

Inevitability 291

Chapter 291 Important Figure

Lumian set his glass down and flashed a smile, speaking in Intisian but with the accent of the Riston Province.

“I arrived in Trier just two days ago. Came to Lavigne in search of work.”

Thanks to Aurore's help, he could speak like a local from Trier, shedding his Riston Province Dariège accent. Having spent six years in Cordu, he had a knack for learning, imitating, and adapting to new dialects effortlessly.

...

The tired bartender looked around as if he hadn't slept well and spoke cautiously, “That's the famous Blazing Danitz, a significant figure at sea!”

“I've never heard of him,” Lumian replied bluntly.

The bartender cleared his throat, reminding Lumian to watch his tone and attitude.

“Have you heard about the six Pirate Kings and nine Pirate Admirals?”

“A little,” Lumian honestly admitted.

His knowledge about the Pirate Kings and Pirate Admirals came from newspapers and adventure novels, and he was aware of Gehrman Sparrow hunting down a few. He knew that the great adventurer's servant, Dubois, had once served as a pirate on Vice Admiral Iceberg's ship. He knew of Ailment Maiden or Vice Admiral Ailment, and the frequent change of Pirate Admirals. As for the Pirate Kings, they were well-established and had held their positions for so long that no one could remember when they first came to power.

Realizing Lumian wasn't completely ignorant, the bartender breathed a sigh of relief.

“That individual used to be a pirate, acknowledged to be stronger than all the Pirate Admirals, second only to the six Pirate Kings.”

Quite impressive... Lumian couldn't determine the exact Sequences of the Pirate Admirals and Pirate Kings, but their survival despite constant pursuit by the authorities showed they weren't weak.

Blazing Danitz ranked seventh among the pirates, almost reaching the level of a quasi-Pirate King. He was undeniably formidable!

A Saint? If he's one, the same can be said for the Pirate Kings... The strongest among Sequence 5s? Lumian quickly grasped the bartender's words.

“Used to be?”

“Yes, used to be. He's no longer a pirate or a Treasure Hunter. Look, there's no wanted poster of him on the wall.” The bartender gestured around.

But there's my wanted poster... Thankfully, the bounty is low. It's tucked away in a corner where no one pays attention... Lumian asked curiously, "He can just stop being a pirate because he wants to? Did the authorities cooperate and revoke his wanted poster?"

Which country or orthodox Church did he surrender to?

The bartender lowered his voice even further.

"He's now a member of the Church of The Fool, the envoy of that deity."

Mr. Fool's Oracle? Perhaps that one and only Oracle? Lumian was taken aback.

The bartender assumed Lumian wasn't familiar with the Church of The Fool, so he explained, "That's a deity recognized by all orthodox Churches. Heh heh, why would a deity choose such a name?"

"The Fool's faith is very popular at sea. Many sea merchants and sailors believe in Him. They even pooled money to build The Fool cathedral in Lavigny."

"The cathedral's bishop is that Oracle?" Lumian deliberately lowered his voice.

"No." The bartender shook his head. "But Blazing Danitz often comes to Trier. He likes it here. Yes, he's from Intis. There isn't an Intisian who doesn't long for Trier."

Just as Lumian was about to say something, the important figure at sea, the Oracle of The Fool's Church, Blazing Danitz, finished his remaining wheat beer and stood up, heading towards Sea Breeze's entrance.

Almost simultaneously, the sailors—playing cards, drinking, boasting, and making out with street girls—stood up in an unusually orderly fashion.

They didn't cause any commotion as they silently and orderly followed Blazing Danitz out of the bar.

If he hadn't witnessed this scene, Lumian wouldn't have realized that all the sailors in the bar were subordinates of The Fool's Oracle.

Blazing Danitz... From his nickname, he deals with fire... Could he also be from the Hunter pathway? Lumian sipped his Lanti Proof and chatted with the bartender about the Church of The Fool.

"What kind of deity is The Fool?"

The bartender gestured a triangular Sacred Emblem on his chest and shook his head.

"I'm not a follower, so how would I know?"

"By steam!" Lumian drew a triangular Sacred Emblem on his chest as well.

The bartender glanced at the empty area and said, "But the Church of The Fool isn't bad. Even if you're just a tramp, even if you don't believe in The Fool, you can still receive communion after entering their cathedral."

“If you ask them for help, you might even get a meal with meat and bread and a room to sleep in.”

“Should I join the queue now?” Lumian asked with a smile.

The bartender shook his head again.

“No need. They can't leave the cathedral to preach or proselytize. Only the local tramps know they can seek help there, but they only go once in a while because the Church of The Fool is more willing to offer job opportunities to them.”

After a pleasant chat and having figured out the schedule of The Fool's cathedral's bishop sermons, Lumian finished his Lanti Proof and decided to make the most of the spare time by exploring the nearby streets in detail.

He soon noticed that several strategic points were guarded by the military, armed with cannons and massive firearms that required water-cooling.

The government's distrust of these sailors and merchants, who occasionally indulge in piracy around the docks, is evident... Lumian turned away and hurried towards The Fool's cathedral before darkness fell.

The cathedral had a simple layout, devoid of gold embellishments or intricate machinery. The most remarkable aspect was its numerous windows, allowing natural light to illuminate the interior without the need for candles and gas lamps even before nightfall.

Like many religious spaces, the walls were adorned with giant murals, although the colors were muted and somber.

Using the fading light of dusk, Lumian examined the mural's contents and discovered that it depicted a wilderness where humans struggled to navigate.

These humans were unusually tall, almost resembling legendary giants. Some had three eyes, while others lacked noses, leaving only two dark holes. They looked more like monsters than ordinary people.

Despite the pain and despair evident on their faces, their eyes shimmered with hope.

Leading these peculiar humans were several distinct and detailed guides. Some had gray hair and carried two swords on their backs. Others wielded dark-blue sledgehammers emitting a sun-like glow. There were also figures clad in dark black armor with silver-gray curly hair...

At the forefront of these guides stood a figure.

Dressed in a black trench coat and a half top hat, the figure walked with a straight back, holding a lantern.

Just ahead of the figure was a ball of light—the altar of The Fool's cathedral—a silver-white Sacred Emblem emitting a radiant glow under the sunlight.

Lumian's attention was drawn to a few stained glass panes. Sculpted in an exaggerated style, angels and saints adorned them. Some were also featured in the murals, while others were not. There were angels with wings and halos, and saints with only halos.

Lumian carefully circled the area, observing for over half an hour. Eventually, he found a seat and settled in to wait for the 6 p.m. sermon.

As time passed, many people entered the cathedral. Some were dressed as merchants, others as typical sailors. There were also dockworkers, visibly exhausted after a long day's work, and a few street girls as well.

Amidst the tolling of the bell, the bishop arrived at the altar.

His hair and eyes shone with a golden hue. Towering at 2.56 meters tall, he donned a finely tailored black trench coat and a half top hat, hardly resembling a typical clergyman.

With a hearty gesture, the boorish bishop pressed his hand to his chest and called out in a booming voice, "Praise The Fool!"

"Praise The Fool!" echoed the gathered believers, and Lumian enthusiastically joined in.

Flipping through the black-and-silver-patterned bible in his hand, the bishop spoke with a voice that reverberated through the cathedral,

"Our lord is known as The Fool. Across past, present, and future, he reigns supreme over the spirit world. He is also the King of Yellow and Black who wields good luck. A beacon for all in the pursuit of eternity...

"He is compassionate, benevolent, and the savior of this world. He allows us to address him as him instead of Him...

"Our lord resides above both reality and the spirit world. His benevolence extends to Heaven and the land. Beside him stand eight angels...

"The Angel of Mercury is the embodiment of fate, our Lord's most cherished angel. The Angel of Death has followed our Lord for the longest period of time and is the consul of the Underworld. The Angel of Redemption is our Lord's bugle, once taking on the form of Gehrman Sparrow to deliver his revelations. The Angel of Life is the crystallization of wisdom itself, the indestructible spirituality that resides in everyone's body."

Gehrman Sparrow? That adventurer is an angel of Mr. Fool? Lumian was astonished by the revelation.

The giant bishop continued, "There's also the Angel of Retribution beside the Lord's throne. He is the Lord's lightning, the Lord's rage, and the Lord's palm, the judge of all the fallen and the ones who aren't chaste.

"Next to the Angel of Retribution is the Angel of the Holy Spirit, reigning over all spirits and representing our lord in controlling the spirit world.

"In contrast to Them, there are the Angel of Time and the Angel of Stars.

“The Angel of Time was an angel of ancient times. He eventually submitted to our Lord and now strikes the bell of Heaven.

“The Angel of Stars is a witness, a recorder, the eyes and ears of our lord...”

Lumian listened attentively, finding it hard to believe that there were eight angels by The Fool's divine throne.

Wasn't this strength too terrifying?

It seemed no different from an orthodox Church!

Suddenly, Termiboros's magnificent voice resounded, “Do you believe it?”

“Why not?” Lumian replied in a hushed tone, as if reciting passages from the bible.

After all, whose bible, even among the orthodox Churches, didn't have a touch of exaggeration?

Even without embellishments, it was still impressive!

Chapter 292 Communion

Termiboros fell silent.

Lumian continued to listen intently to the bishop's sermon as he recounted the general situation of the Church of The Fool. He discovered that there existed another continent in this world called the Forsaken Land of the Gods—a place cursed and abandoned by the gods Themselves.

Despite the gods turning their backs on the continent, Mr. Fool refused to forsake it. He dispatched the Angel of Redemption—Gehrman Sparrow—to lead the surviving humans from the lost city-states out of the Forsaken Land of the Gods and guide them in rebuilding their homes on the maritime islands.

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Consequently, the Church of The Fool's headquarters were established in the New City of Silver in the Sonia Sea.

The other two Holy Lands, New Moon City and Bayam, the capital of the Rorsted Archipelago, were also located in the same area.

Lumian listened with fascination, gaining a fundamental understanding of the Church of The Fool.

Following the sermon, the bishop and a few priests distributed communion.

It consisted of a glass of transparent, colorless liquid and a large fruit shell with charred marks covering it.

Lumian picked up the glass and took a sip. The liquid had a slight sweetness, reminiscent of dairy products but with a more fragrant essence.

Next, he used a wooden spoon to scoop out the food from the huge fruit shell.

As soon as he tasted the food, Lumian's expression turned surprised.

It's meat!

Isn't this a bit extravagant?

Even the Eternal Blazing Sun Church's Communion couldn't compare to this. They only had red wine and unfermented flatbread.

Lumian perked up and chewed the food with interest. It was delicious, with a meaty texture and a mix of sweetness and slight sourness, like that of a fruit. Its aroma was entirely different from the usual dishes found in Trier.

While he ate, he listened to the bishop explain the origins of Communion.

It turned out that this was Angel of Redemption Gehrman Sparrow's favorite food during his travels across the land. As the bugle of the Lord, he preached the revelations of the Lord.

The liquid was called Teana, derived from a giant fruit unique to the Rorsted Archipelago, and it was extracted from the pulp.

Having lost most of its pulp, the Teana rind was stuffed with mashed mutton and fish, culminating in the communion, Teativa.

However, transporting such massive fruits from the Rorsted Archipelago to Trier for Communion was impractical. It required crossing three seas, and no matter how unripened the fruit was, it would inevitably rot, wasting valuable resources.

With the help of a particular botanist, the Church of The Fool had cultivated a modified Teana tree that could grow in southern Intis, producing a stronger milky scent.

A delicacy with a maritime charm... If it weren't for the Church of The Fool's inability to preach and proselytize, who knows how many people would convert solely due to the Communion... But that could lead to financial issues as well. Too many believers in The Fool would cause the expenses of Communion to skyrocket... After pondering the Church of The Fool's finances for a moment, Lumian, who hadn't eaten dinner yet, finished the Teativa clean and gulped down the Teana juice.

“Praise The Fool!” Lumian stood up sincerely and bowed. He slowly left the candlelit cathedral and stepped into the night.

Under the warm glow of gas street lamps, Lumian strolled along the port area, dressed in a linen shirt, black vest, and rolled-up sleeves. His destination was the other side of the docks, where he intended to catch a public carriage to Avenue du Boulevard.

Lavigny had grown quiet, with only occasional groups of sailors passing by, singing or shouting.

All of a sudden, a commotion erupted nearby, followed by a piercing scream.

As the sound echoed through the night, Lumian noticed a figure hurtling towards him at an incredible speed.

Casually, he sidestepped, acting like an innocent bystander.

Yet, if the approaching person happened to be vile or had indeed committed some wrongdoing and was now being chased, Lumian wouldn't mind sticking out his right foot and tripping them, just for the spectacle.

Within seconds, the figure reached the edge of the street lamp's glow, making Lumian's eyebrows twitch in surprise.

So fast!

Clearly not an ordinary human!

With the help of the gas lamps, Lumian got a good look at the figure's appearance.

It wasn't human—it was a monster!

Though its wrinkled head resembled a human's, its dark-green scales covered its body. Wearing a torn linen shirt and brown pants, its feet lacked shoes, and thin, tough skin membrane grew between its fingers. Slippery dark green mucus oozed over its form, and its palms and mouth were stained with blood.

Having encountered numerous monsters in Cordu's ruins, Lumian remained unperturbed. He only frowned slightly.

It reminds me of those murlocs mentioned in mysticism magazines. Those dark-green scales must provide formidable defense...

As Lumian pondered, the monster noticed him sidestepping and grew more violent and crazed in its expression.

Without warning, it lunged at Lumian.

Reacting swiftly, Lumian arched his body, not backing away, but stepping forward to face the suspected murloc.

Bang!

His right hand, emitting sparks, struck the creature's abdomen.

Then, he swiftly lowered his body, slipping under the armpit of the dark-green-scaled monster, avoiding its counterattack and effectively positioning himself behind the assailant.

Lumian spun around, his arms swinging. His fists, with flickering flames, delivered powerful blows to the back of the suspected murloc, knocking it to the ground.

Blows resounded until Lumian withdrew his hands, ceasing his assault. He observed silently as the struggling body left corrosive marks on the ground.

With a muffled explosion, crimson sparks erupted from the monster's eyes, nose, ears, and mouth. Its body swelled before collapsing, shedding several dark-green scales.

After a few convulsions, it lay still.

Lumian averted his gaze and looked towards the figures chasing after him. He nonchalantly flicked his hands, alleviating the corrosive pain caused by the dark-green liquid.

His injuries were minor. After all, he had delivered a barrage of powerful punches, and his contact with the dark-green scales and viscous liquid had been brief.

Soon, the figures reached the lamp pole.

They were sailors, led by a mixed-blood man from the Southern Continent, sporting braided hair and brownish-red skin.

He appeared to be in his thirties, with thick lips. His eyes first scanned the murloc-like monster lying motionless on the ground, then he looked at Lumian with surprise, suspicion, and fear.

After a few seconds of silence, the sailor with the braided hair spoke with a solemn voice, "This is the murloc we captured at sea. It injured one of our crewmates and managed to escape."

It is indeed a murloc... Did they truly capture it? Why didn't they turn it into various materials and transport it to Trier? Why risk keeping it alive? Lumian silently mused as he asked with a smile, "Are you planning to apologize on its behalf and compensate me for my mental distress to soothe my terrified mind?"

The sailor and his companions exchanged glances, unable to decipher the lad's true intentions.

In the distance, the sound of regimental-like running resonated, accompanied by gunfire.

Patrol soldiers had rushed over upon hearing the scream.

The sailor's heart tightened as he unconsciously grabbed the monster's corpse, closely observing Lumian's reaction. He intended to stop once the other party showed any dissatisfaction.

Simultaneously, he continued, "No problem. We have no problem."

What he meant was that they would provide compensation for Lumian's mental distress.

Lumian sensed that they mainly wanted the Beyonder characteristic produced by the murloc, but the monster was too weak. He wasn't in the mood to discuss how the prize would be divided with them.

It was not worthy of the Shadow Branch at all!

If these individuals, who acted recklessly without concern for covering their tracks, managed to evade pursuit and crossed paths with him again, he could simply demand compensation from them for his mental distress.

As Lumian watched the sailors carry the murloc away, he continued on his way as if nothing had happened.

Before long, several patrolling soldiers caught up with him, examining his condition and inquiring if he had witnessed anything unusual.

Lumian candidly pointed in the direction the sailors had fled.

"I heard a scream and saw a group of people running that way. They were dressed like sailors."

The officer leading the patrol nodded approvingly.

"Thank you for your cooperation."

"No need to thank me. It's what any responsible citizen should do," Lumian replied with a smile.

Soon, the other soldiers discovered traces of corrosion and scales on the ground, along with sticky liquid that hadn't entirely evaporated. They followed the trail towards the docks.

Lumian clicked his tongue and continued on his way towards the public carriage stop.

Clap! Clap! Clap! He heard a soft applause.

Feeling uneasy, Lumian turned his head and saw someone sitting on a nearby cargo box, seemingly having appeared out of nowhere.

The man's eyebrows were charred yellow, and his hair shared the same color. His eyes were dark blue yet radiant. He wore a linen shirt, a brown vest, and a pair of black leather boots hung from his dark brown pants.

Lumian recognized the man and felt alarmed.

Blazing Danitz, a great pirate second only to a few Pirate Kings!

But Lumian calmed down when he recalled the man's other identity: He was no longer a pirate; he was now Mr. Fool's Oracle!

As the holder of a Minor Arcana card, Lumian believed that as long as he revealed his identity, Blazing Danitz wouldn't give him trouble.

Blazing Danitz gazed at Lumian for a few seconds before effortlessly leaping down from the top of the wooden crates.

He chuckled and spoke leisurely, "To be able to swiftly choose the most effective, targeted, and efficient attack method against your prey, perfectly evading the enemy's enhanced scale defense—your combat intelligence is quite impressive. I admire it.

"So, how about it? Are you interested in joining my team and becoming my subordinate?"

Chapter 293 "Pious"

Inviting me to join your team without even checking my background or confirming my strength? Are you that confident, Mr. Fool's Oracle? Lumian couldn't help but criticize, feeling unsure about the whole situation.

He looked at Blazing Danitz and responded with a smile, "No."

Blazing Danitz acknowledged tersely, his voice gaining intensity as if confirming it for the last time.

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Lumian slipped his right hand into his pocket, maintaining his smile.

"Not interested."

What a joke. How can I complete the Tarot Club's mission if I join your team?

This requires your consultation with Madam Magician!

Danitz's dark-blue yet bright eyes narrowed slightly, his aura instantly becoming more intense.

Lumian felt as if he were facing a spear or a loaded gun pressed to his forehead. Fear and danger washed over him.

However, he didn't look away and met Blazing Danitz's gaze with a calm determination, as if facing an apex predator.

After a brief silence that filled the air with tension, Blazing Danitz broke into a smile.

“Not bad. You're quite resolute and bold. I admire you even more.”

With those words, the former great pirate, now The Fool's Oracle, turned around and strolled towards the well-lit street in the distance.

Confidence naturally breeds resoluteness... Lumian thought silently as he withdrew his right hand from his pocket, revealing a tarot card held between his thumb and index finger.

The tarot card—Seven of Wands!

Though he couldn't fathom Blazing Danitz's impromptu recruitment, he felt somewhat glad to have encountered Mr. Fool's Oracle.

This meant that The Fool Church held substantial strength in Trier.

After leaving Lavigny Docks, Lumian hopped onto a public carriage and soon arrived at Avenue du Boulevard. He walked to 19 Rue Scheer and met Mr. K beneath the headquarters of the Psychic organization.

The Aurora Order Oracle remained seated in the red armchair, his face concealed in the deep shadows of his black hood.

His voice rasped as he inquired, “How's your progress in gaining Gardner Martin's trust?”

Lumian replied calmly, “I've already joined the Iron and Blood Cross Order.”

Mr. K fell silent for a moment before asking, “How did you gain Gardner Martin's trust? How did he test you? And how did you pass the test?”

The Aurora Order Oracle altered his usual demeanor, posing three questions at once.

Lumian chuckled.

“Well, there was no need to gain Gardner Martin's trust. Simply joining the Iron and Blood Cross Order earned loyalty.”

Upon hearing this, Mr. K, who had been reclining in his chair, sat up straight. The shadows in the basement seemed to stir, almost alive.

With his expertise and knowledge, discerning the hidden meaning behind Lumian's words wasn't difficult for him.

And it undoubtedly spelled danger: Lumian had indeed become a member of the Iron and Blood Cross Order, pledging his allegiance to them. He was here to report while bringing the powerful figures of the Iron and Blood Cross Order!

Lumian smiled, unfazed by the immense pressure radiating from Mr. K. He proceeded to recount how he informed Gardner Martin that he had become a Sequence 7 Pyromaniac, leading up to the vigil at 13 Avenue du Marché and the formal initiation ceremony.

He didn't hold back the fact that he had engaged in an underground transaction and fled in terror after encountering Supervisor Olson's monstrous creation.

As Lumian finished, Mr. K stood up, excitement in his tone as he verified Lumian's various details at 13 Avenue du Marché repeatedly.

Upon realizing that Lumian had used the honorific name at a crucial moment and received a divine revelation of “don't respond,” Mr. K burst into a fit of maniacal laughter.

“Hahaha, hahaha, just as I thought, piousness is the only way out!”

The hooded Oracle's laughter grew wilder, echoing through the basement, making Lumian's eardrums tremble and a faint scent of salt and blood fill the air.

“Hahaha! Hahaha!”

Mr. K laughed so hard he nearly doubled over.

He no longer concealed his condition. The whole basement seemed enveloped in darkness, and he stood as the source of danger behind it all.

After a while, Mr. K paid no mind to Lumian's presence, instead kneeling down, lowering his body to pray almost silently, as if thanking the Lord that created everything, the omnipotent and omniscient God.

Lumian managed to keep his lips from twitching. Before leaving for Lavigny Docks, he had performed a ritual, praying to The Fool for the angel's protection. He praised the True Creator of the Aurora Order and drew a cross on his chest, following an up-to-down, left-to-right order.

With a sudden display of piousness, Mr. K stood up and said with fervor, “This was all arranged by the Lord. He brought you here to join us.”

It depends on which lord you're talking about... Lumian muttered, finding amusement in the situation, and replied humbly, “What He says will come true.”

This was one of the religious texts of the Aurora Order taught by Mr. K. Lumian had always regarded it as a sermon praising the deity's strength. He found it quite useful in the present conversation.

The hooded Mr. K nodded, thoroughly satisfied.

“I had arranged for others to approach the exposed members of the Iron and Blood Cross Order before, but they lost contact with me and stopped reporting. They even put me in considerable danger.

“Now I understand why they failed. Their lack of piousness! In the face of danger and corruption, they didn't even think to recite our Lord's honorific name and seek His protection!

“But you, at the critical moment, had only my Lord in your mind. That's the kind of piousness I admire the most.

“That's why you successfully joined the Iron and Blood Cross Order without being corrupted!”

With only faith in a deity left in your mind... Will this affect your intelligence? Lumian observed Mr. K, gaining a deeper understanding of his state of mind and way of thinking.

Mr. K paced back and forth in front of Lumian, his excitement palpable in his voice.

“Based on the information you brought back, I now have a better understanding of the Iron and Blood Cross Order's problems. I have a new insight into their current situation and their intentions.

“I can say you've completed half of the mission I assigned you. Next, you need to investigate the source of the abnormality, the exact timeline, and their roadmap for inciting the riot.

“If they find a way to enter Fourth Epoch Trier or a passageway, you must inform me immediately. Don't let them succeed.”

Mr. K pondered for a few seconds and said, “The first option is to take out my finger and ignite it. As long as the environment isn't special, I can sense it and roughly understand the cause.

“If that doesn't work, pray to my Lord immediately, just like this time.”

“Alright,” Lumian agreed.

When the time came, he might have to try contacting Madam Magician. It seemed like he would be very busy.

After assigning the subsequent mission, Mr. K looked at Lumian in a friendly tone and asked,

“Since you've completed half of the mission and brought back crucial information, I can't be stingy with the rewards. Tell me, what do you want?”

“I want a mystical item of bizarre nature. If you don't have it, a corresponding Beyonder characteristic will do. I'll find an Artisan to craft it myself,” Lumian answered without hesitation.

Mr. K let out a chuckle.

“You deserve that. Come back in three days. I'll give you a few choices, or I'll offer what I think suits you best.”

“Thank you, Mr. K,” Lumian expressed his sincere gratitude.

This was much more generous than what the Iron and Blood Cross Order offered!

“It's not me you should be thanking, but the Lord,” Mr. K replied with a smile.

Helpless, Lumian drew the cross again.

“Praise be to you, the creator of all things. Praise be to you, who carries the burdens of the world's sins.”

Mr. K chimed in, praising the True Creator.

“Unfortunately, our Aurora Order doesn't have things like godfathers or godchildren. Otherwise, I'd be more than willing to baptize you again.”

Why do so many people express their admiration by wanting to be someone else's father? Lumian found it amusing.

In high spirits after Mr. K's assurance, Lumian made his way back to Auberge du Coq Doré. He headed straight to the basement bar and ordered a glass of the unique textured distilled lemon liquor. As he chatted with the others, he found amusement in Charlie's return, spreading all sorts of rumors.

Meanwhile, intermittent singing and clapping rhythms filled the air, creating a lively atmosphere that lasted until the early hours of the morning. When the customers, who had to work at dawn, finally departed to their residences, the bar quieted down.

Lumian realized he had been spending too many nights at Auberge du Coq Doré lately, neglecting his sleep at Salle de Bal Brise. He decided it was time to balance things out and head there next.

As he left Auberge du Coq Doré and walked along Rue Anarchie, where there were no gas street lamps, he noticed a figure emerging from the dark shadows ahead.

The person was almost as tall as Lumian, with broad shoulders and a muscular build, dressed in a linen shirt, a brown jacket, and a brownish-yellow wide-brimmed hat.

Gray hair adorned their head, and dark eyes stared intently. The man's hairy skin added to his rugged appearance, giving off a wild sense of beauty.

Having halted Lumian, the man, whose age was difficult to gauge from his appearance, lifted his chin slightly and inquired, “Are you Ciel Dubois?”

Do you truly think yourself worthy of addressing me by my name? Lumian contemplated responding in a similar manner, uncertain of the man's intentions, and sensing a hint of arrogance. Thus, he chose to pretend.

He asked cautiously, “And who might you be?”

The man remained composed, showing no signs of being affected. With a cold expression, he pressed on, “Tell me who the boss of your Savoie Mob is.”

Chapter 294 Beyond

You don't even know who's running the show for our Savoie Mob? And you're coming to me with this question? You must be clueless about the real deal. Our Boss is the Commanding Officer of the secret organization called the Iron and Blood Cross Order, and we're just a small part of the whole setup, Lumian thought, sliding his right hand into his pocket.

He quickly considered three possibilities.

First, Gardner Martin used the Savoie Mob for his secret missions, like smuggling some bizarre stuff through “Rat” Christo. Having been detected by someone or some faction, they now wanted to dig into the mob and expose the mastermind behind it.

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Second, some members of the Savoie Mob must have offended the wrong people, and now the consequences were knocking at their door.

Third, after the Poison Spur Mob got wiped out, the Savoie Mob expanded rapidly, attracting attention from certain factions.

Lumian quickly dismissed the first two options. Whether it was some secret getting leaked or someone causing offense, he wasn't going to be the one facing questions about the identity of the Savoie Mob's Boss!

Usually, whoever did something secretive would get a visit from the investigators. Similarly, if someone offended another, they'd be targeted, or the leader shielding them. Lumian had never truly been involved in the Savoie Mob's clandestine affairs, nor had he recently defended any subordinates.

The person standing across from him was directly probing about the identity of the Savoie Mob's Boss. It wasn't about which individual belonged to the mob or some specific incident in the past.

Based on this, Lumian strongly suspected that some faction or individual had taken an interest in the Savoie Mob and planned to incorporate them.

Of course, he couldn't dismiss the possibility that a rival mob had teamed up with a powerful being to seek help in taking down the Savoie Mob's Boss.

Yet, in either case, they seemed to have a shallow understanding of the Savoie Mob. They didn't even know the superficial identity of Gardner Martin. All they knew was the most famous member of the mob in recent times. They had just asked about him and paid him a "visit."

In other words, they are treating the Savoie Mob as a regional mob with only a few Beyonders. Sending real powerhouses to deal with such a mob is clearly impractical, and they probably can't afford to hire them either. Even a Mid-Sequence Beyer is highly esteemed; it doesn't go beyond Sequence 6. Lumian made this rough judgment in just a couple of seconds.

Seeing Lumian remaining silent and not reaching for his weapon, the tall man with bushy hair, dark eyes, and a brownish-yellow wide-brimmed hat let out a cold snort. His expression and eyes revealed a clear sense of danger.

Almost simultaneously, Lumian felt the darkness around him grow heavier, swallowing up the faint glow of distant street lamps and the crimson moonlight from the sky.

The darkness condensed like frost, slowly but firmly seeping into Lumian's skin, flesh, and bones, causing an uncontrollable fear to well up within him.

Is that all? Lumian, who had been through major situations before, scoffed inwardly.

Gazing at the muscular man with gray hair, donning a linen shirt and a brown jacket, Lumian feigned a twinge of fear and blurted out, "It's Gardner Martin! Gardner Martin, a member of the Savoie Chamber of Commerce!"

The man nodded, pleased, and pressed on, "Where does he usually reside?"

"Lion" Ciel, the ruthless, crazed, and powerful mob leader, is no different from other mobsters!

They only know how to bully the weak and rely on their mob's backing to take on rival mobs. When facing genuinely formidable foes and simple dark-type spells, their timidity and cowardice become evident!

Lumian swallowed hard and managed to say, "He lives at 11 Rue des Fontaines."

At that moment, Lumian shook himself out of his daze.

"Let me tell you, our boss is a member of a secret organization. His strength is even more terrifying than you can imagine!"

A member of a secret organization? The broad-shouldered man was momentarily taken aback before breaking into a smile.

This was truly an unexpected windfall!

"Lion" Ciel is even more timid than I thought. He even spilled such vital information!

The man lifted his chin and sneered with a deep voice, "Well, did I mention that I, too, am part of a secret organization? A very ancient one."

With those words, the surrounding darkness seemed to tighten its grip.

Really? I can't quite tell... Lumian pondered the idea of luring this man and the faction behind him to confront the Boss. He wanted to see what would happen when the two secret organizations clashed, hoping to expose more of the Iron and Blood Cross Order's secrets.

After a brief silence, Lumian couldn't bear the weight of the darkness any longer. His right hand and arm, tucked into his pocket, trembled slightly.

"I don't know, I don't know. The Boss didn't tell us the exact name!"

The man scrutinized Lumian for a few seconds and concluded that he shouldn't know the details of the secret organization.

For a regional mob like theirs, the Boss is at most a member of some secret society.

The man couldn't help but smirk sinisterly.

"Then take me to 11 Rue des Fontaines."

As soon as he spoke, he lunged at Lumian, moving with such speed that he left afterimages.

Almost simultaneously, his nails shot out, long and sharp, flickering with a metallic light that exuded a dark sheen.

Yet, Lumian showed no fear, offered no resistance, and didn't panic. He also moved to evade the attack, all while extending his right hand from the depths of his pocket.

In his hand, he held a blazing white fireball the size of a fist, sending it hurtling toward his assailant like a gift.

Fireball... Blazing white... The man with short gray hair on his face and the back of his hands found himself too close to turn around due to his speed. As these thoughts raced through his mind, he collided with the condensed, blazing-white fireball.

Boom!

Amidst the muffled explosion, the man's abdomen burst into a bloody mess, emitting a distinct charred smell.

After the other party inquired about the Savoie Mob's boss, Lumian discreetly tucked his right hand into his pocket. However, it wasn't to draw a weapon or guard against attacks. Instead, he used his clothes as cover to steadily conjure crimson flames in his palm. Layer by layer, he compressed them to their utmost, turning the flames into a blazing white. The explosive power was on par with a Giant Fireball, but even more concentrated, capable of burning through skin.

If the enemy's speed hadn't exceeded Lumian's expectations, he would have had a high chance of witnessing the enemy's neck exploding upon impact.

Amidst the rumbling, the man was sent flying, and Lumian was affected by the aftershocks, stumbling backward and tumbling a few times.

Both of them got up simultaneously. Lumian's shirt and vest bore burn marks, and many parts of his skin were damaged.

He saw an irregular, gaping wound on the man's abdomen, with blood-stained intestines flowing out and being stuffed back into place. The surface was marked with fractures and charred spots.

Despite the severe injury, the man didn't lose mobility. As he pressed his abdomen to prevent his intestines and other internal organs from spilling out, he let out a low growl of pain, anger, and violence.

Accompanied by the growl, short gray fur sprouted from his body, transforming him into a towering wolf.

His severed intestines began to writhe, attempting to reconnect. His charred skin slowly healed, and he forcefully closed the huge crack in his abdomen with his palm. Flesh and blood intertwined, bit by bit.

What potent vitality... Lumian sighed from the bottom of his heart at the sight.

He realized that given enough time, the other party would likely recover!

The other party's behavior and state reminded Lumian of a few passages recorded in Aurore's grimoires:

“Werewolf, a Sequence 7 of the Prisoner pathway, a category under Mutants. During the full moon or when they nearly lose control of their emotions, they will be controlled by their bloodthirsty and murderous desires, involuntarily transforming into a true werewolf.

“They possess terrifying strength, agility, and speed, and their self-recovery abilities are outstanding. Their claws and teeth are sturdy and sharp, and they are venomous. They are equivalent to Beyonder weapons of the same Sequence, capable of destroying thinner steel plates.

“They also know a few dark-type spells, capable of turning ordinary humans into puppet monsters with short lives.

“Werewolves often appear in the Southern Continent. They are often associated with various terrorist activities in the Northern Continent...”

I actually encountered a Werewolf Beyonder... Lumian didn't give the other party time to recover from his injuries. Crimson Fire Ravens materialized behind him, spiraling towards their target.

The Werewolf didn't sit idle either. Clutching his stomach to suppress the wound, he approached Lumian with extraordinary speed.

Most of the Fire Ravens' initial lock-on missed, but a few made minor changes in direction and landed on the target one after another, causing continuous rumbling.

The Werewolf suffered several more wounds, leaving him charred and blood-red.

Relying on his potent recovery abilities, he swiftly closed the distance between him and Lumian, disregarding his injuries. He intended to engage in close combat with the Pyromaniac, who excelled in spells, and tear him to pieces with his sharp and venomous claws.

At some point, the darkness around Lumian further encroached on him, causing him to feel an eerie chill on this summer night and slightly affecting him.

In an instant, crimson flames erupted from his body, enveloping him in scorching warmth.

The very next second, Lumian turned around and fled, dodging the Werewolf's claws.

This made the Werewolf, whose mind was filled with bloodthirsty and murderous desires, feel his adversary's fear. He believed that his target had already gone all out and lacked experience in such battles.

He chased after him and caught up to Lumian in a few swift strides.

Chapter 295 Brains Are Important

Sensing the swipe that carried the scent of blood and char behind him, Lumian swiftly pivoted and darted into the alley leading to Rue du Rossignol.

The Werewolf's pitch-black eyes were bloodshot, and his severe injuries fueled his anger and desire to kill, overpowering most of his thoughts. He forcefully turned around and sprinted into the alley after Lumian.

Seeing Lumian vault over a barricade up ahead, he followed suit and leaped up as well.

...

In the next instant, he caught sight of an uncovered entrance to the sewers. Iron-black stairs led straight into the depths.

Lumian deftly stepped on the edge of the sewer entrance and jumped over the “natural” trap.

Bam! The Werewolf crashed into the sewers, finding himself halfway in. His wounds worsened, and his head spun.

Lumian seized the moment to turn around and conjure crimson Fire Ravens, sending them spiraling towards the Werewolf, who was stuck at the sewers entrance.

Amidst a muffled rumble, the crimson flaming ravens engulfed the area, setting the Werewolf's gray fur on fire, scorching patches of his skin, and tearing more flesh.

The Werewolf exerted strength with both hands and finally managed to leap out of the sewers. Lumian took the opportunity to flee, having successfully dealt a blow.

The Werewolf grew even angrier. All he wanted was to tear Lumian apart and spill his innards to the street dogs.

With a swoosh, Lumian, who had rushed to the alley exit, turned at high speed and sprinted to the left.

The Werewolf caught up in a few strides and followed the target's escape route.

However, a nearly one-meter tall barricade emerged in the darkness ahead of him. Lumian, already prepared, reached out and pressed down, using the situation to somersault and jump over.

The Werewolf realized it too late and didn't have time for other strategies. He could only choose between hastily jumping up or crashing straight into the barricade.

Exerting strength in his legs, he attempted to leap to the top of the barricade, but his forward momentum couldn't be stopped. Before he could fully ascend, his feet caught onto the obstacle.

Thud!

The Werewolf tumbled off the barricade; his fall made him see stars.

Lumian halted once more. With one hand in his pocket, he gazed at the enemy.

Around him, a new wave of Fire Ravens condensed and flew towards the base of the barricade.

The Werewolf tried his best to roll, but he was still struck by at least ten flaming ravens. The wound on his abdomen, which no longer had pressure on it, reopened, and blood-colored intestines flowed out.

Only then did the Werewolf realize that he had fallen into the other party's trap. He regained some of his rationality and assessed his weak body and unstable condition.

He extinguished the flames over his body and struggled to his feet, attempting to escape.

At that moment, Lumian's mocking voice echoed in his ears.

"Didn't your mommy tell you not to fight in an environment familiar to Hunters? You actually dared to pursue me on Rue Anarchie and the surrounding areas. I can only say that brains are important, but you don't have any."

The Werewolf's mind buzzed, and he became abnormally infuriated.

He willingly sacrificed his rationality and erupted with desire, bolstering his body in all aspects.

He had become a Lunatic!

He pursued Lumian once more.

Occasionally, Lumian would abruptly halt and counterattack. Other times, he would sneak under a stone statue's arm from a corner. When the Werewolf slammed into an obstacle, Lumian would turn around and unleash a volley of crimson Fire Ravens. Sometimes, he would feign entering Underground Trier but lie in ambush, waiting for the incoming attack.

As the pursuit continued, the Werewolf finally reached his limit, his body teetering on the brink of collapse.

Regaining his senses from his frenzied state, he felt a strong premonition of danger. All he wanted was to leave this area and escape Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman.

At that moment, Lumian halted, as if he had sensed something. He turned around and smiled.

He watched as the Werewolf fled much slower than before while condensing a blazing white spear in his hand.

Lumian swung his body and hurled the flaming spear.

A blazing white stream of light streaked through the air, piercing the Werewolf's ravaged body, pinning him to the ground, and setting him ablaze.

Amidst the sudden blaze, Lumian walked toward the enemy with one hand in his pocket.

Crimson Fire Ravens materialized behind him, whistling and spiraling as they approached the Werewolf. They burrowed into his wounds, destroying his heart, lungs, and other organs.

By the time Lumian reached his target, the Mutant was no longer breathing—he was dead.

His eyes were wide open, filled with regret and fear.

Why'd you have to attack me? If you needed something, you could've just gone to the Boss of our Savoie Mob, couldn't you? Lumian shook his head while looking down at the Werewolf. Did you plan on turning me into a puppet for the assassination of Gardner Martin? Did you really think so low of mobsters? Your confidence made you arrogant.

Earlier, Lumian prepared for a tough battle. He had even prepared for a Sequence 6. His escape route was always near Rue des Blouses Blanches.

Once there, he could get Franca's attention and have her secretly use the enemy's blood to cast a fatal curse.

Lumian considered using the explosion caused by a fireball on Avenue du Marché to create a commotion and scare the enemy away if capturing the target proved difficult even with teamwork.

But the enemy's madness and desire to kill made Lumian doubt if he could think rationally and end the battle quickly to escape the pursuit of official Beyonders. He himself had to hold on until dawn arrived.

Squatting down, Lumian searched the Werewolf's clothes, finding only 3 verl d'or coins, burnt banknotes, and a wallet without anything useful.

Have you never considered bribing me? Do you only want to rely on your strength to intimidate me? Lumian cursed, his heart aching.

He wasn't too disappointed as he knew the chances of this Werewolf being a bestowed were slim. Soon, it could secrete a Sequence 7 Beyonder characteristic that included Sequence 9 and Sequence

8 Beyonder characteristics, worth 30,000 to 40,000 verl d'or, or even more. He could use it to complement the Shadow Branch, create mystical items, or exchange it for more suitable Beyonder characteristics.

Considering the relatively weak explosions he caused, Lumian didn't linger on the street. After briefly dealing with the Werewolf's corpse, he picked him up and brought him to the back door of Salle de Bal Brise.

Sarkota and the other members of the Savoie Mob were no strangers to destroying corpses, quickly placing the body inside a bag and sending people to clean up the blood along the way.

Lumian tossed the body bag into the carriage belonging to Salle de Bal Brise, fully intending to find Gardner Martin that very night.

During the journey, he opened the body bag several times and finally noticed a blackish-green light secreting from the corpse, which merged with a sharp canine fang.

After a few seconds, Lumian had obtained this strange black-green fang.

After a moment's consideration, he decided to keep the fang in the body bag and see what Gardner Martin would do.

Based on the Commanding Officer's behavior, Lumian knew he would undoubtedly reward him when the time came. He might hand over the Werewolf Beyonder characteristic, switch it to another one, or purchase it at market value.

In any case, Lumian was ready to be honest about it.

Around 1 a.m., Salle de Bal Brise's carriage stopped at 11 Rue des Fontaines in Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative. Lumian unceremoniously pulled the rope beside the iron fence door, causing the chimes to reverberate through the grayish-white three-story villa.

Before long, a valet of Southern Continent descent arrived and opened the door, though he looked displeased at being woken up. When he saw Lumian's charred and tattered clothes and the body bag he dragged behind him, his attitude changed to that of a courteous servant.

Lumian brought the body bag into the villa and saw Faustino, the butler, who was also a member of the Iron and Blood Cross Order.

After tying his bow tie, Faustino stared at Lumian and the body bag for a few seconds before asking in surprise, "What's this?"

"A strange fellow," Lumian replied with a smile.

Faustino didn't inquire further and led Lumian into the activity room on the first floor.

There, Gardner Martin, donning a dark-blue silk robe, sat in a recliner and asked with a smile, "Who's in the body bag? For you to rush here overnight, it doesn't seem simple."

Lumian untied the body bag and dumped the Werewolf's corpse and the strange black-green fang onto the carpet in the activity room.

Gardner Martin's expression turned serious at a single glance.

"A Werewolf..."

Lumian chuckled. "He came to me to inquire about the identity of the Boss of our Savoie Mob. He even wanted to control me and turn me into a puppet."

Gardner Martin nodded slowly and said, "And?"

"And then?" Lumian raised his eyebrows and replied with a smile, "Then I killed him."

Upon hearing this, Faustino, the butler standing beside the Commanding Officer, glanced at the Werewolf's corpse on the ground and then at Lumian, whose clothes were clearly charred and torn. His expression was no longer calm and composed.

Gardner Martin's eyes narrowed. After a few seconds of silence, he sighed and said, "Unfortunately, you don't know how to channel spirits; we missed out on a lot of information."

Lumian wanted to say, "Perhaps I need a mystical item that can channel spirits," but he was worried that it would take up a portion of the reward and cause the Shadow Branch to lose its match.

Gardner Martin continued, "I'll arrange for follow-up investigations and responses. Don't worry about this for the time being. I'll inform you when you need to carry out your mission."

"What's he up to? He doesn't seem simple." Lumian glanced at the Werewolf's corpse and deliberately expressed his confusion.

Gardner Martin shook his head.

"I can't be sure yet." He then looked at Lumian and asked with a smile, "Do you want this Werewolf fang or something else?"

"What are the choices?" Lumian didn't hold back.

Chapter 296 Request

Gardner Martin was well accustomed to Lumian's straightforwardness. He gave a slight nod and said, "If you want a quick trade, I have three items of equal value to the Werewolf fang."

"The first is the Shadow Bracelet, a mystical item that lets you conceal yourself within larger shadows. It can summon a Shadow Servant with a few special abilities and can bring shadows to life to restrain targets to some extent.

"It's a foreboding item. More than a third of those who've used it have gone mad, while another third mysteriously disappeared without it, never to be seen again. Many of those who remain seem fine, but they often complain of tinnitus and hallucinate sounds.

...

"In recent years, unless there are special circumstances, no one has dared to use this mystical item."

Lumian expressed his confusion through his gaze: Then why are you offering it to me? Do I look like a lunatic or an idiot to you?

Gardner Martin smiled and explained, "I'm one of the few people who hasn't encountered problems with the Shadow Bracelet. I know a way to weaken its negative effects, but I can only tell you if you choose it."

When did you start hallucinating that there's nothing wrong with you? Lumian suppressed his concerns and held his tongue.

He thought that Gardner Martin, who had been corrupted by the abnormality at 13 Avenue du Marché, might not be any better than those who had gone mad or disappeared mysteriously.

According to Madam Magician's description of corruption, the person standing before him might not be the same Gardner Martin as before.

Gardner Martin glanced at Lumian and smiled. "Actually, there's no need to be so reserved in front of me. That won't make you seem like a Hunter who hasn't advanced to Sequence 6. If you say something that might 'provoke' me, I'll probably just respond with sarcasm. Look, isn't Albus still alive and well?"

"Yes, CO Sir," Lumian replied, not revealing the secrets that couldn't be disclosed to the Iron and Blood Cross Order.

Gardner Martin got up from his recliner and continued, "The second item is a Beyonder characteristic left behind by a Spirit Medium. Do you know what Beyonder characteristics are?"

Lumian answered calmly, "Killing a Beyonder creature will yield one of the main ingredients for concocting a potion. Killing a Beyonder will definitely yield the corresponding items, just like the transparent golden-red ball from 'Hammer' Ait and this Werewolf fang."

"I believe these are Beyonder characteristics. They all correspond to a potion. There's no need to gather additional main ingredients, right?"

Gardner Martin nodded approvingly. "That's right. Your judgment is accurate."

Gardner Martin didn't go into detail about the Law of Beyonder Characteristics Indestructibility, as if he believed it involved many secrets Lumian couldn't grasp at the moment.

With his hands clasped behind his back, Gardner Martin paced in front of the unlit fireplace.

"Spirit Medium. From its name, you can roughly guess the abilities of the mystical item created from it. Of course, what you obtain depends on an Artisan's ability.

"If I'm not mistaken, it should be an Eye of Death, allowing one to disguise as a zombie and endure the effects of decay, cold, death, and other auras. It can also identify the weaknesses of undead creatures and directly communicate with natural spirits and various undead creatures in the real world, using them for various magical effects. If you're lucky enough, you might even have all of those abilities.

"Try not to carry this Beyonder characteristic with you. Otherwise, you'll become the target of surrounding natural spirits and undead creatures. You'll never know when you might suffer a bizarre attack."

Impressive as it sounds, it's somewhat similar to a Contractee—relying on other

creatures to gain strength... Lumian pondered for a few seconds and asked, "And the third?"

Gardner Martin settled back into his recliner.

"It's also a Beyonder characteristic. If you carry it, you'll find yourself rather lucky. This will be reflected in the details of various matters.

"The corresponding Sequence name is Lucky One, but you have to remember that reveling in luck is often a precursor to disaster. Also, it might allow you to see things you shouldn't see."

Sequence 7 of the Monster pathway? Lumian recalled the contents of Aurore's grimoires.

The Monster pathway, also known as the Fate pathway, was a pathway known for its high spiritual perception and close connection to fate.

Lumian chuckled and said, "The Lucky One ultimately transformed into a Beyonder characteristic in an unlucky manner? What an ironic joke."

Gardner Martin agreed. "Don't underestimate bad luck, and don't rely on luck. Otherwise, you may also become a Beyonder characteristic."

"Very philosophical." Lumian took note of the words filled with experience and lessons learned.

He carefully recalled Gardner Martin's introduction and realized that he wasn't stingy with information about the corresponding Sequences.

Merely the descriptions of the abilities of a Spirit Medium and Lucky One could fetch a good price at many mystical gatherings.

Gardner Martin pointed at the blackish-green fang on the ground.

"It's a Werewolf Beyonder characteristic. Once transformed into a mystical item, it should provide powerful self-healing abilities, allow transformation into a werewolf, and grant a short burst of power at the expense of rationality.

"But, as you saw, Werewolves are always affected by killing and bloodlust. During the full moon or Blood Moon, there's the latent danger of losing your mind and control.

"Have you decided which item to choose? If you choose the Beyonder characteristics, I can help you contact an Artisan and assist with the production fee. It's the reward you deserve for your contribution tonight."

Is the Artisan you're hiring a Saint? How will you react if you discover that I'm hiding a Shadow Branch? Lumian wondered, seriously considering his options.

First, he eliminated the Shadow Bracelet, suspected to be a mystical item of Mr. K's pathway. Mr. K might offer similar but better options in his rewards soon. Besides, the negative effects of the

Shadow Bracelet were too perilous. Even if Gardner Martin claimed he could weaken them, Lumian didn't dare take the risk.

Most importantly, such a risk was pointless.

A Spirit Medium can compensate for my shortcomings, but it doesn't complement the Shadow Branch. I can't create a mystical item with the effect of lingering human-ghost emotions. Yes, some characteristics overlap with a Contractee...

Lucky One can make the Shadow Branch always trigger suitable desires? The Werewolf's rationality sacrifice and the influence of being murderous and bloodthirsty are quite compatible with the Shadow Branch. I wonder what kind of mystical item it would produce...

After careful consideration that spanned a few minutes, Lumian made his decision.

"I want Lucky One."

The main reason he gave up the Werewolf Beyonder characteristic was its potential negative effect of losing rationality.

Others might find ways to reduce the impact, using it only when facing enemies or avoiding certain lunar phases. But Lumian couldn't take that risk. Losing his mind even once could lead to Termiboros exploiting him and causing the seal to lose its balance.

Furthermore, he belonged to the Inevitability domain as a Beyonder in some way. In the future, when he reached a higher Sequence, he might be able to enhance the mystical item's effects through the Lucky One trait.

As for seeing things he shouldn't, Lumian already had the Mystery Prying Glasses, so having something similar didn't bother him.

Gardner Martin seemed surprised. He had expected Lumian to choose between the Spirit Medium Beyonder characteristic and Shadow Bracelet.

However, he quickly composed himself and didn't inquire further. With a smile, he said, "Humans are obsessed with good luck."

The Boss of the Savoie Mob, Commanding Officer of the Iron and Blood Cross Order, briefly left the activity room and went upstairs.

A few minutes later, he returned with a transparent glass jar, once used to hold sweets.

Inside the jar lay a mercury-colored eyeball, swiveling left and right as if it were alive.

"To carry and store it, place it in a narrow dark space," Gardner Martin instructed as he wrapped the jar in black cloth.

Handing the item to Lumian, he added, "Change the jar every seven days."

"Thank you, CO Sir." Lumian put the glass jar containing the Lucky One Beyonder characteristic into his pocket.

Gardner Martin didn't wonder why Lumian didn't ask him to contact an Artisan. The true effects of a mystical item were something the wielder wanted to keep as secret as possible. Seeking an unknown Artisan was more conducive to secrecy.

Just as these thoughts crossed his mind, Lumian brought up the matter himself.

“CO Sir, I'd like to exchange the free Artisan service for other rewards.”

Curious, Gardner Martin asked, “What reward do you desire?”

A grin crept across Lumian's face. “Help me find someone.”

“Who?” Gardner Martin had a hunch.

Lumian's expression turned serious.

“Guillaume Bénét.

“Since you know I'm from Cordu, you must have seen the padre's wanted poster.

“I've been tracking him, hoping to apprehend the heretic who caused disaster for me. I just received information that he might appear in Quartier de la Princesse Rouge next week. I'd like to request your assistance in locating him, CO Sir.”

Gardner Martin burst into laughter.

“I thought you wanted to handle it yourself, enduring pain, tracking alone, and seeking revenge in secret.

“Nicely done. You've learned to leverage an organization's strength sooner than I expected. That's something a Hunter must understand.

“I agree to your request.”

Chapter 297 Informant Contract

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On his way back to the market district, Lumian leaned against the carriage wall, pondering the whole situation once more. He realized he had overlooked a problem.

A Sequence 7 mysteriously vanishes during a relatively simple mission, and it is now suspected to be dead. Would the secret organization behind him just pretend that nothing had happened?

...

Would they realize the truth tonight and launch an investigation?

As a Conspirer, there's no way the Boss wouldn't have thought of this. Yet, he didn't warn me and allowed me to go home alone... Is he using me as bait?

Yes, the secret organization behind the Werewolf might not take action tonight. As long as they keep their wits about them, they should realize that their missing subordinate is a huge problem. It seems the Savoie Mob is not as simple as it appears. If I were in their shoes, I'd hold back for a while until further events unfold. Then, I'd use the chaos to figure out the true situation of the Savoie Mob.

Of course, if they have an angel's protection and can get Him to temporarily descend upon Salle de Bal Brise, they can do whatever they want...

Now that I think about it, although that Werewolf was arrogant, he wasn't that stupid or reckless. He's just average. He must have captured some ordinary members of the Savoie Mob beforehand and roughly figured out the situation of the few leaders before targeting the leader who recently joined the Savoie Mob—me. Logically speaking, I wouldn't have been involved in the Savoie Mob's core matters. I wouldn't know many secrets, and I won't cause too many implications...

Furthermore, ordinary members of the Savoie Mob don't know that I've advanced to Pyromaniac. Judging from my recent combat records, that fellow believes he can easily handle me. In close combat, a Werewolf with stronger self-healing abilities, faster speed, greater strength, and nimble reactions, possessing claws equivalent to Beyonder weapons, is far superior to a Provoker...

By the time Lumian returned to Salle de Bal Brise, he had already sorted out the situation. He touched Mr. K's finger in his pocket and entered the room on the second floor, seemingly oblivious. He washed up and went to bed.

As the sun began to rise, Jenna hurriedly left 17 Rue Pasteur in Quartier du Jardin Botanique, a piece of toast in her mouth.

Last night, she had returned to visit her brother. She tossed and turned in the bed that she had shared with her mother until midnight before finally falling asleep. She woke up early in the morning, not wanting to run into her neighbors who might inquire about the wanted criminal named “Celia Bello.”

It was still dark, and the streets were mostly empty. Jenna passed by the few vendors and passersby and turned into an alley near Rue Saint-Hilaire, which was even more desolate.

And then, she saw a familiar figure approaching.

He was a man with brown skin, thick lips, and light-yellow hair neatly combed. He had native blood from the Southern Continent and an inconspicuous piece of tape on the bridge of his nose. Wearing a light-colored shirt and a yellow vest, a golden Sun Sacred Emblem was pinned to his chest.

Sun Sacred Emblem... Jenna's heart skipped a beat as she remembered who he was.

He was a Beyonder from the Eternal Blazing Sun Church, once responsible for protecting Hugues Artois!

Jenna instinctively wanted to turn and leave the alley, but she noticed another Beyonder from the Eternal Blazing Sun Church standing guard at the alley's exit! He too was an Eternal Blazing Sun Church Beyonder who had protected Hugues Artois!

Valentine's eyes were bluer than lake water, and his expression was cold.

Jenna stopped turning and held her breath. Her right hand rested on her waist, ready to draw her hidden revolver and dagger in an instant.

Seeing her cautious stance, Imre quickly called out, “Relax! We're not here to arrest you.”

Recalling Franca's analysis about the possibility of the official Beyonders making her an informant, Jenna calmed down a bit, but still eyed Imre and Valentine warily.

Imre flashed a friendly smile and said, "We do eliminate wild Beyonders, but that doesn't mean we don't have options."

"Don't be intimidated by the rumors about the stake. This is Trier. Wild Beyonders who aren't truly sinful won't face such a fate. Of course, similar cases happen in other provinces, villages, small cities, and towns."

Jenna grew more certain of the official Beyonders' intentions. She feigned inexperience and asked, "What do you want from me?"

Imre smiled.

"We hope you can cooperate with us.

"In fact, if we hadn't deliberately let you go, you would have been arrested long ago."

Jenna pondered for a moment, thinking about how she managed to lead a peaceful life after assassinating Hugues Artois.

After a while, she asked hesitantly, "Cooperate?"

Imre smiled and nodded.

"Let me introduce myself. I'm Imre, a Purifier of the Eternal Blazing Sun Church's Inquisition. This is my colleague, Valentine.

"Not every wild Beyer earns our goodwill and the chance to cooperate. We've looked into your situation and confirmed that you're also a believer of God and haven't committed any serious offenses. Moreover, after gaining superpowers, you restrained yourself and didn't misuse your abilities, except for assassinating Hugues Artois.

"We understand your hatred and your choice. After all, he's a heretic who deserves death. Anyone has the right to purify him on behalf of God. You must know that if we hadn't arranged it and deliberately turned a blind eye to your actions, you wouldn't have escaped from the member of parliament's office."

Jenna nodded slowly, showing that she had realized it later.

Imre continued, "Because you're a believer who inherently stays true to yourself and doesn't abuse your abilities, we want to invite you to be our informant and provide us with corresponding intel.

"Don't worry, we won't force you to betray your friends. We just want you to keep an eye out for anything that might bring disaster to the market district and Trier."

Stay true to myself and refrain from abusing my abilities... I used to be like that in the past, barely so in the present, but will I be in the future? Jenna thought, mocking herself. She wanted to tell them that they had arrived too late, and she was no longer the same person.

After a moment's hesitation, she said, "I also live in the market district. I'd be glad to help resolve any issues that might harm this place through you."

She tactfully expressed her willingness to cooperate.

At that moment, Jenna felt inspired and blurted out, "I discovered something two days ago!"

"What?" Imre glanced at his teammate Valentine in surprise.

They hadn't expected their newly-hired informant to provide intel right away.

Jenna recounted how she'd attended a mysterious gathering where she heard about the disappearance of the Deep Valley Cloister's gatekeeper. Upon accepting the corresponding commission, she described how she and her companion accidentally stumbled upon a cybernetic-eyed monk entering a nearby quarry and opening a secret cave filled with numerous human arms and legs.

Throughout the process, she kept her companion's identity and name, as well as the time and location of the mysticism gathering, hidden.

Imre and Valentine were a mix of joy and solemnity.

They were delighted by the unexpected gain, but the peculiarity of the situation also troubled them.

"Very good. That's the kind of cooperation we need," Imre praised Jenna after she finished speaking.

Valentine nodded reluctantly.

It wasn't that he didn't see the need for such an informant; the incident with Hugues Artois had changed his perception of wild Beyonders significantly. However, he was a bit emotional as Imre could have convinced Celia Bello alone, yet he insisted on involving Valentine.

After praising the morning sun, he could have gone home to rest and enjoy breakfast with his family.

Nevertheless, Imre's reasoning was sound.

According to the rules, it was best to have two Purifiers present when developing informants, especially Beyonders who belonged to a few pathways like Demoness.

Imre explained that over the years, many Purifiers had fallen into the trap of being seduced while developing Demonesses as informants or pursuing them. This led them to fall in love, betray the Church, and lose control amid the torment of faith.

Hence, having two Purifiers to supervise each other in such cases was essential.

Though Jenna was still an Assassin and had plenty to go before qualifying as a true Demoness of Pleasure, one couldn't be careless about such matters, especially with a rare female Assassin.

After the praise, Imre added, "Cooperation means both sides can benefit from this matter. We'll reward you accordingly based on the intel you provide. You can choose from money, materials, knowledge, weapons, and more."

Jenna hesitated for a moment before asking, "Will there be a reward for what I just said?"

"What do you want?" Imre inquired.

"The main ingredient of the Instigator potion," Jenna replied without hesitation,

having already received the potion formula from Franca.

Imre wasn't surprised. He nodded and said, "We'll discuss it after we verify the authenticity and importance of this intel."

"Alright," Jenna replied, not too disappointed as she didn't hold out much hope.

Imre produced an ordinary-looking piece of white paper with a few simple clauses written on it, outlining what he had just said.

The terms didn't demand Jenna's faith to be constantly with the Eternal Blazing Sun, but they required her not to believe in an evil god.

Being experienced, Jenna read the terms over and over again until she confirmed that there were no issues, and then she readily signed her real name.

She watched Imre take out a fountain pen made of pure gold and sign his name. He then quickly wrote a few bright red words in the Notary position.

A sun-like glow briefly enveloped the contract before vanishing.

After bidding farewell to Imre and Valentine, Jenna headed towards Rue des Blouses Blanches.

Apartment 601, 3 Rue des Blouses Blanches.

Lumian roused Franca from her sleep at the crack of dawn and faced her wrathful expression as he recounted the Werewolf incident.

Franca swiftly focused her mind and mumbled contemplatively, "If there's a follow-up investigation, the one you'll face will either be Zombie or Wraith. I'm more inclined to believe the latter."

"Huh?" Lumian was bewildered.

Franca explained matter-of-factly, "They are Sequence 6 and Sequence 5 of the Prisoner pathway."

Lumian sighed, still puzzled, and commented, "You seem to know this pathway quite well."

"Of course." Franca chuckled. "In the whole world, besides a few Prisoner pathway Beyonders, the rest belong to two factions. One is the Southern Continent's terrorist organization, the Rose School of Thought, that I mentioned earlier, and the other is..."

At this point, she paused, teasing Lumian deliberately. After a few seconds, she revealed, "Mr. Fool's Church."

Chapter 298 Rose School of Thought

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Mr. Fool's Church? Lumian was both surprised and unsurprised by the answer.

He hadn't expected the Church of The Fool to have a large number of Beyonders from the Prisoner pathway, but he figured that, according to the Bible's description, it wasn't too surprising for anyone from any pathway to appear.

...

Franca smiled and began to explain in detail, "Actually, the Prisoner pathway Beyonders of the Rose School of Thought and the Prisoner pathway Beyonders of the Church of The Fool were originally one."

"They later fractured?" Lumian hazarded a guess.

Franca confirmed tersely. "The Rose School of Thought is an incredibly ancient organization, boasting a history stretching back over two millennia, even predating the Fourth Epoch—prior to the Cataclysm."

Over 2,000 years old... Lumian was astonished.

When he learned that the Iron and Blood Cross Order had been established only 200 to 300 years ago, he had considered it ancient. But compared to the Rose School of Thought, the Iron and Blood Cross Order seemed like a child who hadn't even attended compulsory education.

Franca continued, "The Rose School of Thought was originally an orthodox organization in the Southern Continent. It ruled the Paz Valley and Star Highlands, where the government and the church were one, until the invasion of the Northern Continent's countries."

"When the invasion occurred, they lost their country and went underground, becoming clandestine. On the one hand, they resisted the colonists and attempted to expel them from the Southern Continent. On the other hand, they frequently caused terrorist acts in the Northern Continent. Heh heh, this actually had no effect on their resistance to colonization. Instead, it incurred the hatred of the people of various countries. Of course, their primary goal might not be this. Perhaps it's purely for blood sacrifice and certain rituals."

"How did they fracture?" Lumian was more concerned about this question.

Franca leisurely paced two steps in the living room.

"The Rose School of Thought has held different beliefs for ages. Their core principle revolves around the notion that willpower is born from diverse desires, capable of reshaping reality and achieving incredible feats. Yet, there's a divide in how they approach these desires.

"Some adhere to indulgence, embracing passionate cravings at all times, even resorting to bloody or primitive sacrificial rituals to bolster their willpower. On the other hand, the temperance faction, working from the potions' names, advocates for suppressing desires, keeping them pent up within their hearts, only unleashing them during critical moments to unleash formidable forces.

“Hence, one faction is known for indulgence, while the other is the temperance faction.”

Prisoner... Lumian silently echoed the name of Sequence 9 potion and pondered. “I reckon the temperance faction has got it right.”

“Any sensible person would think the same. After all, the body is like a cage for the heart, and the world is a cage for the body. Madness must be curbed, and desires must be reined in,” Franca sneered. “But there'll always be a few with a few screws loose. After indulgence, all that's left is madness. They'll barely be able to retain their basic faculties.”

No wonder the Werewolf reacted that way... It seems he truly belongs to the Rose School of Thought... If the others in their ranks share his mindset, it only confirms their strength. Surviving to this day without wit would demand remarkable strength... Lumian's thoughts carried both mockery and vigilance.

Franca gazed out the window, watching the daylight grow brighter, and spoke, “In the beginning, the indulgence faction and the temperance faction barely tolerated each other. If you ignore me, I won't meddle with you or the people you protect. But later, the indulgence faction started claiming that the Chained God, whom both factions believe in, is actually the embodiment of some evil god.”

Some evil god... Giving in to desires... Lumian's brow furrowed as he sought confirmation.

“Mother Tree of Desire?”

“Yes,” Franca smiled. “Someone you know, or rather, a deity you know.”

No, I don't want to know Her at all... The Rose School of Thought actually believes in the Mother Tree of Desire. The Werewolf's investigation of the Savoie Mob's information seems more complicated than I suspected... Does the Bliss Society have any connection to the Rose School of Thought? Or do they withhold such information? Lumian fell deep into thought.

Franca sighed sincerely and said, “Powers related to desire can be quite useful, but why can't they be used for the right purpose?”

“Blame it on the evil god?” Lumian cautioned his companion. “It's best if you don't try.”

Franca smiled sheepishly and said, “I still know what I can try and what I shouldn't. I understand the dangers posed by evil gods better than you.”

“Yes, later on, the indulgence faction launched a surprise attack on the temperance faction and inflicted severe injuries. The remaining members of the temperance faction fled in a sorry state and were hunted down for a long time until they found protection under Mr. Fool.”

“I've heard that Saint Sharron from Mr. Fool's Church was once a member of the temperance faction. Likewise for the Angel of the Holy Spirit beside Mr. Fool's throne...”

The indulgence faction is terrifyingly powerful to be able to hunt down the angel-led temperance faction and send them scurrying. There's no doubt they have angels, and not just one... And Mr. Fool's Church can protect the temperance faction... After hearing this, Lumian gained a rough understanding of the Rose School of Thought's history. He grew more confident in the Church of The Fool's strength and associated some of the names from the Bible with significant figures in reality.

Simultaneously, he understood why the Knight of Swords, the other holder of a Minor Arcana card, intended to blow up the Rose School of Thought's weapons warehouse.

"Heh heh, should we stop calling it the Rose School of Thought? Can't we just call it the School of Indulgence?" Lumian taunted.

Franca replied in amusement, "What a lame name! Do you think every secret organization is as uncreative as the Iron and Blood Cross Order?"

As they chatted, they heard Jenna's familiar gait approaching.

Jenna opened the door and was taken aback to find Lumian standing there.

"Something happened to him last night," Franca explained.

"What happened?" Jenna scrutinized Lumian but found no signs of injury.

Franca briefly recounted the Werewolf and Rose School of Thought, leaving out the deep connection that tied her, Lumian, and the Church of The Fool.

The more Jenna listened, the more alarmed she became. She felt that a Sequence 9 was nothing in the world of mysticism.

Her determination to become an Instigator as soon as possible grew stronger.

After the discussion, Franca added, "I'll briefly explain the situation of Zombie and the Wraith so you don't rush forward without knowing anything or sense the abnormality without realizing it.

"Compared to Werewolf, a Zombie's greatest transformation is their steel-like sturdiness. They're unafraid of fire, bullets, or cannonballs. You need to hit the same spot more than five times in a row to break through their defenses. As Zombies, as long as their heads remain intact, they are not in danger.

"They have also mastered decomposition, frost, and death-type spells that can awaken and control ghosts and corpses.

"A Wraith can freely transform into a specter. They no longer have a physical body and are unafraid of physical damage. Their spellcasting abilities are significantly improved. They can even forcefully possess you, taking control of your body and making you kill yourself.

"After entering the Wraith state, they can traverse different mirrors and use them to conceal themselves. Even if you activate your Spirit Vision, it's almost impossible to see them directly.

“If you encounter something similar to a poltergeist, you mustn't be careless. You have to consider the possibility of dealing with a true Wraith.”

Lumian listened attentively and pondered before saying, “Are attacks targeting the spirit more effective against Zombies and Wraiths?”

“Yes, I recommend the abilities of the Sun domain,” Franca said with a chuckle.

“However, I suggest that you run if you can when facing such an enemy. If you can't, seek help quickly.”

Lumian never found it embarrassing to ask for help. As he expressed his agreement, he proposed a new idea.

“They're all members of the indulgence faction. Wouldn't it be better to deal with them using an ability to influence desires?”

If that was the case, the mystical item made from Shadow Branch would come in handy.

Lumian had yet to contact Madam Magician. He planned to wait for Mr. K to reward him before deciding which domain's Beyonder characteristic to match the Shadow Branch.

“In theory, yes, but it might have the opposite effect,” Franca warned him.

After discussing the Rose School of Thought, Jenna recounted how she had been recruited as an informant and provided information about the Deep Valley Cloister.

Franca genuinely felt happy for her.

“That's right. This way, you'll have a fixed source for resources, but the officials are very strict about key items. You can't rely on them completely.”

Lumian hadn't expected Valentine to be in the market district as well. He was concerned about his lack of necessary disguises. The Mystery Prying Glasses could only be used at critical moments.

After some thought, he said to Jenna, “Showing your devotion to the Eternal Blazing Sun in front of a Purifier will yield unexpected gains.”

“You seem very experienced.” Jenna's eyes darted around, sensing that Ciel held many secrets.

Leaving 3 Rue des Blouses Blanches, Lumian strolled back to Salle de Bal Brise.

The more he delved into secret organizations, the more he sensed his lack of knowledge about mysticism.

Lumian sipped a glass of absinthe and settled into his office.

Just as he was about to find a more comfortable position, starlight oozed forth, forming a dazzling and dreamy door.

The door swung open, and Madam Magician emerged. Today, she sported a beige shirt, a brownish-yellow dress, and dark brown leather boots.

What's the matter? Lumian rose to his feet.

Madam Magician grinned and replied, "The friend I mentioned earlier, the one who can help you decipher the symbolic elements, has finished his recent work and is on a short vacation. I'll take you to him now."

Lumian responded with unusual excitement, "Alright!"

Chapter 299 Interpretation

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Lumian had been eagerly waiting for the dream symbols to be interpreted so that he could get enough clues before meeting with Padre Guillaume Bénét.

Only then could he effectively interrogate his target.

This time, when Madam Magician placed her hand on his shoulder, the usual layers of saturated colors and strange creatures were absent.

...

Instead, he felt a surge of starlight before finding himself in a distorted and concealed dark tunnel. His spirit and body seemed in chaos, unsure if he was moving forward, retreating, or simultaneously ascending and descending.

The state lasted briefly, but Lumian couldn't grasp the duration accurately, as if time had slipped from his grasp temporarily.

When he returned to his senses, he almost suspected that he was at Salle de Bal Brise just a moment ago, and in the next instant, he had arrived at his destination.

Before him lay a primitive forest, its dense canopy almost blotting out the sky. In an open space surrounded by towering trees stood a brownish-yellow hunter's hut.

"Go in," Madam Magician's voice echoed, though he couldn't see the demigod.

Following her instructions, Lumian stepped forward, treading on tumbling leeches and navigating through the dancing poisonous insects in the air and vegetation. He reached the hunter's hut and pushed open the unlatched wooden door.

Inside, rows of bookshelves lined the walls, and a wooden table stood in the center, seemingly existing in a different world compared to the primitive forest outside.

A figure sat behind the table, dressed in a white shirt and an open black coat, appearing somewhat obscured by a thick fog. Lumian could barely make out the clothes, facial features, and gender of the person, but not his face clearly.

"Have a seat," the figure spoke with a slightly magnetic and ethereal voice.

"Hello," Lumian greeted with a polite bow before taking a seat. "May I know how I should address you?"

The figure pondered for a moment and replied, "Think of me as a poet."

Poet? Lumian didn't fully grasp the significance of the code name, but he still chose to show respect. "Hello, Mr. Poet."

The poet gave a small nod and said, "Magician has already shared the entire dream and related information with me, but I'd still like to hear you recount it in detail."

Addressing her directly as Magician... Is he also a member of the Tarot Club? A holder of a Major Arcana card? Lumian sized up the poet opposite him with a guess.

In the dense fog's outline, he got a clearer impression.

His black hair was longer than usual, giving him an artistic appearance. His eyes were emerald green, not sharp but captivating. He had a slim face and a relaxed posture...

The combination of these elements and the thick fog made the poet seem like he emerged from a dream.

"Alright," Lumian replied.

He recounted Cordu's nightmare, supplemented by the various traces found in the ruins and the vast amount of information he gathered over the past month.

Compared to before, his emotions were still stirred by recalling these matters, but not as intensely. Throughout the entire process, he only took a single deep breath.

As he spoke, Lumian noticed the poet, leaning back in his chair, clasping his hands between his chest and abdomen. The poet's green eyes were much clearer than before.

In the next second, Lumian noticed strange insects crawling in and out of the other party's eye sockets.

The insects switched between translucency and opaqueness, as if carrying rings on their backs.

Such a scene nearly made Lumian forget to continue his recount. It was like facing the headless monster created by Supervisor Olson. He couldn't help but feel shocked.

He composed himself and forced himself to ignore the strange insects wriggling into his eyes, expressing everything he wanted to say.

After his words trailed off, the poet fell silent for a moment before continuing, "It's truly a dream filled with symbolic meaning.

"Let's start with the simplest part—the deceased Warlock in the tomb."

Doesn't it symbolize Aurore becoming Inevitability's Blessed and ultimately dying? Lumian was about to ask this question, but before he could, the poet seemed to sense his thoughts and took the initiative to explain.

"This is a typical dual-structure symbol. In other words, it contains two layers of meaning.

"The first layer is about the Warlock representing the power of Inevitability, or rather, corruption. And it also stands for Termiboros. The coffin is like the concept of 'death.'

Both symbolize the sealing of Inevitability's power and its loss of vitality. The tomb itself represents the seal.

“In the dream, we can see that the Warlock is truly dead and has never left the tomb. This aligns with the sealed state on your body.

“Your sister Aurore got some boon from Inevitability in this incident as well. She's suspected to be one of the leaders, embodying the power of Inevitability to a certain extent. Plus, she's already dead, so the Warlock matter takes on a second symbolic meaning.

“These two layers of symbolism are superimposed through Inevitability's core power, which can easily make interpreters overlook one of them.”

So that's how it is... Lumian's heart sank as he gradually became convinced by the poet. From another perspective, he now understood the essence of the Warlock legend.

The poet kept his seated posture, and there were no longer any strange insects crawling in and out of his eye sockets.

“Now that we've unraveled the full symbolism of the deceased Warlock, there's a preliminary answer for the owl and the other you.

“The other you symbolizes both your mutated personality due to corruption and Termiboros's attempt to achieve His goal by influencing your thoughts. If we only had the first symbol, the other you probably wouldn't be able to leave the tomb.

“The fact that the owl can freely enter and exit the deceased Warlock's tomb means that it can bypass the seal to some extent. It also displayed a few characteristics: monitoring your changes, not showing up at critical moments, and guarding the deceased Warlock.

“Based on our interpretation of the symbolic meaning of the deceased Warlock, the owl represents another Blessed of Inevitability, assigned to monitor your condition. Its attitude towards the deceased Warlock is quite ambiguous. It didn't exhibit the protective behavior it should have, nor did it assist during the final ritual with the angel's descent.

“Bypassing the seal suggests it's in the outside world and might be communicating with Termiboros in some way. I'm not entirely sure about that yet. You shouldn't ignore other possibilities.”

So, the symbol of the Sufferer turns out to be the owl. I thought it was the other me or Aurore... Lumian heaved a sigh of relief but also felt a sense of disappointment.

During the momentary pause in the poet's speech, he seized the opportunity to pose a question. “The underground altar exists, but what does the Sufferer aura in the dream symbolize?”

“The first layer symbolizes the previous appearance of the power of Inevitability there, but only on this layer. It's unlikely that the symbolic elements will take the form of the Sufferer aura.” The poet took a moment to interpret. “As for the second layer, if the owl—the Blessed of Inevitability—who watches over you is already a Sufferer, it means it doesn't want others to come into contact with the altar of Inevitability. It also symbolizes the power of Inevitability.

“Furthermore, we observed that you suffered the least damage back then. This suggests that the Sufferer isn't willing to kill you. It might even protect you to some extent. This is quite similar to the psychiatric treatment you experienced in Trier's market district.”

So, from the beginning, that person was already eying Termiboros? Of course, before his intentions are fully revealed, he will cooperate with Termiboros to do something... Termiboros attempted to influence me several times, but without success. Could this be the reason? Lumian couldn't help but sympathize with the Inevitability angel sealed in his chest.

The poet continued, “I suspect there's a third symbolic layer. It represents a true Sufferer in Cordu, a Sufferer who's not at the Beyonder level.”

A true Sufferer... Lumian's heart skipped a beat.

He made numerous connections but couldn't find the correct answer.

The poet wasn't entirely certain about this, so he didn't elaborate further. Instead, he focused on interpreting the symbol that Lumian was most concerned about.

“Whether or not the lizard-like elf actually exists, its symbolic importance in the dream is quite evident.

“Firstly, it represents a yearning for the cemetery and a fascination with entering and exiting tombs, but it never truly enters the tomb of the deceased Warlock. This signifies its affiliation with another faction, linked to the power of Inevitability, yet not exactly the same. It appears to be using this connection to seek and attain something related to Inevitability.

Another faction... Lumian recalled the diaphanous “lizard” present during the Tree of Shadow incident.

The poet sat up straighter.

“Secondly, it symbolizes concealed corruption and unconscious alterations.

“In the entire dream, only two individuals had a lizard-like elf crawl out of their mouths. One was your sister Aurore, and the other was the deputy padre, Michel Garrigue. What do you recall about him in reality?”

Lumian pondered for a moment and responded, “He's somewhat similar to the dream, but not as exaggerated.

“He's a devoted follower of the Eternal Blazing Sun. When he was shunned by Guillaume Bénet, he became fixated on giving sermons and hearing confessions. Later, his behavior became more and more apparent, neglecting all other matters...”

Suddenly, Lumian was startled.

He thought of Aurore, the other person from the dream who had a lizard-like elf emerge from their mouth.

Hadn't she also neglected to ask Hela for help?

Mr. Poet nodded.

“Your sister Aurore should have exhibited similar behavior.

“Thirdly, the faction or deity represented by the lizard-like elf does not want to witness an angel of Inevitability descending. It symbolizes the role of a saboteur.”

Seeing Lumian's confusion, the poet continued, “If it hadn't been the person with the lizard-like elf crawling out of their mouth who knocked you out, brought you to the final sacrificial site, and turned you into a vessel, the descent ritual might have succeeded.

“Consider this: during the ritual, if someone else had stood in front of Aurore instead of you, would she have gained a moment of clarity and pushed him off the altar?”

Chapter 300 Another Symbol

Upon hearing Mr. Poet's question, Lumian was caught off guard. A shiver ran up his spine and pierced his brain like an icy dagger.

Whether it was Aurore, who had knocked him out in the dream and led him to the sacrificial grounds, or the deputy padre, Michel Garrigue, who had done it in reality, they all had been secretly corrupted by the lizard-like elves—evident from them crawling out of their mouths!

If Lumian hadn't become the vessel, forced onto the altar and stood before Aurore, Termiboros's descent ritual might have succeeded. Aurore wouldn't have pushed the vessel out the altar, ruining the rite, and Lumian's Mr. Fool mark wouldn't have been activated!

...

This realization left Lumian's mind in chaos.

He never imagined that the lizard-like elf was behind the sabotage of the ritual. They had insidiously corrupted Aurore and the deputy padre, making them blind to important matters and missing their last chance to save themselves!

“W-what does it want? What's its true motive?” Lumian asked, feeling a pang of pain.

The poet's voice, veiled in mist, replied calmly, “I'm just interpreting the symbolic meaning of your dream's elements. I can't fully reconstruct the truth.

“But I can offer some speculation.

“The faction represented by the lizard-like elves aims to use the large-scale sacrifice of the Inevitability believers to summon an angel for some hidden purpose. However, they don't want Termiboros to descend upon this land for real.

“There must be a conflict between them and the entity known as Inevitability.”

Lumian nodded, finding it the most logical explanation.

He couldn't help but furrow his brow.

“What hidden motives do they have?”

“That's one of the paths for your subsequent investigation,” the poet said with a smile. “Decryption isn't divination or prophecy. You need enough information for deduction. You can't make wild guesses.”

Lumian nodded slightly, eager to catch the padre, Guillaume Bénét.

The poet leaned forward, placing his elbows on the wooden table, hands still clasped together.

“I've already deciphered the more crucial symbolic elements. There's only one left.

“Your dream itself holds a strong symbolic meaning.”

“The dream itself?” Lumian pondered for a few seconds but couldn't grasp the specific symbolism.

The poet's voice deepened, no longer abnormally ethereal but more magnetic.

“It symbolizes protection.

“Back then, due to intense emotional upheavals, your mind was on the verge of collapse, and you fell into a deep slumber. If not for the comfort and hope brought about by the dream of reality, perhaps you would have collapsed completely. Driven by your self-destructive tendencies, you would have acted irrationally until your death.

“Moreover, we can confirm that you don't have the ability to produce a dream of reality, nor can you draw investigators into that dream. The sealed Termiboros can't do it either. In other words, the dream of reality is a result of external interference.

“We haven't grasped the specific abilities of the High-Sequence Beyonder of the Inevitability pathway. We can't determine if it was done by the Inevitability Blessed symbolized by the owl or if it was influenced by other factions. Given the previous interpretation and the situation in reality, all of them have sufficient motives.

“In short, besides the entity known as Inevitability, no one else wants to see Termiboros truly descend upon the land.”

Lumian instantly recalled the area around the blood-colored mountain peak in Cordu's ruins that induced slumber.

Before he could bring up the subject, the poet added, "Considering that the area that forces others into sleep is around the sacrificial ground and not the house where you sleep, I'm inclined to believe that it's influenced by other factions. Their main purpose is to disrupt the ritual, and pacifying you just comes with it."

"If it was done by the Inevitability Blessed symbolized by the owl, the location of the abnormal area would be completely opposite."

The faction represented by the lizard-like elf did it, or someone else did. Is there another faction? The more Lumian understood the situation, the more he realized that the truth of the Cordu disaster was far more complicated than he had expected.

He fell silent, taking a moment to gather his thoughts before speaking.

"What's the significance of the empty baby cradle in the administrator's castle?"

The poet took a few seconds to contemplate and then replied, "It's a rather minor symbol. It represents the child of the Great Mother. Based on the information you provided, it seems that the child might have entered our world secretly during the final sacrificial ritual, aided by another blood-related son hidden by Madame Pualis. It then left Cordu unnoticed, leaving behind the empty cradle."

The spawn of the Great Mother... Lumian hissed to himself, realizing the seriousness of the situation was on par with Termiboros's descent.

Inevitability's faction had taken a significant risk and worked tirelessly for nearly a year, all for the sake of obtaining a sealed angel. Ultimately, it served the Great Mother's purpose.

With those thoughts, Lumian let go of his worries.

The saints and angels of the Tarot Club and the Church of The Fool would undoubtedly handle this matter. It was beyond the concerns of someone like him, a mere Sequence 7.

Besides, this issue primarily revolved around the sacrificial ritual and had little to do with the truth behind the Cordu disaster. Lumian's main focus was tracking down and capturing the padre, Guillaume Bénét.

He then inquired, "Why was the entire Cordu village destroyed, while only my home remained intact?"

The poet pondered for a moment and answered, "I believe it symbolizes Aurore's nostalgia, reluctance, and regret."

"After the ritual, she should have regained some clarity. In the midst of the fusion of the villagers' flesh and blood, she instinctively protected the building that represented her beautiful past life."

"Of course, it's possible she also leveraged other forces interfering with the ritual."

Nostalgia... Reluctance... The beautiful life of the past... Lumian fell silent, lost in thought.

Observing this, the poet unclasped his hands and said, "I've deciphered all the symbolic elements of your dream."

“Thank you, Mr. Poet.” Lumian stood up and, following the Church of The Fool's customs, pressed his hand to his chest and bowed slightly.

For a moment, his mind turned adrift, seeing the poet, the wooden table, the surrounding bookshelves, walls, the primitive forest outside, and all kinds of insects fade away like a dream, returning to deep darkness.

In an instant, the darkness vanished, and Lumian found himself standing at the edge of a marketplace.

In the distance, there were white buildings with dark black or earthy yellow bell towers and spires. Nearby, cloud-like tents and herds of cows, sheep, and horses were scattered around.

Most of the people passing through the market had dark skin, as if they were exposed to the sun every day. Among them, men wore felt hats and dark-red or sky-blue robes, while women wore colorful multi-layered gowns.

A chilling wind howled as Lumian gazed at the snow-covered mountain peak in the distance, momentarily lost in his thoughts.

His conversation with the poet and what he had just experienced felt like a vivid dream.

No, it was a dream!

That's why he couldn't see Mr. Poet clearly.

I didn't realize I was dreaming at all. When did the dream start? It felt eerily similar to the dream I had in the ruins of Cordu. Could it be that Mr. Poet's divine path has the power to make others have vivid dreams? And could the abnormal area around the blood-colored mountain be related to similar abilities? Lumian was shocked at first, but then numerous thoughts rushed through his mind.

Just then, Madam Magician appeared before him, wearing a beige shirt, a brownish-yellow dress, and dark brown leather boots.

“Do you want to go back to Salle de Bal Brise now?” the Major Arcana card holder asked.

Lumian casually asked, “Where are we?”

Madam Magician gazed at the azure sky and pure white clouds and replied, “We're in Star Highlands' Rapus, once a significant city in the Highlands Kingdom, also known as the City of White.”

Star Highlands... Lumian recalled the Rose School of Thought and recounted the Werewolf attack and Gardner Martin's arrangements to Madam Magician. Finally, he asked, “Did the Rose School of Thought enter the market district because of the Tree of Shadow? And didn't they gather detailed information about me from the Bliss Society?”

Madam Magician chuckled.

“You should have asked these questions earlier. The gentleman who helped you decipher the dream symbols is an expert at dealing with the Rose School of Thought. Alright, I'll ask him for you now.”

With that, she vanished in front of Lumian. A few minutes later, she reappeared in the same position, unnoticed by the people passing through the market.

Madam Magician smiled at Lumian and said, “Based on that gentleman's experience, although the Mother Tree of Desire and its worshiping organizations show clear purpose, sufficient decisiveness, accurate foresight of the future, and excellent planning on a higher level and at the macro scale, when it comes to specific events, they often appear chaotic, disorderly, and even mad. It reflects the nature of the evil god itself.

“In simpler terms, the organizations worshiping the Mother Tree of Desire don't cooperate or communicate well. They sometimes act erratically and unpredictably. It's a common situation.

“However, in the past year or two, that gentleman noticed some rudimentary cooperation among these organizations. Some members of the Devil families are even involved.”

“Devil families?” Lumian had never heard of such a term.

Madam Magician casually explained, “The families that control the Devil pathway—the Criminal pathway. Some of them show signs of worshiping the Mother Tree of Desire.”