consider me? Don't you know that I also wanted to help you gather the supplementary ingredients for the Pyromaniac potion through Gardner? He's a Sequence 6 Conspirer or a Sequence 5 Hunter, and he has a group of Hunters working with him. He won't be lacking in such things. Luckily, I haven't approached him in the past two days. Otherwise, he would have surely suspected that we were having an affair.”

Lumian had always assumed Franca would seek materials through the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society. He hadn't expected her to approach Gardner Martin out of convenience and proximity, almost exposing their secret relationship.

Franca returned to her room and retrieved a banknote worth 4,000 verl d'or from somewhere. She handed it to Lumian and solemnly reminded him, "Once you obtain the main ingredient, don't rush to concoct the potion. You must ensure that your condition can withstand the impact of your advancement. Otherwise, it's best to delay it for a while. The main ingredient is much easier to preserve than the potion itself."

"I'm well aware," Lumian replied calmly.

After a moment of thought, he asked, "Before you go to Jenna, it would be wise to inform the authorities. The explosion just happened, so there might be some clues left behind."

"Yes," Franca agreed.

Before bidding farewell, Lumian asked curiously, "If the living are the third-best sacrifice, what are the second-best and the best?"

"The second-best are beings with Beyonder characteristics. And the best..." Franca smiled. "They are demigods."

Quartier de Noël, sixth floor of Holy Palace Hospital.

As Jenna returned to the ward from the washroom, she spotted her brother Julien assisting their mother, Elodie, in tucking the corners of the blanket.

Elodie remained unconscious, but her complexion showed signs of improvement.

Julien stood up and beckoned his sister to the side. He whispered, "Celia, don't fret about the upcoming medical expenses. I'll find a solution. Keep attending your acting lessons at Théâtre de l'Ancienne Cage à Pigeons."

Jenna's heart swelled with gratitude as she inquired, "Did the doctor talk to you?"

"Yes, he just did." Julien nodded with solemnity.

Jenna pressed her lips together and assured him, "Don't worry. My friends have agreed to lend me money. I can repay them over three years with minimal interest. With my earnings as an underground singer and your wages, if we are frugal, it should be enough without affecting our respective apprenticeships."

There was a moment of silence as Julien pondered, before he finally spoke, "That Ciel?"

"Yes, he's one of them, but I have other friends too. And Franca, the 'Red Boots' I mentioned last night." Jenna felt the need to clarify the situation, fearing her brother might resort to extreme measures.

She recalled how two years ago, Julien had contemplated secretly selling himself to Balam-Paz Import and Export Corporation, unbeknownst to their mother, in order to become a disposable mercenary and repay all their debts, allowing Jenna to pursue her dreams as an apprentice actress. Fortunately, that plan had been thwarted in the end.

Just as Julien was about to respond, his gaze fell upon a tall, slender woman standing at the ward's entrance.

She donned a blouse, light-colored breeches, a thin black-on-white checkered tweed top, and vibrant red boots. Her long flaxen-colored hair was tied back in a simple ponytail. With eyebrows that extended toward her temples and eyes that sparkled with energy, she exuded an irresistible charm.

Jenna eagerly approached her.

“Franca.”

Rue des Blouses Blanches, inside the safe house.

Lumian, having acquired Sun Star and currently distilling its extract, took a seat and awaited Madam Magician's response.

On the desk in front of him, Fire Salamander blood, Magma Pyroxene powder, and Redcrown Balsam powder were neatly arranged.

Just as the Sun Star extract was about to be completed, the arm-height “doll” dressed in a light-gold gown, with exquisite yet slightly peculiar facial features, appeared on the windowsill.

It placed a metal biscuit tin on the windowsill and sniffed the air.

“Use this extract the next time you summon me.”

“Alright.” The request from the other party was so unusual that Lumian was momentarily taken aback. His instinctive response was the only thing he could offer.

In an instant, the puppet messenger vanished before his eyes. Lumian opened the bright silver biscuit tin and beheld the small crimson “heart” burning silently within.

Sorry for the inconvenience. Thank you very much!

Without hesitation, he grabbed a prepared beer mug and dropped in the Pyromaniac Beyonder characteristic.

Immediately afterward, Lumian poured over 50 milliliters of Fire Salamander blood into the cup.

With a sizzling sound, the crimson liquid evaporated, transforming into a mist of blood that swirled around the “heart.”

The Pyromaniac Beyonder characteristic softened considerably, its surface rippling like the water of a lake.

Following the potion formula's instructions, Lumian added Magma Pyroxene powder, Redcrown Balsam powder, and Sun Star extract into the beer mug. As he did so, the blood mist surrounding the “heart” abruptly shrank, giving rise to a yellowish liquid with red bubbles.

In Lumian's eyes, this was the Pyromaniac potion.

Rather than consuming it immediately, Lumian closed his eyes.

In his mind, he conjured images of Flameng's lifeless body dangling from a window frame, the lunatic's will inscribed on a sheet of white paper. He envisioned Monsieur Ruhr, his body ravaged by decay. He pictured Madame Michel, drowning her sorrows in drink and singing boisterously, only to ultimately meet her demise by hanging herself in the morning light. He also saw the cries that echoed through Sifflet Square.

Then, he glimpsed his own stubborn and determined self as a wanderer. He witnessed his unwavering spirit, refusing to surrender despite the repeated blows. He envisioned an alternative outcome for himself. He witnessed the sorrow, anger, powerlessness, and oppression that came with pursuing hope, only to be engulfed by darkness.

The mocking laughter of fate resounded in his ears, igniting a raging fire within his heart.

If this is the unavoidable conclusion;

If this is the fate of insignificance,

If efforts yield no fruit, and hope remains forever out of reach;

Then I shall fight with every ounce of my being to change it all!

Even if there is no light ahead, and hope dwindles to a mere flicker, I will fight until my last breath!

Motherf*cker member of parliament!

Motherf*cker Guillaume Bénét!

Motherf*cker heretics!

Motherf*cker Termiboros!

Motherf*cker Inevitability!

Lumian's eyes snapped open as he solidified his final acting principle as a Provoker.

Provocation symbolized indomitable spirit!

He didn't need this for digestion assistance. With a fire raging within his chest, he seized the beer mug and guzzled down the liquid.

It burned from his mouth, down his esophagus, into his stomach, and seared into his heart.

Chapter 242 Pyromaniac

Instantaneously, Lumian felt an inferno raging within him. The scorching agony seared through his body and soul, engulfing him completely. This sensation was not alien to him. Whether it was the dire wounds inflicted during his pursuit of the flaming monster or the brink of losing control while receiving a boon, all had set him ablaze.

In this very moment, the tormenting fire failed to extinguish the blazing determination in his heart. He defied destiny, yearning to alter the course of events, to incinerate the oppressive flames of despair and desolation.

Instead of succumbing to the pain and collapsing to the ground, Lumian remained upright. Clenching his teeth and contorting his face, he refused to bow down.

Gradually, the agony became unbearable, and his body began to bend. Nevertheless, Lumian mustered all his strength to straighten his back, just as he had confronted Guillaume Bénét, the padre, and Termiboros, who had unleashed a cataclysmic calamity upon Cordu.

Step by step, he lowered his body and raised it again. The scent of singed flesh filled his nostrils, and the voice from infinity reverberated in his ears.

A familiar, excruciating pain pierced his skull, eliciting an involuntary cry. Cracks formed on his skin, and molten liquid akin to lava coursed beneath.

Desperately, Lumian leaned on the desk before him, seeking support.

The spot he touched promptly blackened and charred, permeating the air with the scent of burning timber.

His instinctive scream was stifled. His mouth hung open, expelling searing gas.

Instead of immediately uncorking the vial of gray amber perfume, he relied on the fire within his chest to combat the mounting anguish and the increasingly hazy thoughts welling up from within.

Seconds ticked away. Lumian, with gritted teeth, sensed the flames within his chest surging forth, mingling with the inferno raging throughout his being.

Gradually, the manifold pains subsided, and his muddled thoughts gradually cleared.

Using his hands as support, Lumian hoisted himself up and directed his gaze towards the full-length mirror in the room.

Reflected in the looking glass, his blond locks retained a tinge of black, his attire reduced to tatters. His body bore scorch marks that swiftly scabbed over and fell to the floor, revealing his fair complexion.

Simultaneously, Lumian beheld two crimson flames ablaze within his blue eyes. It was only after striving to regain composure and still his racing heart that the flames gradually dissipated.

In the next second, In the next heartbeat, Lumian raised his right hand, manifesting a crimson flame in his palm.

He had triumphantly ascended to the Sequence 7 of the Hunter's path, emerging as a Pyromaniac!

From his palm, flames surged, intertwining with the original crimson hue, constantly compressing.

After a span of more than ten seconds, the fiery crimson transformed into an incandescent white. The temperature and explosive force it contained surged to greater heights.

I can wield the crimson flame directly or, by accumulating and compressing it for a duration, unleash an even more scorching white-hot blaze... Lumian's palm appeared impervious to the scorching heat as he allowed the white-hot flame to silently burn.

Having already conducted a preliminary assessment of his condition and the mystical knowledge he had acquired, Lumian had gained a fairly comprehensive understanding of the superpowers bestowed upon a Pyromaniac.

First and foremost, a Pyromaniac's spirituality had seen a remarkable improvement, leading to a transformative shift in Lumian's Spirit Vision. No longer confined to a chaotic spectacle, he now possessed the ability to employ a more discreet and expeditious activation method. Moreover, he could finally perceive the hues and shades his sister had described, discerning the various components of the Ether Body.

This newfound insight proved invaluable to a Hunter, enabling Lumian to better grasp an adversary's physical state and thereby target them with greater precision.

Secondly, his instinct for danger had undergone significant enhancement. Gone were the days when he only sensed trouble at the very brink of eruption. Through careful observation of his surroundings and the assimilation of information, Lumian could now activate his intuition preemptively. Consequently, he could detect if he was being followed and employ his anti-tracking techniques more effectively and flawlessly.

Thirdly, his command over flames had brought with it a handful of accompanying spells.

At present, Lumian's primary ability involved controlling the flames that originated from within him or were conjured by his own hands. While he possessed an affinity for flames and combustible substances in his vicinity, his influence over them remained somewhat limited. It was possible that, upon digesting the Pyromaniac potion or advancing to a higher Sequence, corresponding changes might occur.

Furthermore, Lumian could employ the flames he created as weapons against his adversaries. However, once the flames left his body, they no longer fell under his dominion unless he had pre-invested a portion of his spirituality in them.

In essence, altering the trajectory of a fireball in mid-flight proved to be quite challenging, necessitating a supplementary expenditure of spirituality.

The control of flames could be categorized into seven distinct aspects:

Firstly, there was compression—a bombardment in the form of a fireball. The longer the compression lasted, the more flames gathered, resulting in a more potent strike.

Secondly, Lumian could ignite a layer of flames over his body, affording him a measure of defense against freezing effects, poisonous gases, and other forms of assault.

Thirdly, he could fashion various temporary weapons using flames, capable of inflicting scorching, cutting, and piercing damage. Depending on the time spent channeling the flames, this ability could be categorized as either crimson or blazing-white.

Fourthly, Lumian had mastered the art of delayed explosions. By employing additional spirituality and manipulating the structure, he could fashion a Flame Bomb that would detonate at a predetermined time, rather than immediately upon impact.

Fifthly, he possessed the power of areof-effect attacks. By extending the reach of the flames instead of hurling them forth, Lumian could ensure precise control over their detonation, causing them to erupt at a desired location or manifest in different forms.

Sixthly, Lumian had honed the technique of Fire Infusion. Through close-quarters combat and the forceful clash of strength, he could gradually inject flames into an opponent's body before triggering their detonation.

Finally, the seventh aspect involved imbuing his weapon with fire damage.

The fire-type spells Lumian had acquired were instrumental in these various aspects, leveraging certain techniques to achieve effects that he could not ordinarily produce.

The spells at Lumian's disposal were as follows: Fire Raven, Blazing Spear, Wall of Fire, and Giant Fireball.

Of them all, the Fire Raven spell stood out as the most enchanting. With its aid, Lumian could swiftly condense a flock of flaming ravens around him, bestowing a fraction of his spirituality upon each avian form. This granted him a degree of control even after they departed from his body, enabling them to momentarily adjust their flight path and lock onto their intended targets.

Without this spell, Lumian, a recent convert to Pyromaniac, would need to expend at least three times his present store of spirituality and energy to achieve a similar outcome. Moreover, the Fire Ravens would possess a significantly more clumsy and rigid disposition.

Blazing Spear, on the other hand, entailed the rapid condensation of white flames, though they could only maintain the shape of a spear. Infused with spirituality, they could roughly guide Lumian's created fireball.

By utilizing the ground as a conduit and drawing upon its own essence, Wall of Fire summoned forth a pair of flaming serpents that slithered toward the enemy, erecting a scorching barrier around them.

Giant Fireball demanded a span of ten to twenty seconds, akin to the compression of numerous crimson fireballs into a single devastating blast.

While the Pyromaniac's flames originated from his physical form and primarily inflicted bodily harm, they were also capable of burning a Spirit Body. Lumian was no longer defenseless against creatures of a soul-like nature, though he still relied on external assistance.

Additionally, the potion's modifications had bestowed upon his body a remarkable resistance to flames. Even if doused in animal fat and subjected to the flames of a torch for half a day, the damage he suffered would be minimal. Nevertheless, the concussive force of a fireball's explosion could still harm him in a conventional manner.

Lumian held the belief that as he advanced to higher Sequences, his body might even merge with fire itself.

With a casual flick of his right hand, the blazing white flame dissipated into the air.

Then, with a firm grip, he summoned a longsword crafted from crimson flames, materializing it from thin air.

Lumian brandished the fiery blade a few times, his disappointment evident. He muttered silently to himself, It possesses the ability to harm the enemy, but it cannot block or parry...

The flaming sword lacked a tangible form. Lumian surmised that he would need to reach a higher Sequence before he could turn such a weapon corporeal.

He dismissed the flaming longsword and drew Hedsey's dagger.

As his fingers caressed the dagger's surface, a fiery blaze enveloped the blade.

Lumian tightened his grip on the hilt and executed a few thrusts with the dagger. He observed the rapid dissipation of red sparks in the air, creating an ethereal spectacle.

It can block and deal fire damage. Though it may lack scorching temperatures in this form, it remains highly useful.

The current problem lies in the fact that ordinary weapons cannot endure exposure to flames for long... Lumian pondered, nodding approvingly.

Having confirmed his Beyonder powers as a Pyromaniac, he swiftly organized his desk and donned a linen shirt, a brown jacket, and dark trousers.

Lumian cast a final glance at his reflection in the mirror, a smile curling upon his lips.

He placed the dark-blue cap upon his head, turned on his heel, and strode purposefully toward the door.

Crimson flames silently erupted in his wake, an ephemeral and blinding display.

Sorry for the inconvenience. Thank you very much!

On Avenue du Marché, outside the khaki-colored four-story building that housed the member of parliament's office,

Lumian once again found himself seated among the destitute at the alley opposite, quietly observing the steady flow of people entering and exiting the targeted establishment.

In the wake of the explosion at Goodville Chemical Factory, countless workers had tragically lost their lives, leaving many more injured. The entire city of Trier was abuzz with news reporters flocking to the scene. As a result, Hugues Artois's office remained aglow with gas-powered wall lamps, as his staff tirelessly attended to visitors with varied intentions.

The member of parliament had yet to return home, and his entourage naturally remained within the khaki-colored building. Every room seemed to radiate with illumination, brimming with activity.

Leaning against the wall of the street, Lumian observed the comings and goings within the member of parliament's office, his mind churning with contemplation.

He yearned to ignite a “fire”!

He yearned to “incinerate” the despicable scoundrel responsible for spreading disease!

He was fully aware of the dire consequences that awaited him. As a Pyromaniac, he understood that he alone was not yet strong enough to face off against the evil god's Blessed who surrounded Hugues Artois.

Yet, he simply longed to take action. He couldn't shake the feeling that no matter how fierce a conflagration may be, it all started with a single spark.

Chapter 243 Visit

Lumian's fury did not mean he would lose his composure—to just disguise himself and sneak into the member of parliament's office, where he would find the fellow who had dared to “casually spit” and incinerate him on the spot.

It wasn't a ridiculous scheme, but without enough information, taking such a risk could easily turn into suicide.

First and foremost, Lumian had no knowledge of the number or strength of the heretics present in the member of parliament's office.

He also had no idea how many protectors Bureau 8 or the two Churches had assigned to Hugues Artois, nor did he know their abilities.

Furthermore, he lacked precise details about the target's whereabouts or situation. Even if he managed to infiltrate the office successfully, finding the target would be no easy task.

Lastly, he hadn't yet devised a plan for sneaking in and, more importantly, a plan for a safe retreat.

Nevertheless, Lumian couldn't deny that the chaos caused by the Goodville Chemical Factory explosion provided an excellent opportunity for his infiltration.

For now, his temporary strategy was to be a patient hunter. He would trail the target silently, observing his movements and waiting for the perfect moment to strike.

Based on the target's status in Hugo Artois's campaign, Lumian surmised that the man couldn't be too powerful. He certainly didn't possess godlike abilities. Even if he were a Mid-Sequence Beyond, he would likely be no higher than a Sequence 7.

Lumian wasn't overly concerned if his judgment was wrong and the target turned out to be a Sequence 6 or even Sequence 5. In fact, he believed that Mr. K would find the hunt for heretics quite intriguing!

Phew... Lumian breathed out slowly, his gaze fixed on the brightly illuminated khaki-colored four-story building. He continued to gather useful information for his upcoming operation.

As time passed, he noticed middle-aged scavengers carrying linen bags, sifting through the trash piled beside the building.

This sight made Lumian sigh, fueling the fire of determination in his heart.

In Trier, people couldn't scavenge just for the sake of it. Each scavenger had an employer, whether they worked full-time or part-time. They were assigned specific scavenging areas and were not allowed to cross boundaries. Violations often led to conflicts and violent encounters. As a result, Ruhr and Michel wished fervently that Hugues Artois would host banquets every day instead of wandering into areas where banquets were already being held, as those spots belonged to other scavengers.

The difference between full-time and part-time scavengers lay in their employment terms. Full-timers received a monthly salary from their employers, and the employers owned all the trash they collected. Occasionally, if they stumbled upon valuable or usable items, they might decide whether to surrender them or keep them for personal use. Part-timers like Ruhr and Michel didn't have a fixed salary. They scavenged in the morning and evening, delivering everything they found to a designated waste disposal site, typically owned by their employers.

These circumstances restricted street tramps to scavenging for food and clothing, with little opportunity to exchange their findings for money.

Lumian patiently waited until 9 p.m., observing as the number of guests visiting the member of parliament's office gradually dwindled. People stepped out onto the balconies for a smoke or a brief respite.

And then, his eyes widened as he spotted a figure.

Standing on the balcony of a second-floor room, there he was—the thin, pale man with curly dark-yellow hair and piercing brown eyes.

Dressed in a blue shirt, black vest, and a somber suit, complete with a bow tie, he held a cigarette, enveloped in a cloud of smoke, occasionally taking a drag. Lumian had seen him before in Franca's Magic Mirror Divination. It was the spitter.

Cough, cough, cough! A fit of violent coughing shook the frail young man, as if he wished to expel his lungs from his body.

Finally, he hacked up another glob of thick phlegm after some harrumphing.

Pulling out a handkerchief, he spat the viscous phlegm into it, wrapping it up and tucking it away in his pocket. He didn't discard it carelessly.

Lumian's eyes narrowed. He knows that his phlegm can transmit diseases as a result of mysticism.

As more people flocked to the balconies of their respective rooms, Lumian swiftly identified the familiar faces.

Member of Parliament Hugues Artois from the market district occupied the room at the top floor, boasting the largest balcony.

The red-haired woman resided on the same floor, right next door to him.

On the second floor, on the opposite end of the corridor from the spitter, was a man in his thirties with gold-rimmed glasses, a document always in hand. Every now and then, he would wander to the balcony to enjoy a smoke and the view, displaying a lack of concern for the aftermath of the Goodville Chemical Factory explosion.

The third floor housed a tall, muscular middle-aged man, occupying the central office.

Directly beneath Hugues Artois, on the fourth floor, was a refined young woman in a white shirt and a dark-blue coat. She shared the same side of the building as the man with gold-rimmed glasses, deliberately avoiding any proximity to the spitter.

Lumian observed closely and deduced that the rooms adjacent to the spitter's were part of a collective office, likely accommodating several employees.

This implied that the probability of them holding any significant status or possessing Beyonder powers was negligible.

So, the other heretics intentionally distanced themselves from the incessant coughing and spitting man. They believe the member of parliament's office is heavily guarded, and that individual possesses Beyonder powers. It's highly unlikely for an attack to be directed at him. True enough. If an assault were to occur in the member of parliament's office, the target would undoubtedly be Hugues Artois and not one of his subordinates. Only then would it be worth the risk... Lumian pondered this realization earnestly for a moment and suddenly sensed an opportunity emerging.

The dilemma now lay in how Lumian could infiltrate the member of parliament's office unnoticed, particularly given his conspicuous golden hair with a touch of black. After all, he didn't have Franca's help.

After careful consideration, Lumian devised a plan.

He departed from the vicinity of the office and made his way back to the safe house on Rue des Blouses Blanches.

Without hesitation, he set up an altar and offered a prayer to the great existence, seeking His protection.

Lumian firmly believed that since the embrace of an angel would shield him from the prying eyes of any deity, it definitely ensured sufficient anti-divination effects!

Just as before, he found himself bathed in the radiant brilliance and divine majesty of the angel. Overwhelmed by indescribable emotions, he witnessed cascades of luminous wings enveloping him.

Once he completed this ritual, Lumian pressed his hand to his head.

His golden and black hair erupted into flames, cascading down like withered grass until only a few hair roots remained.

Putting on his trusty dark-blue cap, he concealed his features behind the Mystery Prying Glasses. With his transformed appearance, Lumian left Rue des Blouses Blanches and ventured towards Avenue du Marché near Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman. There, he located a clothing store that didn't specialize in cheap garments.

The two shop assistants, a man and a woman, were taken aback when they saw a person dressed like a vagrant entering, unsure of how to react.

In a panicked tone, Lumian explained, "I encountered a perverted thief who stole my clothes and trousers. I had no choice but to purchase this set from a nearby beggar."

The female shop assistant struggled to suppress her laughter.

They had witnessed similar situations countless times before, well aware that those who made such excuses were often involved in affairs with certain ladies, fleeing in a state of undress with their wallets once their husbands returned, only to seek refuge in the garments of a beggar.

When someone confidently claimed that their predicament stemmed from an affair, it usually meant they had genuinely encountered a twisted thief.

In the end, Lumian acquired a suit that appeared decent but was actually quite ordinary. It included a shirt, coat, bow tie, and a dark cane. Additionally, he opted for a brown wig and a matching fake beard.

The total cost came to 78 verl d'or.

After carefully covering his tracks and returning to the safe house on Rue des Blouses Blanches, Lumian shed his disguise and once again adorned the Mystery Prying Glasses. Following his recollection, he skillfully applied makeup to achieve his desired effect.

Sorry for the inconvenience. Thank you very much!

His aim was to transform himself into an older version. As he gazed into the mirror, Lumian gradually took on the appearance of a middle-aged man, complete with a fake brown beard affixed to his mouth and chin.

Thus, Lumian assumed the identity of Bono Goodville, the proprietor of the Goodville Chemical Factory.

Though the resemblance was only around 40 to 50%, anyone acquainted with Bono Goodville would instinctively mistake Lumian for the man, provided they didn't scrutinize or closely distinguish him.

In this guise, Lumian intended to infiltrate the member of parliament's office!

Before embarking on his mission, he ventured into the underground and stashed the tramp's attire in a cavern within the quarry.

Emerging from Underground Trier, Lumian hastened to the khaki-colored four-story building that housed the member of parliament's office, cane in hand.

After observing for a brief moment and ensuring that the figures in each room remained relatively unchanged, he lowered his head, partially concealing his face, and approached the entrance.

“Whom are you seeking?” inquired an armed guard donned in a dark blue uniform, blocking his path.

Lumian raised his head, withdrew his hand, and responded with anxiety in his voice, “I'm looking for the member of parliament.”

One of the guards caught a clear glimpse of the visitor's face under the glow of the street lamp and involuntarily exclaimed, “Monsieur Goodville, what brings you here again...”

Abruptly, he halted his words, realizing that this gentleman, who had recently experienced a devastating explosion at his factory, had an abundance of issues to address this night, along with numerous concerns that required assistance.

The two guards refrained from further inquiry and stepped aside, granting Lumian passage.

The lobby on the ground floor bustled with activity, despite the late hour. Reporters, officials, representatives of charitable organizations, hospital staff reporting in, and various personnel responsible for receiving them filled the space.

Lumian preserved his desire to remain inconspicuous. With his head lowered, partially obscuring his face, he proceeded directly to the staircase. Employing the same tactic, he passed by the two armed guards and ascended to the second floor.

Orienting himself, Lumian bypassed the two employees who emerged from a nearby room and arrived in front of the office belonging to the unhealthy young man.

Embedded on the vermilion door was an aluminum-white nameplate inscribed with a few golden Intisian words: “Assistant Secretary, Tybalt Jacques.”

Tybalt... Lumian smiled, donned his gloves, and tapped lightly on the door.

Chapter 244 Red and Black

Knock, knock, knock.

The office reverberated with an urgent knock.

A feeble and disinterested voice floated through the air.

“Come in, please.”

Lumian turned the doorknob and pushed open the vibrant vermilion door. Before him stood a frail, gaunt young man.

Dressed in a blue shirt, black waistcoat, and somber suit, he stood by the expansive desk, his eyes fixed on the door.

As Tybalt Jacques recognized the visitor to be Bono Goodville, a chuckle escaped the assistant secretary.

“Don't fret. Decay is an unavoidable fate. It afflicts humans and organizations alike. Once the decay sets in, all sorts of troubles will arise...”

Before Tybalt could conclude, he saw Lumian approach. Guard raised, he blurted out, “What do you think you're doing...”

Bam! Lumian threw a punch, accompanied by a blazing crimson flame.

His action cut off Tybalt's words, forcing him to instinctively raise his forearm to block the blow.

Flames flickered, consuming Tybalt's sleeves.

Simultaneously, a taunting voice reached his ears.

“So weak?”

Sorry for the inconvenience. Thank you very much!

Originally, Lumian's plan was to cloak his fist in flames, launching a surprise attack on his adversary without alerting the nearby employees. In the ensuing chaos, he aimed to use Fallen Mercury and inflict a wound upon him. Then, before his foe could recover, Lumian would forcefully make his way past him, exiting the khaki-colored building housing the parliament member's office through the balcony.

Throughout this endeavor, he would employ fireballs, Fire Raven, and other techniques to impede his opponent. Even if he sustained injuries, he had to escape into a nearby alley and disappear into Underground Trier before Hugues Artois's security personnel, the red-haired woman, and the other campaign members could react. After all, the fiery “armor” he created had the power to incinerate pathogens. With limited contact, the chances of contracting an illness were slim. And if something did manage to slip through, the symptoms would be mild enough for Lumian to endure until six in the morning.

If worse came to worst, he could borrow half a canister of healing agent from Franca.

Even Ruhr, a scavenger with his advanced age, succumbed to the illness only an hour or two after being exposed to the thick phlegm. Lumian believed it would be even less of a problem for him.

Of course, the condition was that the thick phlegm represented one of Tybalt's more potent methods. He couldn't concoct a highly virulent disease that triggered symptoms within a minute or two. Nonetheless, Lumian had his flames to shield him.

Yet, now, after a swift exchange, Lumian realized that Tybalt Jacques was far weaker than he had presumed!

This revelation instantly altered Lumian's course of action.

Silently, his form became shrouded in a cloak of fiery crimson.

The flames undulated like liquid, seamlessly encasing his skin, hair, garments, and hat. They hung there, a constant flickering and flowing.

Crimson flames continued to emerge from Lumian's being, melding with the inferno.

It felt as though Lumian had wrapped himself in a crimson cloak. Amidst the swirling blaze, his disguised countenance and blue eyes, each harboring a blazing fire, came into view.

With a snap, he discarded the dark cane and launched a fist wreathed in flames towards Tybalt.

The cane's handle remained aglow, eradicating any traces of fingerprints, sweat, or handprints.

Bang! Bang! Bang! Tybalt staggered back two steps, as though battling a tempest of fire. His eyes burned with a reddened intensity.

He harrumphed and expelled thick phlegm at Lumian.

The viscous yellow-green phlegm met the fiery cloak and was instantly incinerated, emitting a sizzling sound.

Bam! Bam! Bam! Lumian's arms, engulfed in crimson flames, swung repeatedly, pinning Tybalt to a corner of the office. His back pressed against the wall, with no escape or retreat. All he could do was defensively parry with his arms.

Witnessing the Sputum of Disease prove futile and the surrounding air heating up under the flames' influence, causing his skin to scorch, Tybalt's heart constricted, and he was about to cry out for help.

However, just as he opened his mouth, Lumian's flaming fist collided with his arm, causing him to tremble. His words became trapped in his throat.

Tybalt attempted to call for aid, but his pleas were repeatedly interrupted by the adversary. The deep voice of his foe resounded in his ears.

“Is that all you have?”

“How dare a feeble fledgling like you spit so recklessly?”

“Didn't your deity teach you to behave with civility?”

“I shall summon a hundred vagabonds to spit in your mouth!”

The mockery inflamed Tybalt's eyes, and he momentarily forgot about seeking assistance. All he yearned for was the other party to suffer and perish.

Translucent blisters materialized on his exposed skin, brimming with a sickly yellowish-black fluid.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Lumian's flaming fist consumed Tybalt's sleeve, rupturing the translucent blister within. Yet, the repugnant yellowish-black liquid failed to touch his flesh. It was first scorched by the flames before being halted by the gloves.

The lingering pathogens on the surface of the gloves rapidly dissipated beneath the crimson flames' effect.

Amidst the relentless but non-lethal strikes, all the translucent blisters burst of their own accord within the increasingly sweltering environment. The faint yellowish-black liquid sizzled and evaporated, forming an almost imperceptible mist around Tybalt.

However, the mist was either consumed by the flames or melted by the soaring temperatures. It couldn't breach the fiery cloak and corrode Lumian's body.

In that moment, Tybalt, battered multiple times, regained his senses from the Provocation. He opened his mouth and cried out for aid.

High-temperature gas and dissipating flames infiltrated Tybalt's mouth as Lumian's fist connected. The heat contorted his expression, rendering him unable to scream.

“Feeling grand, are we? Enjoying yourself?”

“When you spat without a care, did you ever consider that it would lead to your own demise?”

“Taking your life is no different from slaughtering a chicken!”

Lumian locked his gaze onto Tybalt's eyes, witnessing despair, fear, and pleas for mercy slowly emerge.

He didn't relent. With fists ablaze in crimson flames, he unleashed another relentless onslaught of strikes.

He had no intention of evading Tybalt's feeble attempts at defense; each blow found its mark.

With a subdued thud, Lumian abruptly halted and withdrew his hands.

Tybalt remained motionless against the wall, his eyes vacant.

The flames enveloping Lumian's form dissipated like a receding river, leaving behind a trace of crimson in his footsteps.

Without sparing Tybalt a second glance, Lumian stooped to retrieve his cane. He took Mr. K's finger and pressed it against the wall beside Tybalt.

Having done so, Lumian removed his half top hat and placed it upon his chest, bowing to Tybalt.

Then, he strode past his lifeless, statue-like prey and ventured onto the balcony. Concealed by the shadows, he pressed against the wall and effortlessly leaped to the side of the khaki-colored building.

Only then did the occupants upstairs sense something amiss. Several individuals rushed out, peering into the outside world. Lumian's figure had already vanished into the depths of the dark alley.

Simultaneously, a muffled sound emanated from Tybalt's rigid body.

Boom!

In an instant, he erupted from within, crimson flames splattering flesh and internal organs in every direction.

Fire Infusion!

Pyromaniac's Fire Infusion!

Prior to Lumian's departure, Tybalt had teetered on the precipice of death. His organs and brain had been consumed by the injected flames. What ensued was primarily the annihilation of his Spirit Body.

There were three reasons why Lumian had a change of heart at the last moment, opting to forgo the quickest and simplest method of dispatching Tybalt.

Firstly, utilizing the Montsouris ghost could potentially impact Tybalt's family. If possible, it was preferable to avoid such measures, despite the high probability that they had already succumbed to the influence of an evil deity. Secondly, he could utilize the implosion to create a gruesome scene of carnage, strewn with flesh and blood. Coupled with Mr. K's fingerprint, it would point subsequent investigators in the direction of the Aurora Order. It would also serve as a clear indication that Tybalt was a follower of an evil god. Thirdly, by utilizing Fire Infusion, he could delay the explosion and dismantle Tybalt's Spirit Body, thereby minimizing the efficacy of the evil god's Blessed's investigations through spirit channeling.

Furthermore, there was another reason. Beating and cursing Tybalt to death brought Lumian an undeniable sense of satisfaction.

Before long, a group of seven or eight individuals, including Hugues Artois, the red-haired lady, and the bespectacled secretary, arrived at Tybalt Jacques's door.

What greeted their eyes were scattered flesh, fragments, and internal organs, along with scorch marks that marred the ground.

The sight of red and black intermingled was jarring, rendering everyone present speechless.

“Who could have done this?” Hugues Artois exclaimed, horror etched on his face.

In his mind, the murder of Tybalt and the macabre aftermath served as a chilling warning and a preview of his own impending demise!

After all, who would go to such lengths to target an assistant secretary?

The red-haired lady cast a brief glance at Hugues Artois before speaking in an androgynous tone,

“Based on the evidence before us, it appears that the perpetrator is a Pyromaniac, or perhaps even more formidable. Given Tybalt's capabilities, he should have been dispatched within ten seconds. However, the assailant deliberately prolonged the act.

“It seems that the goal was to create this gruesome scene. It bears the hallmark of those lunatics from the Aurora Order.”

Hugues Artois's eyes narrowed, and he lapsed into silence for a couple of seconds.

“Why would the Aurora Order target me?”

“I cannot say.” The red-haired lady peered deeply into Hugues Artois's eyes, shaking her head slightly.

While the official Beyonders conducted their investigation, the original campaign team returned to Hugues Artois's office.

The red-haired lady turned her attention to the secretary with gold-rimmed glasses.

“What has Tybalt been involved in recently?” she inquired.

“Due to his chronic illness, he intentionally disposed of his disease-ridden handkerchief and ended the lives of two elderly scavengers who had no children,” the secretary with gold-rimmed glasses truthfully replied. “I have managed to keep this matter under wraps.”

The red-haired lady muttered to herself, her voice barely audible, “Two childless elderly scavengers... It seems that Tybalt's demise is undeniably targeted at Monsieur Member of Parliament.”

Chapter 245 “Speech”

All eyes turned towards Hugues Artois, the distinguished member of parliament, his prominent nose and graying temples giving him an air of refinement. He had quickly regained his composure and wore a smile as he spoke.

“There's no need to fret. If the assailant possessed the means to breach two layers of defense and confront me directly, there would be no reason to go through the trouble of assassinating Tybalt. This seems more like an act of blackmail, a surface-level threat.”

The four members of the campaign present nodded simultaneously, coming to the conclusion that Monsieur Member of Parliament's deduction was accurate.

Hugues Artois turned to the lady with red hair.

“Cassandra, my knowledge of mysticism is limited. I have only heard that Beyonders can extract the truth from a deceased soul through spirit channeling. Will Tybalt's spirit betray us?”

Cassandra, with her red hair flowing, slowly shook her head.

“Under normal circumstances, we would have to take the risk of cleansing the situation. However, in the recent attack, the assassin clearly took ample time to obliterate Tybalt's spirit, thereby concealing his own identity. It's equivalent to assisting us.”

Hugues Artois nodded slightly and cast a glance at the two anxious secretaries. With a smile, he reassured them.

“Rhône, Margaret, fear not. Time is on our side, and the future lies within our grasp. A minor setback will not hinder the ultimate outcome.

“You must always believe that our actions represent justice.”

Rhône, donning gold-rimmed spectacles, and the refined Margaret were bewildered. They couldn't fathom being associated with the concept of "justice."

Not only them, but even Cassandra with her red hair and the middle-aged, muscular Boduva looked at Hugues Artois in confusion, sensing they might have misheard.

Cautiously, Hugues Artois glanced towards the door, silently questioning if anyone might be eavesdropping.

After the red-haired Cassandra nodded, he launched into an impromptu speech.

"Ladies and gentlemen, while I may not possess the ability to convert and pray for a boon due to a binding contract, I have acquired a profound understanding of our world.

"You, better than anyone, should be aware that the vast cosmos above us represents an expansive universe. Countless planets exist within it, each akin to its own world. Many of these worlds harbor their own civilizations. The world we inhabit is but one among an endless expanse, as insignificant as a speck of dust.

"The seven deities have imprisoned us in this realm, preventing us from making contact with the civilizations that thrive in the universe. They desire our blindness and deafness, seeking to keep us enslaved for generations.

"They label these magnificent beings as evil gods. They weave falsehoods, warning us of the peril that lies in believing in these evil gods. Their goal is to prevent us from making contact with these higher civilizations, to keep us confined.

"If the belief in an evil god were genuinely dangerous, why do numerous civilizations in the universe, comprising different species, still exist?

"They are afraid. If these mighty entities were to descend upon our world, They alone would face destruction. Only the saints, angels, and fanatics who follow Them would be affected. For most people, it would merely be a shift in faith, devoid of peril.

"Believing in one of the seven deities is deemed faith, but believing in other great beings is not?

"We can no longer remain captive to the seven deities. We must venture forth into the future of humankind and the course of civilization. From the mere fact that boons can be obtained, these great beings are mightier than the seven deities. They will bestow protection and willingly offer their power. Their divine benevolence is boundless, akin to the vast sea.

"In the days to come, when we navigate the universe and reflect upon the journey we have undertaken, you shall come to comprehend that our cause is one of justice.

“In this process, death is an inevitability, yet those who perish are deserving. They are either aged, feeble, unlucky, or destined to meet such a fate. Most of the blame does not lie with us.

“Furthermore, they constitute only a minority. We cannot impede the majority from seeking refuge with a higher civilization, pursuing a better future.

“Ladies and gentlemen, sacrifices are inherent in any cause. As long as we steadfastly believe that our actions are driven by justice and persist unwaveringly, the future shall unquestionably be ours!

“In a decade's time, humanity will secure a ticket to join the circle of cosmic civilization. We shall no longer be barbarians, hiding in the shadows of obscurity!”

The red-haired Cassandra, Secretary Rhône, and the rest were left dumbfounded.

Who was the true believer of the evil god?

Each had their own reasons for following different evil gods, and deep down, they knew they had veered onto the wrong path. Nevertheless, they had already set foot on this journey and had no choice but to press forward. Thus, they either used faith as a facade to gradually reshape their understanding, or they completely surrendered themselves, seeking any motivation to propel them onward.

And yet, Hugues Artois, someone who clearly wasn't a believer and hadn't received any favors or undergone significant assimilation, managed to speak such astonishing and captivating words straight from the depths of his heart.

The four members of the campaign were taken aback, realizing the sense behind Hugues Artois' words, causing them to reevaluate the meaning behind their past actions.

After a few moments, the red-haired Cassandra let out a slow exhale. She looked at Hugues Artois and sincerely praised him.

“An exceptional speech, Monsieur Member of Parliament. In the future, when you choose your faith, I can recommend one for you.”

“Oh?” Hugues Artois inquired in a nasal voice.

Cassandra smiled and elaborated.

“Among the boons bestowed by that individual is one called Orator.”

Hugues Artois nodded and flashed a relaxed smile towards the four members of the team.

“Do not be disheartened by Tybalt's demise. We will remain steadfast in our original plan.”

Cassandra, Rhône, Margaret, and Boduva responded in unison.

“Yes, Monsieur Member of Parliament.”

In the depths of Underground Trier.

Lumian took a detour and returned to the quarry cave. Swiftly, he shed his clothes and shoes, removing the wig and beard that concealed his true appearance.

Once he changed back into his ragged tramp attire and adorned a dark-blue cap, semi-translucent crimson Fire Ravens materialized around him.

The Fire Ravens darted out, alighting upon the cane, shirt, bow tie, wig, and other objects, causing them to erupt in soft explosions of flame.

Lumian, having turned his back, proceeded towards the exit of Underground Trier. Crimson flames surged in his wake, consuming everything related to the previous attack, casting an illuminating glow within the dark cavern below.

Around midnight, in the depths of the Eternal Blazing Sun Inquisition beneath Église Saint-Robert.

Angoulême de François, engrossed in perusing the investigation records, heard a knock on his office door.

His brown coat, adorned with two rows of golden buttons, hung neatly on a coat rack near the entrance. He wore a light golden shirt featuring the emblem of the Sun Sacred Order, along with dark brown pants.

“Please, come in,” Angoulême calmly invited.

Valentine, powdered hair and face adorned with subtle makeup, entered the room.

He had been preoccupied with thoughts of Cordu all this time. Upon learning of survivors appearing in the Trier region, he had submitted an application and transferred to this post. His wife and child had long yearned for the bustling city of Trier, so they eagerly moved with him without much persuasion.

He was on night duty with a few teammates and happened to encounter the murder of the member of parliament's assistant secretary.

Valentine, clad in a slim blue tweed coat with a golden brooch, took a seat across from Angoulême and spoke directly.

“Deacon, why haven't we investigated Hugues Artois?”

“While most members of the Aurora Order may be crazy, they possess an uncanny ability to detect heretics. Although not every person they target is a believer in the evil gods, at least 70% are.”

“Considering the information we've gathered, we can reasonably conclude that Tybalt Jacques, who met his demise tonight, was a heretic and wielded the power of decay. Furthermore, he served as Hugues Artois's assistant secretary.”

“We cannot allow a highly suspicious individual to continue serving as a member of parliament. Investigating him is not only a responsibility to the people of the market

district, but also to Hugues Artois himself. If we find no evidence of wrongdoing, we can assist him in purging any heretics surrounding him.”

Angoulême hadn't anticipated his new team leader to be more devout and zealous than himself. He couldn't help but raise his hand and furrow his brows.

With a bitter smile, he responded.

“Perhaps you are unaware, but every member of parliament has signed a contract with the two Churches and received a notarized contract.

“In this contract, they pledge their faith, display their abilities and associated sources. The two Churches promise not to restrict the personal freedom of any member of parliament or their key staff without substantial and compelling evidence. They won't be subject to the influence of Beyonders.

“This is to safeguard the authority of the National Convention.

“According to the contract, Hugues Artois believes fervently in the mighty Eternal Blazing Sun and is not a Beyonder.

“Hence, you may question him and his core staff, but that is the extent of it.”

Valentine couldn't conceal his disappointment.

“Why is such a contract in place?”

“It is a byproduct of the past coup d'état, a change that accompanied the course of history,” Angoulême provided a simple explanation.

Sorry for the inconvenience. Thank you very much!

Valentine let out a sigh, rose from his seat, and extended his arms.

“Praise the Sun!”

“Praise the Sun!” Angoulême stood up and returned the gesture, watching his subordinate exit the office.

Quartier de Noël, Holy Palace Hospital.

Jenna sat upon a small stool, slumped beside her mother Elodie's lightly slumbering form in the hospital bed.

After bidding farewell to Franca and sending her brother Julien home, who had to attend to his factory duties come dawn, Jenna found herself alone. The Théâtre de l'Ancienne Cage à Pigeons had yet to resume its acting training, as plans were underway to auction it, along with Auberge du Coq Doré, at the police headquarters. However, the recent explosion at the Goodville Chemical Factory had caused a delay in those proceedings.

Suddenly, Elodie stirred. Jenna startled awake, her eyes fixating on her mother, who gradually opened her own.

Elodie's gaze mirrored the face of her daughter as she mustered a smile.

“I thought I was about to see your father.”

Without awaiting Jenna's reply, Elodie inquired, her voice frail, “How are my injuries?”

Jenna, overjoyed to witness her mother awaken from her coma, beamed genuinely and responded, “They're not severe. Look, no surgery is required.”

Elodie heaved a sigh of relief and nodded slowly.

Still recovering from her coma, her body and mind weren't yet in their prime state. After a brief exchange, she drifted back into slumber.

Jenna clasped her mother's hand and beheld the contentment that graced the wrinkled, gray-haired countenance beneath the gentle illumination streaming in from the window.

Observing for a while longer, she glanced upward and caught sight of the first rays of dawn gradually painting the sky with light.

Chapter 246 Resolution

As the first rays of dawn illuminated the room, Lumian slowly opened his eyes, awakened by the gentle chime of bells from Église Saint-Robert.

The previous night, he had stayed at Auberge du Coq Doré.

He raised his right hand to touch his head. His bald head had grown thick and healthy hair once more.

Leaving the comfort of his bed, Lumian walked over to the full-length mirror and saw a reflection that looked both familiar and unfamiliar.

Back in Cordu, his hair had never been dyed golden.

But in the morning light, he couldn't help but smile, feeling better than he had in a long time.

At the very least, he didn't meet with failure with everything he did. Killing and taking revenge didn't pose a problem.

Sorry for the inconvenience. Thank you very much!

After breakfast at a street vendor, Lumian planned to find a barbershop in either Quartier de l'Observatoire or Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative to revert his hair color to golden. But before he could set out, hurried footsteps approached his room.

He braced himself, thinking someone might kick the door open, but instead, there was a knock.

It was Franca, who rarely rose so early. She couldn't hide her surprise upon seeing Lumian's pure black hair.

“You dyed it back?” she exclaimed.

“Sort of,” Lumian replied, observing Franca as she entered Room 207 and closed the door behind her.

Without mincing words, Franca confronted him, “Did you kill Hugues Artois's assistant secretary? And did you rush to advance to Pyromaniac last night?”

Lumian stood up, smiling.

“Yes.”

Franca was momentarily at a loss for words with the frank admission.

After a few seconds, she hissed and said, “You brat, you promised me you would hold back and endure, but the very next moment, you went ahead without hesitation. You really can't suppress your hatred for a night, can you?”

“If you keep going like this, I seriously doubt you'll survive this year—no, this month!”

Lumian explained simply, “Actually, I didn't intend to kill Tybalt last night. I merely wanted to monitor him, gather information, and plan a proper approach to deal with him together with you. But an opportunity presented itself, and it was too good to pass up. I couldn't convince myself to hold back.”

“Right, I made preparations in all aspects, including measures against divination and tracking.”

Relieved, Franca asked, “That Tybalt guy seemed weak. Was it easy for you to handle him?”

“He mainly transmitted diseases through contact, and Pyromaniacs happened to counter that ability. If not for my anti-divination and anti-spirit channeling preparations, I could have taken care of him in ten seconds,” Lumian recalled.

Franca sighed, admitting, “You got lucky. Have you considered the possibility that your target might be much stronger?”

“My initial judgment was that he wouldn't be too formidable. If he exceeded a certain threshold, I was prepared to use my dirk,” Lumian replied before asking, “Why are you up so early?”

“Gardner woke me up!” Franca replied with gritted teeth. “He instructed me to gather the leaders of the Savoie Mob and find the person responsible for killing Hugues Artois's assistant secretary. When I heard the details, I knew it had to be you! I told you last night to get in the right condition before drinking the Pyromaniac potion, but you went ahead and consumed it anyway.”

Lumian spoke earnestly, his voice filled with sincerity. “I believed that I was in the perfect state to advance to Pyromaniac, so I swiftly concocted the potion. Will Boss suspect me?”

“For now, no,” Franca replied, shaking her head. “Besides yourself, nobody expected you to consume the potion last night. Moreover, you cunningly framed the Aurora Order. Gardner doesn't see any motive in you.”

Franca glanced at Lumian's head and suggested, “Come here, I'll help you restore your original hair color. It's best not to make any changes during a time like this to avoid arousing suspicion.”

“Alright,” Lumian agreed, feeling delighted to save some money.

In the morning, the ward buzzed with more activity compared to the somberness of the night. Echoing through the air were the cries of those being carried away, the presence of relatives escorting loved ones back home, and the determination of some patients who defied the cries, choosing to depart from the hospital's confines.

Jenna and Elodie—who had regained consciousness—observed the scene in silence. They understood the painful reality unfolding before them.

Not everyone could bear the weight of insurmountable medical expenses, nor did they wish to drag their families into the depths of despair.

Sometimes, the patient surrendered while the family persisted. Other times, it was the family that gave up, leaving the patient with no choice but to accept their fate. At times, patient and family would tacitly leave the ward, exchange silent glances, and be unable to hold back their tears as they cried or wailed.

After a while, as the ward regained a semblance of tranquility, Elodie, who had managed to sit up, whispered softly, “How long will I have to stay here for treatment?”

Jenna pondered for a moment before deciding to tell her mother the truth. It was an impossible matter to conceal. The doctors' rounds, treatments, and further examinations would inevitably reveal some information. Besides, Elodie would piece it together based on her physical condition and the fact that she hadn't been discharged after several days.

Organizing her thoughts, Jenna explained, “The doctor said you'll be here for months, possibly even half a year. Your external injuries aren't severe, but your body has suffered significant damage. Unless you make a full recovery, your condition may worsen.”

Before Elodie could respond, Jenna smiled reassuringly and continued, “I've already secured the funds for your treatment. I borrowed the money from Franca. She has no shortage of resources. She promised Julien and me that we could repay it in two to three years, in installments. By then, Dad's accident compensation will surely have been paid. There may even be hope for yours.”

Elodie's expression faltered for a moment. After a few seconds, she spoke with weariness in her voice, “Why will it take so long...”

“With such a massive explosion and the chemical gasses, it's a miracle that you survived,” Jenna said before asking. “What exactly happened back then?”

Elodie contemplated for a moment and replied wearily, “I don't know. The explosion happened so suddenly, and I lost consciousness.

“I think it originated near the metal tank. Sigh, many of the factory's facilities are old and prone to breakdowns. They require repairs, but the boss refuses to invest in replacements. Sigh...”

After chatting for a while, Jenna noticed her mother's energy waning. She advised Elodie to rest for a while and headed towards the washroom at the end of the corridor.

As soon as Elodie witnessed Jenna's departure from the ward, she mustered all her strength, disconnected the IV, and leaned against the wall for support. Gasping for breath, she took two steps towards the ward diagonally opposite, where doctors and nurses meticulously examined each injured individual.

Elodie located the doctor, provided her ward and bed number, and inquired, "How long will my treatment last?"

The doctor leafed through his records and responded, "We don't have all the results yet, but we estimate it will take about five to seven months."

"What will be the cost of treatment each month?" Elodie inquired.

The doctor pondered for a moment and replied, "Let's wait for the complete assessment. If all goes well, it should amount to around 200 verl d'or per week. As treatment progresses, the cost will decrease. However, if your condition isn't too favorable, it might range from 300 to 400 verl d'or per week. Furthermore, even after you leave the hospital, you must prioritize rest and avoid exerting yourself."

Elodie found herself rendered speechless. The nurse assisted her back to the ward and reinserted the needle into her arm.

Shortly before noon, Julien rushed into the ward, his concern for his mother evident in his eyes.

After conversing with him for a while, Jenna announced, "I'll go to the hospital cafeteria and bring back some food for you."

With that, she departed the ward, moving briskly as she descended the stairs.

Thanks to Lumian's guidance, Jenna had come to realize that she possessed extraordinary abilities as a Beyonder. She was no longer an ordinary individual. With a willingness to take calculated risks, she had numerous avenues to earn money.

Consequently, the expenses for Elodie's treatment and the overwhelming debt held no power over her. The fact that her mother had been saved was cause for celebration, a reason to extol the sun.

In the ward, Elodie gazed at Julien, who sat beside her, and posed a question with a tender expression, "You're nearly 23, aren't you?"

"That's right," Julien replied, a smile gracing his face. "I've been a provider for the family for quite some time now. But in your eyes, I'm still a youngling."

Elodie offered a faint smile and spoke, "That's because my criteria for true adulthood differ from others. I've always believed that one can only be considered an adult when they possess a skill that consistently earns them money. You're still a year away from that, and Celia has another year and a half to go.

"You've endured so much these past few years."

"It was you who endured," Julien responded with a sigh. "Before I could truly assist, you worked three jobs a day for a whole year, from 6 a.m. until midnight."

Emotions surged within him, causing him to blurt out, "We'll definitely cure you!"

Elodie chuckled in delight, her hand gently caressing her flaxen hair.

“Unfortunately, my wig is gone.

“And your sister. She previously deceived us, claiming that the theater required her to dye her hair a brownish-yellow shade. In reality, it was to prevent herself from being recognized when she went to sing at the dance hall. I don't know what to do with her.

“Sigh, I truly don't want you to shoulder more debt. It will waste years. By then, you won't be young anymore...”

Julien swiftly consoled his mother, assuring her that he excelled at his job and would undoubtedly receive a salary increase next year.

After rambling for a few minutes, Elodie clutched her chest and beseeched Julien, “I'm not feeling well. Please find a doctor for me.”

“Okay.” Julien stood up abruptly and dashed out of the room.

Elodie promptly removed the IV needle and stumbled toward the ward's window, relying on the nearby beds for support.

Meanwhile, on the first floor of Holy Palace Hospital.

Jenna emerged from the cafeteria, carrying a wooden lunch box, and began her journey up the staircase.

Suddenly, from the corner of her eye, she witnessed a figure hurtling downwards, resulting in a resounding thud.

Jenna's heart skipped a beat, her mind filled with unease. Hastily, she turned around, uncertain about the source of her apprehension. She dashed out of the hall and approached the spot where the person had jumped, maneuvering through the gathering crowd.

In the next instant, she beheld a crimson liquid seeping and a familiar face adorned with delicate wrinkles.

With a thud, the lunch box slipped from her grasp, crashing onto the ground. Her eyes grew vacant, reflecting a vivid red.

The lifeless body belonged to her mother, Elodie.

The person who had leaped from the building was her mother, Elodie.

Chapter 247 Instigation

In the café on the second floor of Salle de Bal Brise,

Lumian finished his lunch and caught sight of Franca once more. She was attired in a white shirt, light-colored breeches, and vibrant red boots.

This time, her countenance was grave, causing an uneasiness to settle upon Louis, Sarkota, and the other gangsters. They feared that trouble might accompany her arrival.

Lumian rose from his seat, casting an inquisitive gaze in her direction.

Franca exhaled slowly and spoke, her tone weighted with solemnity.

“Jenna's mother passed away.”

Lumian was taken aback, as though he had witnessed Flameng's lifeless body dangling from a window frame or Ruhr decaying to the bone.

His eyes narrowed, and his hands clenched into fists. After a few moments, he inquired, “Was it due to her declining condition?”

“No,” Franca shook her head. “It was suicide.”

Observing Lumian's perplexed expression, she sighed and elaborated, “Last night, when I sought out Jenna, I worried that she might put up a brave facade and keep her difficulties concealed or seek our assistance, so I made a point to meet the attending physician and the nurses responsible for her mother's care. I treated them to coffee and dessert, urging them to keep a close watch on Jenna's mother. I arranged for them to notify me immediately of any complications, and I pledged to cover any necessary expenses.

“They informed me that upon learning about the months-long treatment and its approximate cost, Jenna's mother took advantage of Jenna's visit to the cafeteria and Julien's absence in search of a doctor. She leaped from the sixth floor..

“Alas, her health was already frail, and she perished instantly upon impact.”

Lumian fell into a pensive silence. Suddenly, he pressed his left chest and sneered, “Is this fate?”

Franca couldn't provide an answer.

At 1 p.m., Lumian and Franca arrived at the Holy Palace Hospital. The nurse, whom Franca had deliberately befriended, guided them to the Farewell Sanctuary, situated on the ground floor of an annex.

The place was known as the Farewell Sanctuary, where the departed awaited their purification.

Julien, Jenna's brother, sat by the door, his head in his hands, wearing a pained expression as he stared at the sky-blue-painted wall opposite.

Approaching him, Franca asked in a hushed voice, “Are Auntie and Jenna inside?”

Julien nodded slowly and whispered to himself in anguish, “I shouldn't have left her alone in the ward...”

“I shouldn't have left her alone in the ward...”

Franca didn't know how to console him; all she could do was sigh and enter the Farewell Sanctuary alongside Julien.

Elodie's body lay on a bed covered by a white sheet, concealed beneath a plain white cloth.

The blood on her body had been cleansed. Her face appeared pallid, and her eyes were tightly shut.

Jenna sat on a stool across from her mother, her gaze empty and her voice absent, as if her soul had departed.

Franca called out, a mix of pain and concern in her tone, but Jenna ignored her, as if she had encased herself in another realm.

Lumian pulled up a chair and seated himself next to Jenna, his gaze also fixed upon the lifeless figure of Elodie.

After a few seconds, he spoke in a deep voice, "I understand what you're feeling. Not long ago, I, too, lost the family member who meant the most to me."

Jenna remained silent, as if she had transformed into a statue.

Lumian directed his gaze toward the same direction as Jenna and continued, "But you need to know who is responsible for this tragedy.

"Is it your fault? Is it your mother's fault? Is it your brother's fault?"

"No, you did nothing wrong! Faced with accidents and debts, you chose to endure them with determination. You chose to rely on your own labor and suffering to secure a new life. It took you several years to emerge from it slowly. Is that wrong? No!

"This time, you didn't abandon your loved one. You fought hard to find a solution. Is that wrong? No!

"You didn't hide anything from your mother. You informed her about the duration of the treatment, the costs, and the source of funding. Is that wrong? No! There was no way to conceal it!

"Your mother loves you and wants you to avoid reliving the painful past few years. She wants you to walk in the light, not in darkness. Is that wrong? No!

"Who is at fault?"

"It's the factory owner who continuously appeals and delays the compensation for the accident, subjecting you to years of painful and oppressive existence!

"It's the laws that protect their actions!

"It's Bono Goodville, who disregards safety regulations and fails to replace worn-out machines!

"It's the exorbitant cost of treatment that plunges the less fortunate into despair!

"It's the National Convention and the government who have caused all of this!"

Jenna's expression finally shifted, a glimmer of pain surfacing in her vacant eyes and impassive face.

Lumian turned towards the door, his voice resonating with depth as he spoke, "I have something else to say. Perhaps the explosion at Goodville Chemical Factory, which led to your mother's tragic fate, wasn't an accident."

Jenna instinctively turned to face Lumian and Franca.

Lumian directed his gaze towards Elodie's corpse.

"Perhaps it was a murder, a sacrificial offering to an evil deity.

"Our Honorable Member of Parliament, Hugues Artois, has been assessed by the Blessed of powerful evil gods as an open-minded individual. He is surrounded by heretics, including Tybalt Jacques, the assistant secretary responsible for spreading diseases and taking innocent lives.

"Yesterday morning, Bono Goodville paid a visit to the parliament member's office, and by evening, his chemical plant had exploded.

"When I encountered Tybalt Jacques in the guise of Bono Goodville, he mentioned something about unavoidable troubles following an organization's decay. It convinced me that the chemical plant explosion was something they eagerly anticipated. It might have been orchestrated with a specific purpose that remains unknown to us.

"Are you consumed by anger? Do you feel a burning hatred? Can you accept this?

"Do you wish to sit here and watch as the murderers responsible for your mother's death and the destruction of your happiness revel in champagne, indulge in dance parties, and inflict more heartbreak on innocent families?"

Jenna's expression twisted slightly, as if she grappled with conflicting emotions within.

Eventually, she raised her hands to cover her face, weeping bitterly.

"But my mother... she cannot be brought back..."

Franca crouched down before Jenna and embraced her, allowing her tears to flow freely. As Jenna wept, Franca offered her guidance, "What your mother desires most is for both you and your brother to be free from the burdens of debt and to embark on a fresh new life. She wishes for one of you to become a remarkable stage actress, while the other escapes the constraints of ordinary labor and masters a particular skill. She yearns for you to live well. Can you bear to disappoint her?"

Jenna sobbed and asked, "But isn't it said that the night will pass and light will emerge? Why? Why is it always so dark? Why can't I see any light..."

"It will come, it will come," Franca repeated, patting Jenna's back soothingly. "What you must do now is to give your mother a proper burial and consider doing something meaningful in her honor."

"Okay," Jenna agreed tearfully.

She wept until exhaustion overtook her, finally finding stability within her emotions.

At that moment, the clergyman from the Eternal Blazing Sun Church, who had come to offer his final words of solace, arrived.

Clad in a white robe adorned with intricate golden threads, he entered the room alongside Julien and positioned himself beside Elodie's lifeless body.

In one hand, he grasped the Holy Bible and recited a prayer, while the other hand held a suspended bottle of holy water.

Eventually, a beam of sunlight, accompanied by the holy water, materialized from thin air and gently bathed Elodie.

“Praise the Sun. May this sister find peace and enter the realm of God.” The clergyman extended his arms.

“Praise the Sun!” Jenna and Julien joined in prayer.

Sorry for the inconvenience. Thank you very much!

Observing the ceremony, Lumian bowed his head and silently scoffed.

Franca, a devout follower of the God of Steam and Machinery, refrained from praising the Sun as well.

With the purification ritual concluded, the priest departed from the Farewell Sanctuary. In his place, the administrator in charge of the Holy Palace Hospital morgue entered and posed a question to Julien and Jenna, “Should we proceed with burial or cremation for this sister? Shall we send her to the catacombs, Cimetière des Innocents, or Cimetière des Prêtres?”

Julien and Jenna exchanged glances before responding, “Cremation. We'll personally escort her to the catacombs.”

Their father also rested there.

The morgue administrator made a notation and added, “There have been numerous casualties from last night. The crematorium won't be available until next week. Would you like this sister to remain in the morgue for the time being?”

“Very well.” Jenna's voice trembled slightly.

And so, the four of them watched as Elodie's visage was veiled with a white cloth and her body was gently guided out of the Farewell Sanctuary.

They trailed behind the wheeled bed, descending through the steam-powered elevator into the subterranean realm until they arrived outside the morgue.

The morgue door gleamed in a silvery-gray hue, while the interior emanated an eerie coldness, producing a misty white fog at the intersection.

Jenna stood in a daze as her mother, Elodie, was propelled through the door, vanishing into the frigid chamber filled with metallic cabinets illuminated by gas-powered wall lamps. She remained fixated as the silver-gray door slowly shut.

Unconsciously, she took a few steps forward, halting at the threshold.

Silently, the door closed.

Her mother was now forever beyond her sight.

As they returned to Passy Bridge in Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman, Jenna's eyes fixed on her brother Julien, who walked ahead of her with a heavy heart. Sorrow engulfed her as the bright afternoon sun blinded her vision.

Franca averted her gaze from Julien's retreating form and contemplated finding a task to occupy Jenna's mind.

“Your brother is emotionally distressed. It seems he blames himself. Offer him guidance in the upcoming days and assure him that it wasn't his fault. Any ordinary person would have hurriedly sought a doctor.”

Jenna momentarily snapped out of her sorrow and tersely acknowledged, “I'll counsel him. But what if it doesn't work?”

She glanced at Lumian and Franca, her expression filled with helplessness.

Franca nodded reassuringly.

“When the time comes, I can assist him in finding a genuine Psychiatrist—one with Beyond abilities.”

Jenna let out a sigh of relief, her nose sniffing with gratitude.

“Thank you. Thank you both.”

Lumian, drawing from his own experiences, reminded her, “You must also attend to your own mental well-being.”

Jenna pressed her lips together and nodded, her gaze gradually transforming into one of determination.

In a hushed, raspy voice, she addressed Franca and Lumian, “Tonight, I intend to pay a ‘visit’ to Bono Goodville.”

Chapter 248 Visitors

In Quartier des Thermes, at 55 Rue Chestnut, stood a three-story building tinged with a grayish-blue hue. It boasted a delightful garden, a well-kept lawn, and even stables.

Within the establishment, a band played a melodic tune from a corner. Bono Goodville, the owner of this fine establishment, gracefully navigated through the guests with a glass of golden champagne in hand. Engaging in conversations about the aftermath of the chemical plant explosion, he cunningly aimed to evade his responsibilities while securing a substantial compensation from the insurance company.

Between his interactions, he chatted with the wife of a government official, conferred with his lawyer, and sought out influential figures relevant to the matter at hand.

Like a natural social butterfly, he effortlessly flitted from one person to another, exhibiting wit and vigor amidst the elegant setting. The light from the crystal chandelier illuminated his dark-blue eyes and thick brown beard, lending them a captivating sparkle.

As he gracefully maneuvered around an unassuming guest, Bono Goodville unexpectedly encountered Travis Everett.

The superintendent of Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman was not in uniform that evening. Clad in a sleek black suit paired with a stylish blue bow tie, he held a glass of light golden champagne in his hand.

“Superintendent Everett, it is imperative that you ensure my protection during this trying time!” Bono Goodville smiled at Travis Everett, expressing his concerns. “The explosion claimed many lives, and I fear their bereaved relatives might resort to drastic measures.”

Everett adjusted his black-framed glasses and returned the smile.

“Ah, you see, Quartier des Thermes falls beyond my jurisdiction. Moreover, once I stepped onto this street, it became evident that the frequency and intensity of police patrols have notably increased.”

“Indeed, but didn't you hire numerous bodyguards? What is there to worry about? Those who perished were ordinary workers. They pose no threat to you. Furthermore, they are unaware of your place of residence.”

Everett jestingly remarked, his tone lighthearted.

“But if the injured and their families discover that you continue to host a lavish banquet, serving fine wine while being serenaded by a small accompanying symphony band, their anguish might drive them to madness. They could drag you and your family into the depths of despair.”

Bono Goodville sheepishly smiled and replied, “The banquet is unrelated to compensation. I must adhere to the law and await judgment.”

“Superintendent Everett, if I were to return to the market district to handle matters, I humbly request your assistance in assigning two or three police officers to protect me.”

Everett gently nodded.

“That is my duty, but I must remind you that several police officers' families are employed at your chemical plant.”

Implicitly, he emphasized the urgency of compensating his subordinates, hoping for a swift resolution.

Bono Goodville nodded silently, seemingly unaffected.

The banquet continued into the early hours of the morning. Amidst the lingering fragrance, Bono Goodville bid farewell to his three children, embracing each one before ascending to the third floor.

Untying his bow tie, he entered the bedroom with his wife, ready to retire for the night.

With a flick, the gas wall lamp ignited, casting a soft glow that reflected in Bono Goodville's wide eyes.

There, in his cherished recliner, sat an unexpected guest.

Although seated, the man leaned forward, exuding an air of superiority that made Bono Goodville feel small and insignificant.

Clad in a worker's uniform of muted grayish-blue, complete with a dark-blue cap, his face concealed behind swaths of white bandages, leaving only his piercing blue eyes and a glimpse of his nostrils visible.

Bono Goodville's heart raced, his instinct urging him to scream for help.

However, before a sound could escape his lips, a phantom-like crimson flaming raven materialized behind the "surprise" visitor. With a swift swoop, it crashed into Bono Goodville's teeth.

A soft bang resonated as Bono Goodville's mouth seared with pain, and two teeth clattered to the ground. Agony distorted his features, stifling his cry.

At that precise moment, a pair of sharp daggers pressed against the backs of both Bono Goodville and his wife.

Emerging from the shadows of the doorway, Franca and Jenna closed the bedroom door behind them, effectively trapping their captives.

One of them donned a black robe with a concealed hood and leather armor, her face veiled by darkness. The other sported a man's linen shirt, a brown jacket, dark brown trousers, and laceless leather boots. A silver-white metal mask adorned her upper face, leaving only her eyes exposed.

Franca used her free hand to steady Bono Goodville, preventing him from collapsing in agony.

Maintaining his seated posture, Lumian grinned.

"Monsieur Goodville, consider that a warning. It could have been much worse. Those two missing teeth and minor injuries are nothing compared to what could have transpired."

Bono Goodville's wife snapped out of her daze, her voice trembling with fear as she asked, "Who are you? What do you want?"

"Who am I?" Lumian chuckled, a hint of mischief in his tone. "You may consider me your father."

With a glance toward Franca, she retrieved the truth serum Lumian had provided earlier and administered it to Bono Goodville.

As Lumian awaited the serum's effects, he maintained his smile and continued, "Monsieur Goodville, I had hoped for a more challenging encounter, but instead, here we are, having a pleasant conversation. You disappoint me."

He hadn't received a boon!

Under the influence of the truth serum, Bono Goodville wore a bitter expression as he mustered the courage to ask, "What do you want? I have a considerable sum of money in my safe. I can give it to you!"

Jenna's anger flared up, surging from her chest to her head.

In a sudden motion, she raised her left foot and delivered a swift kick to Bono Goodville's calf.

Oh, how she longed to strike him where it truly hurt, but circumstances prevented her from doing so!

Dammit, take your money to the catacombs!

Bono Goodville's body leaned, and the sound of bones cracking reached his ears.

Before his instinctual scream could escape, frost materialized, sealing his voice.

Lumian nodded in approval, acknowledging Jenna's actions. Once Bono Goodville had regained composure, Lumian spoke, "I want to know why you orchestrated the detonation at your own chemical plant."

Bono Goodville's expression transformed, and he blurted out, "How did you find out?"

Before he could finish his sentence, he wished to raise his right hand and slap himself.

Shouldn't he have denied the accusation first? Why did he utter his thoughts so recklessly?

"Well, well, you are quite forthcoming. I was merely testing you, and you readily confessed," Lumian remarked, his tone almost causing Bono Goodville's brain to seize.

Jenna felt as if her soul had vacated her body.

Though Lumian's analysis had mentally prepared her, hearing the admission still left her in disbelief.

Could there truly exist such a wicked individual?

Hundreds of families were devastated!

Snapping out of her stupor, Jenna clenched her teeth tightly,

fearing that any relaxation might ignite her anger, prompting her to stab Bono Goodville.

Sorry for the inconvenience. Thank you very much!

No, it would be hundreds of stabs!

Goodville's wife also stared at her husband in a state of shock and fear.

She had believed the explosion at the chemical plant to be a mere accident.

Lumian cast a cold gaze upon Bono Goodville and questioned, "Why did you do it? Does it have any connection to someone within Hugues Artois' office?"

Upon hearing the latter inquiry, Bono Goodville could not contain his astonishment and dread.

After consuming the peculiar liquid and “confessing” to orchestrating the chemical plant explosion, Bono Goodville's psychological defenses crumbled. In that moment, an overwhelming urge consumed him—to drag someone down with him and share the burden of his sins.

“It's Rhône and Tybalt! They are Secretary and Assistant Secretary to Member of Parliament Hugues Artois.

“They have been dropping hints that the chemical plant has been deteriorating for years and could explode at any given moment. I thought I might as well find a way to cash in on the insurance compensation I had purchased in the past. And when the time came, Member of Parliament Hugues Artois would use the excuse of setting up a factory to boost the economy and protect the interests of the factory owner, thereby securing funds for reconstruction and compensation.

“They kept saying that everything decays. My chemical plant was no exception, so I anticipated various problems. Instead of waiting for it to explode naturally, I decided to exchange it for greater benefits.

“I visited them again yesterday morning. For some reason, I was foolish enough to be convinced by their words. When the explosion actually occurred, I grew fearful and went to the member of parliament's office thrice.

“They assured me everything would be fine.”

What an idiot. He's not even a heretic... Could superpowers have influenced him? Tybalt had also mentioned decay when he saw me disguised as Bono Goodville. What is their true agenda? Lumian pondered for a moment, about to inquire further about the conversation, when the sound of a doorbell being pulled suddenly resonated from the iron gate outside the lawn.

Lumian and Franca exchanged swift glances, both coming up with guesses.

To arrive at such an hour, ringing the doorbell politely, it could only be either a friend or an official investigator seeking Bono Goodville!

Without uttering a word, Lumian rose to his feet, and Franca sheathed her dagger in silence.

Jenna reacted instantly, comprehending their intentions.

Taking a diagonal step, she raised her dagger high and thrust it into Bono Goodville's shoulder.

Blood spurted forth as Bono Goodville let out a pained grunt.

Jenna didn't linger. She dashed towards the window opposite the main entrance.

On her dagger, black flames ignited and swiftly extinguished in several spots within the room.

The trio leaped out of the building, vaulted over the iron fence bordering the garden, and vanished into the encompassing night.

Inside the bedroom, a three-person team consisting of Angoulême, Valentine, and the mixed-blood Imre confronted Bono Goodville, who had just finished bandaging his scorched mouth.

The factory owner seethed with anger as he addressed them, "Officer, I was nearly abducted by three criminals!"

Angoulême surveyed the scene, a smile playing on his lips.

"We will investigate that matter later. For now, the primary problem lies with you."

"My problem?" Bono Goodville grew alarmed.

Angoulême nodded slightly.

"Let us first confirm your faith before delving into your visit to the member of parliament's office on the morning of the chemical plant explosion."

With insufficient evidence to take drastic measures against the member of parliament and his staff, the Purifiers redirected their investigation towards Bono Goodville.

Upon hearing these words, Bono Goodville, his psychological defenses shattered, paled in apprehension.

Chapter 249 Loophole in the Contract

Observing Bono Goodville's reaction, Angoulême's confidence grew a little.

With a swift motion, he withdrew a pen and paper, preparing to draft a Notary Certificate. The concept behind it was for Bono Goodville to swear an oath to a deity, ensuring his honesty during the subsequent questioning.

As Angoulême affixed his signature, the paper emitted a radiant golden glow.

Bono Goodville swallowed nervously, feeling the weight of the situation.

In recent years, as a well-known factory owner in Trier, he had encountered mystic knowledge and extraordinary powers that surpassed the imagination of ordinary folk. Such matters were not unfamiliar to him. It was akin to one of the three abductors blasting him with a flaming raven, another conjuring black flames, and a third leaping from the third floor.

"Sign your name," Angoulême instructed, handing Bono Goodville the Notary Certificate, now devoid of its golden glow.

"Very well." Bono Goodville's right hand trembled as he inscribed his name upon the pledge.

With each stroke, a flash of golden light emanated from his penmanship.

Once he finished, Angoulême spoke in a deep, commanding voice.

"Which deity do you believe in?"

"The God of Steam and Machinery." For Bono Goodville, this question held no challenge.

Angoulême proceeded to the next inquiry.

“Why did you visit the member of parliament's office on the morning of the chemical plant explosion?”

Bono Goodville hesitated for two seconds. Fearful of supernatural powers and divine witnesses, he repeated what he had divulged to Lumian and the others under the influence of the remaining truth serum.

Angoulême, Valentine, and Imre took turns posing questions, allowing Bono Goodville to reconstruct his conversation with the Member of Parliament's secretary, Rhône, and his assistant secretary, Tybalt, as accurately as possible.

When the inquiry concluded, Angoulême delivered the verdict to Bono Goodville.

“You shall be arrested for arson, deliberate detonation of an explosion, and murder. Your assets will be temporarily frozen pending compensation for the deceased and injured.”

Bono Goodville's face drained of color as he slumped into the recliner, utterly depleted.

Valentine took a couple of steps towards the door, casting a glance at the corridor beyond. Lowering his voice, he proposed, “Deacon, after we bring this blasphemous scoundrel to the police headquarters, shall we formally apprehend Hugues Artois's secretary, Rhône?”

Angoulême sighed, shaking his head slowly.

“Not yet.

“Did you not notice? Rhône and the late Tybalt were exceedingly cautious. They never explicitly suggested that Bono Goodville instigated the explosion at his chemical plant. They merely insinuated their support for the member of parliament's policies and preached a philosophy of decay. They might exploit Bono Goodville's blinded mind, misconstruing their words to justify his actions.

“It has been nearly two days, and finding any traces of Bono Goodville being influenced by superpowers is proving challenging.

“Put simply, we lack sufficient evidence to apprehend Secretary Rhône and employ Beyond powers in the interrogation. We can only summon and question him through conventional means.”

Valentine seethed with anger, but he realized there was nothing he could do.

He harbored an unwavering certainty that something was awry with the member of parliament's secretary, yet due to regulations, he couldn't employ mystical methods to confront him.

After a brief pause, he glanced at Bono Goodville, sprawled on the recliner like a heap of decaying meat, and spoke with a deep voice, “I suggest we deliver him to the stake!”

Angoulême nodded, addressing Valentine and Imre, “Let us proceed. Take this man back to the market district, where he deserves to meet his end in ten different manners.”

Valentine was taken aback.

Sorry for the inconvenience. Thank you very much!

“Deacon, aren't we going to track down the three Beyonders who infiltrated this place?”

Angoulême chuckled. “Why should we?”

Valentine gazed at him, perplexed by his deacon's approach.

Imre, accustomed to his ways, whispered, “The three Beyonders infiltrated this place without pillaging or harming anyone. They merely sought information about the chemical plant explosion and the visit to the member of parliament's office. It's evident they possess a genuine interest in Secretary Rhône and Member of Parliament Hugues Artois.”

“I even wonder if they're from the Aurora Order, and one of them is the one who killed Assistant Secretary Tybalt.”

Angoulême chuckled and added, “Since we are barred from thoroughly investigating the member of parliament's office due to contracts and regulations, why not allow untamed Beyonders, equally keen on prying and employing violence, to squeeze out the pus and expose it to the sunlight?”

“Wouldn't that pose a problem?” Valentine blurted out.

Amused, Angoulême responded, “Of course not. When dealing with cunning individuals adept at exploiting regulations, we must be even more cunning and find loopholes. If need be, we can even collaborate with secret organizations and unite with wild Beyonders.

“The contracts we hold with members of parliament and high-ranking officials only limit certain actions; they don't prohibit us from harboring ill intentions or cultivating informants among untamed Beyonders. Such contracts don't constrain the actions of untamed Beyonders.

“Likewise, these contracts mainly serve as restrictions. They don't compel us to take certain actions. Sometimes, we can observe events unfold without transgressing the contract while handling things in the usual manner.

“Valentine, even beneath the sun, shadows abound. Consider everyone's shadows, for instance. You must learn to coexist with them. At times, you must eliminate them, and at others, utilize them to extol the Sun!”

Valentine recalled his collaboration with Lumian in Cordu and reluctantly embraced the deacon's words. He extended his arms and replied, “Praise the Sun!”

Angoulême added, “I did not craft these words. Ever since Emperor Roselle's demise, the two Churches, parliament, the government, the military, and Bureau 8 have been embroiled in conflicts. Each has amassed considerable combat experience that would not be deemed aboveboard in any other context.

“Hence, why do you think I silently permit the presence of wild Beyonders amidst the mobs of the market district? Based solely on the reassurances and rhetoric of the superintendents? No, I merely believe they may prove useful at some point.

“Of course, it is everyone's responsibility to tolerate the convergence of heretics into a large mob. I am no exception. There are advantages and disadvantages to everything.”

Valentine contemplated in silence, refraining from further inquiries.

Similar tensions were apparent in Riston Province, although they paled in comparison to those in Trier. After all, this was the heartland of the nation.

During their journey from Underground Trier to the market district, Lumian, having removed his bandages, cast a glance at the silent Jenna and casually remarked, “I thought you'd dispatch Bono Goodville on the spot, subjecting him to unforgettable torment even if he became a ghost. Who would've guessed you'd merely stab him in the shoulder?”

Jenna pursed her lips and took a few steps ahead before responding in a hushed voice, “If he dies now, the legal process for accident compensation will drag on for years. It might even be symbolic...”

Though she no longer cared, many people still awaited justice.

Franca subtly nodded and added, “Fear not. Bono Goodville will undoubtedly face the death penalty. The only question is the means. Besides, we have left clues for the official Beyonders. Just as we shield Hugues Artois, we shall always assist in eliminating hidden dangers.”

Jenna offered a sad smile.

“That's the member of parliament we elected. His secretary and assistant secretary greeted us with an enormous explosion intentionally.”

“Are you afraid?” Lumian mockingly inquired.

Jenna fell silent, momentarily at a loss for words.

Lumian pressed on, “I have never relished the benefits of Intis, nor have I cast a vote. Should I encounter a similar situation, I would not spare the member of parliament's secretary or even the president who governs this country!

“My sister once said that blood alone can repay blood. I care not for the identity of the bleeding individual.”

Jenna's expression contorted once more, and she spoke with a tinge of anguish, “My mother always taught me to be kind and embrace forgiveness. I cannot allow suffering and hatred to dictate my life. That way, I shall never see the light...”

Without waiting for Lumian and Franca to respond, she lowered her head and gritted her teeth.

“But I despise it so much!”

Lumian pursed his lips and stated, "If you eliminate all your enemies, your life shall not be governed by hatred."

Jenna fell silent for a few seconds before giving a terse nod.

"At the very least, at the very least, I shall not let Secretary Rhône off the hook!

Franca promptly commended her, "Very good. Maintain this resolve."

She then emphasized, "Of course, revenge cannot be blind or impulsive. You must wait until you are strong enough and seize the opportune moment to act. Otherwise, you shall only bring more harm to your family and friends. Furthermore, you will have to witness your enemy living a good life."

"Alright," Jenna softly replied, nodding.

Late at night, Jenna, clad in her usual attire, returned to her home at 17 Rue Pasteur in Quartier du Jardin Botanique, her emotions in disarray.

This place was situated near Rue Saint-Hilaire in the market district and the multitude of factories south of Quartier du Jardin Botanique. Previously, Jenna's family had opted to rent this place for the convenience of Elodie and Julien's work.

Upon opening the door, Jenna was greeted by the sight of her brother, Julien, crouched by the window, his head buried in his hands.

Her heart sank, and her voice quivered as she inquired, "Julien, what's the matter?"

Illuminated by the crimson moonlight, Julien leaned against the old wooden table, wearing an expression of terror.

"Don't fire me! Don't fire me!

"My mother passed away. She really passed away. That's why I didn't come to the factory this afternoon...

"Don't fire me! Don't fire me!

"Mom, Mom, it's all my fault. I shouldn't have left you alone in the ward!

"It's all on me, entirely!

"Sob!"

Julien broke into tears, resembling a frightened child.

It seemed as though he had lost his sanity.

Jenna stood in the darkness at the doorway, gazing blankly at her brother. It felt as though she was slowly descending into an unfathomable abyss.

Chapter 250 Condolence Banquet

Julien's sobs reverberated through the room, bathed in the glow of the moon. Jenna stood hesitantly by the door, unwilling to take a single step forward.

Fear gripped her—fear that stepping inside would confirm this as reality and not some dreadful nightmare.

After a while, Jenna shut her eyes tightly and clenched her teeth as she entered the room that served as Julien's bedroom, living space, kitchen, and dining area.

Hunching down beside her brother, she let him cry, not daring to touch him in his state of shock. Softly, she spoke, “We don't have much debt left to settle. Even if we lose our current jobs, we can find new ones. There's no rush...”

“You have a solid foundation. There must be other masters out there who would gladly take you in...”

“Mom wanted us to have a better life, not to wallow in self-blame...”

Jenna repeated these words again and again until Julien, his spirit shattered, exhausted himself. His body gradually weakened, and he slumped against the wall by the window, drifting off to sleep.

Finally, silence fell.

Watching her brother's face slowly relax, his fear and anguish ebbing away, Jenna let out a silent sigh. Tears welled up in her eyes and streamed down her cheeks.

After shedding silent tears for some time, she rose to her feet and made her way to Julien's bed. Tenderly, she gathered the blanket and draped it over her sleeping brother, leaning against the wall.

Having done all this, she trudged wearily back to the other room. It was her and her mother Elodie's bedroom.

Jenna lay down, her vacant eyes fixed on the dimly lit ceiling, cast in moonlight.

Her mother's words echoed incessantly in her mind, but she couldn't convince herself.

Perhaps, aside from a fortunate few, darkness was the dominant theme in life. Light was but an occasional adornment.

Abruptly, Jenna seized her mother's pillow and pressed it against her face, her body trembling with suppressed sobs.

Why, why is darkness always so overpowering, devoid of light?

When will the sun rise again?

At some point, Jenna succumbed to a deep slumber.

She was startled awake by the commotion outside.

Sitting up, she rubbed her swollen eyes and hastened out of the room.

The sight that greeted her eyes was Julien, toasting slices of bread.

He no longer bore the devastation of the previous night; instead, he was focused on his task.

Jenna's lips quivered for a moment before she finally spoke her customary greeting.

“Why are you up so early?”

Julien responded with a touch of stiffness, "I didn't have dinner yesterday, and my hunger woke me up.

"Just wait a little longer. The toast will be ready soon."

Observing her brother's state, Jenna couldn't ease her worry.

If Julien were still in the midst of a mental breakdown, weeping as he did the night before, she might feel uncomfortable, gloomy, and desperate, but she wouldn't be afraid.

She would compel her brother to meet Franca and have her find a genuine psychiatrist for his treatment.

Yet now, she couldn't be certain if Julien had genuinely recovered or if he was merely presenting a facade of normalcy.

If there were unresolved issues lurking beneath, they could prove catastrophic when they resurfaced!

Jenna feared her brother might leap from a building and end his own life just after they finished breakfast.

Carefully observing Julien for a while, she sensed that his hysterical breakdown had indeed dissipated, but his mind hadn't fully returned to its usual state.

When Julien prepared breakfast, he moved with agility and skill. No issues there. However, during their conversations, he appeared wooden, rigid, and slow to react.

This convinced Jenna that her brother had repressed not only his breakdown and abnormalities but also his thoughts and soul.

Sigh... I still have to find a real Psychiatrist... Jenna's vision blurred once more.

Before long, Julien finished toasting the bread and went to a nearby vendor to purchase a relatively fresh can of milk.

As Jenna nibbled on her breakfast, she pretended indifference and glanced at her brother.

"I couldn't sleep last night, and I felt despondent. I want to see a psychiatrist. You don't seem any better. Would you like to come with me?"

After a brief pause, Julien replied, "I need to job hunt."

A wave of sorrow washed over Jenna once more.

Her brother didn't question her pursuit of a psychiatrist.

People in this neighborhood were reluctant to visit even a regular doctor, let alone a psychiatrist, for mental concerns.

Most of them were unaware of the profession of "psychiatrist" and didn't believe they had any psychological issues.

Considering that seeing a genuine Psychiatrist might require an appointment, Jenna didn't press the matter. After some contemplation, she spoke encouragingly, "I think you should choose your

employer and master carefully this time. It's normal not to find a job within a few days. It might take a week, or two, or even a month.

“When the time comes, both of us will have an income. Maybe we can settle the remaining debt within a year. I certainly can't do it alone. The income of an underground singer isn't stable. I never know when my popularity might wane.”

On the one hand, Jenna aimed to alleviate the pressure on her brother in advance, so he wouldn't break down again due to the inability to find a job quickly. On the other hand, she emphasized his importance, assuring him that she couldn't do it alone. By relying on his responsibility, she sought to fortify his will to survive and prevent any sudden thoughts of suicide.

Jenna, who had never considered such details the previous day, couldn't help but ponder similar matters today.

Having repeatedly steadied Julien's condition, she watched her brother depart for the gathering spot at Quartier du Jardin Botanique, where factories sought employees and gave opportunities.

After taking a brief rest, Jenna left 17 Rue Pasteur, still feeling somewhat weary, and made her way towards Rue Saint-Hilaire, which was within close proximity.

Her plan was to stroll leisurely towards Rue des Blouses Blanches. It would coincide with Franca waking up, enabling her to persuade Franca to arrange an appointment with a genuine Psychiatrist.

Lost in her thoughts as she passed the intersection, Jenna's gaze swept across the vacant space, catching sight of a newspaper article displayed on a nearby newsstand: “Member of Parliament Hugues Artois Stresses Impartial Handling of Goodville Chemical Factory Explosion.”

Intrigued, Jenna was drawn to the words, instinctively stepping closer and picking up the newspaper to swiftly peruse the news.

“...Newly elected member of parliament, Hugues Artois, believes it is unjust to vilify factory owners solely based on accidents. Nor should factory owners, who generate numerous jobs and contribute taxes to the country, face bankruptcy after enduring a mishap. Such circumstances would result in a surge of bankruptcies, heightened unemployment rates, and a fresh wave of protests and turmoil.

“Hugues Artois has expressed his commitment to not forget the injured and deceased in the explosion. He intends to establish a new public welfare fund to assist factory owners in covering a portion of accident compensation, enabling the factories to continue operating. Those responsible for the accident will bear the weight of their sins through increased job creation and tax contributions.

“He further stated his intent to propose a bill at the National Convention, fostering a more favorable environment for entrepreneurs. This would involve streamlined dismissal of unqualified workers and employees, as well as fairer compensation for accidents...”

At that moment, Jenna's shoulders quivered unexpectedly.

She laughed, her body trembling for an extended period.

After a while, she set the newspaper down and resumed her onward journey.

Unbeknownst to her, Jenna arrived at Rue Saint-Hilaire and the partially destroyed Goodville Chemical Factory.

As she gazed at the battered metal tank, thoughts of her mother, Elodie, flooded her mind once again.

She would always gravitate towards that iconic structure upon entering the factory.

A few minutes later, through her blurred vision, Jenna spotted an unfamiliar yet vaguely familiar face.

It was a woman donned in a worn-out dress who said to Jenna, "Hurry, let's make our way to Avenue du Marché. The member of parliament is hosting a condolence banquet and extending invitations. We might be able to obtain something!"

"A condolence banquet?" Jenna asked, bewildered.

The woman nodded enthusiastically.

"Yes, indeed! Your mother was injured in the explosion too, don't you remember? We met in the ward.

"That member of parliament arrived at the hospital just half an hour ago. There will be a condolence banquet later!"

"Hugues Artois?" Jenna blurted out instinctively.

"Exactly, exactly. That's the name," the woman affirmed, grasping the dazed Jenna's arm and hastening towards the member of parliament's office on Avenue du Marché.

Half an hour later, they reached the khaki-colored four-story building.

Many individuals dressed like paupers were queued up for inspection, awaiting entry into the hall.

Jenna, wearing a simple grayish-blue dress, let her hair fall naturally over her shoulders without any makeup.

She joined the back of the line and gradually made her way forward.

Nearly fifteen minutes later, it was finally her turn.

A woman in a dark-blue uniform began the inspection, starting with Jenna's head and proceeding to her boots.

After confirming the absence of any dangerous items, the woman directed her to register and verify her identity before entering the banquet hall.

Auberge du Coq Doré, Room 207.

Lumian cast a surprised glance at Franca, who had appeared at the door, and exclaimed, "You're early again today."

Franca, still donning a blouse, light-colored breeches, and red boots, was now clad in a different ensemble.

She scoffed and retorted, "I'm merely concerned that you and Jenna might outwardly agree, only to carry out an assassination on the Member of Parliament's secretary, Rhône."

"Am I seen as such a reckless individual in your eyes?" Lumian inquired.

"Yes," Franca responded without hesitation.

She even contemplated adding the word "most," but when she recollected a Folk of Rage she had encountered in a seaside town, she felt that Lumian couldn't be categorized as one.

Breathing a sigh of relief, she continued, "Since you haven't acted impulsively, Jenna should be safe. I'll go and visit her, assessing if she requires any assistance at home."

Sorry for the inconvenience. Thank you very much!

Just as Franca concluded her statement, hurried footsteps resounded from downstairs, drawing nearer.

Lumian and Franca, positioned by the doorway, turned their heads to behold Jenna, garbed in a simple grayish-blue dress, her hair tousled, rushing over in distress. She sobbed and uttered, "My brother, my brother has gone insane! He's become a lunatic..."