

## Inevitability 321

### Chapter 321 Compensation

In the dim corridor, despite the unchanging temperature, an icy gust swept through, sending shivers down the spine.

Lumian, who had cleared his mind to restore his spirituality, snapped back into attention. He examined the tombs on both sides, his demeanor unaffected by the sudden disturbance.

His initial urge was to reach into his pocket and grasp Mr. K's finger. Yet, he held back, mindful of the unfamiliar territory that was the Southern Continent. Mr. K might not sense the use of his finger, so Lumian suppressed his instinct.

...

Franca reacted swiftly too. A small mirror materialized in her palm. Jenna, less experienced, didn't grasp the scene's significance, but her instincts told her it wasn't a positive development.

It was akin to the spooky tales told in bar dance halls to frighten young girls!

Sallent, avoiding the dim oil lamp's gaze, briskly moved past Jenna and Franca, making a beeline for the pitch-black wooden door to the basement. He paid Lumian no attention.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Sounds of impact echoed from the tombs on either side. It wasn't clear if sarcophagus lids had been struck or heavy stone doors pounded.

Sallent's expression shifted, and he bolted out.

In the silent basement, the echoes of the pounding lingered. Lumian and the others hurried after the mystic potion store owner, easily overtaking him.

At that very moment, the pitch-black wooden door creaked shut abruptly.

Seeing this, Franca sprinted forward and flung the mirror out the door.

A resonant crack marked the mirror's collision with the wooden door, fragments scattering across the floor.

Lumian and Franca came to a halt simultaneously, their attention on Sallent. Jenna, still in motion, comprehended and made the same choice.

In the eerily dim corridor, Sallent, decked in a blue coat with gold accents, stood frozen, his pale face tinged with a sickly green hue.

The pounding from the tombs persisted, its reverberations shaking everyone present to the core.

Sallent trembled visibly, muttering to himself, "We're done for. We're all finished..."

Franca inquired swiftly yet composedly, "What's going on?"

Only by grasping the core issue could she devise a swift and effective strategy!

Seemingly detached from his own senses, Sallent didn't answer. He half-mumbled, "We're done for. We're all finished..."

Before he could complete his thought, the entire basement quivered.

The dark-green flames that had shrunk to the size of rice grains flickered noticeably in the same direction.

Fear warped Sallent's features, his voice unconsciously amplified.

“It's awake! It's awake!”

“Who is it?” Jenna found it more spine-chilling than any ghost story she'd encountered, but she pushed herself to ask.

Sallent remained unresponsive, repeating his panicked cry, “It's awake! It's awake!”

Seeing that the mystic potion store owner was clearly in a state of extreme horror and not in his right mind, Franca decisively abandoned her attempts to ask him for information and took out a mirror.

Her plan was to use Magic Mirror Divination to swiftly assess the current situation.

Even if the divination's response wasn't crystal clear and required interpretation, it was still better than being completely clueless!

In a matter of moments, Franca completed the incantation and witnessed an aqueous light emanating from the mirror.

Just as she was preparing to gather her thoughts and formulate appropriate questions to obtain corresponding answers, Lumian, who had been standing silently beside her, suddenly spoke up. “Did it work?”

“It did. I can perform the divination,” Franca cooperatively responded, although she was puzzled by Lumian's actions.

Lumian immediately broke into a grin.

“No need for questions.”

Uh... Franca was caught off guard before she grasped Lumian's intention.

Just then, the basement shook once more. Sallent, the mystic potion store owner, was so overcome with fear that his voice turned high-pitched.

“It's here! It's here!”

“We're going to die!”

In the next heartbeat, Lumian seized his shoulder.

Simultaneously, Lumian firmly held Jenna's arm with his other hand, while Franca hooked her arm around his shoulder like a bro.

An eerie light shimmered through the crevices of their clothing, and the four of them materialized outside the basement, standing before the pitch-black wooden door adorned with intricate and enigmatic symbols.

“It's here! It's here!”

“We're going to die!”

Sallent's cries of despair still echoed in the air.

Lumian cast an appraising glance at the mystic potion store owner, pondering whether to utilize the Niese Face to transform into a mummy and give him a scare.

Therapeutic provocation had its merits too!

However, considering his waning spirituality and the prudence of revealing too many abilities to a stranger, Lumian ultimately shelved the prank idea.

Smack!

Jenna swung her right palm, delivering a resounding slap to Sallent's face, leaving him bewildered. He gazed at the woman before him, utterly perplexed.

Franca and Lumian exchanged speechless glances, unsure how to react to this unexpected turn of events.

As the pitch-black door and the basement walls swayed gently, the cacophony outside abruptly subsided.

Jenna felt the weight of their gazes and mumbled, “Isn't this how they wake them up? That's how they would bring back my neighbor when she lost control of her emotions.”

It wasn't madness. In the factory district, people had their own practical remedies. More often than not, they did the trick, though occasionally they proved ineffective.

Of course, if he were part of her family, she wouldn't dare try it. She'd seek professional assistance instead.

Franca snapped out of her reverie and commended sincerely, “Well done.”

Several moments elapsed, and Sallent's gaze cleared.

Instinctively, he scanned their surroundings and exclaimed in surprise, “We're outside? When did we get out?”

“When you were screaming ‘we're going to die,’ ‘we're going to die,’” Lumian retorted with an annoying tone.

He then raised an eyebrow and inquired with a deep intonation, “Who were you saying was about to wake up?”

Sallent's expression shifted multiple times before he stammered, “A genuine ancient mummy. It slumbers deep within the tomb and occasionally stirs. It only woke up a few days ago. Why did it wake up so quickly...”

Normally, there was a rough timeframe for how long the mummy remained “awake.” According to Sallent's experience, it would be at least another month before it awoke again. That was why he dared to bring Lumian and the others into the basement.

Unexpectedly, an accident occurred!

What caused the ancient mummy to awaken prematurely? Lumian directed a thoughtful gaze at Franca, as if silently asking her if she wished to consider obtaining the genuine ancient mummy.

Franca comprehended his inquiry and shook her head, indicating that it wasn't necessary.

The mummy's ashes were merely supplementary ingredients. The ones formed the year before were still usable. There was no need to risk dealing with what seemed to be a perilous entity.

Lumian withdrew his gaze and pushed through the headache gnawing at his temples. He turned to Sallent and grinned.

“I don't care if it's last year's mummy or an ancient one awakening. There are two things I know for sure.

“First, I saved your life. Second, we were scared out of our wits and nearly met our end down there.

“So, you owe me a thank-you present and compensation for the mental strain. How much do you think is fair? Keep in mind, I only want gold.”

With the memory of owing the Armored Shadow and Mr. Fool a total of 100,000 verl d'or in gold, Lumian was keen on seizing every opportunity to amass funds.

As the tumult behind the pitch-black wooden door gradually settled, Sallent heaved a sigh of relief and responded, “How about 1,000 verl d'or? That's all the gold I have on hand.”

His heart ached at the thought of parting with the money, but he acknowledged Lumian's point. Without their intervention, he'd have met his end in that basement, becoming fodder for the mummy.

Moreover, the group had demonstrated significant prowess. Rejecting their request outright seemed like a risky proposition.

“Agreed.” Lumian didn't push for more or attempt to haggle.

As the quartet made their way toward the stairs leading to the warehouse, Franca lowered her left hand and surreptitiously let something slip into the shadowy corner.

After obtaining 1,000 verl d'or in gold coins, gold nuggets, and jewelry, Lumian, Franca, and Jenna exited the Highland Mystic Potion Shop.

Franca glanced back at the shop and let out a wry chuckle. “Tsk, all this trouble, and we ended up with a mummy's hand and an additional 500 verl d'or.”

Without waiting for Lumian's response, she queried with a grin, “Are you running short on funds again? You used to save people without expecting payment. They could give it or not.”

“Have you switched to the Spectator's Pathway?” Lumian teased, nodding in agreement. “The special contract I mentioned involves sacrificing 100,000 verl d'or worth of gold within a set timeframe after the pact is made.”

100,000 verl d'or? Jenna's understanding of monetary matters had undergone quite a transformation since entering the world of mysticism.

Based on what she knew, even someone like Ciel didn't possess as much liquid wealth as her. Yet, he dared to accumulate a debt of 100,000 verl d'or just for a contract granting access to those special abilities.

Franca clicked her tongue and inquired, "Why didn't you 'teleport' us right to the door from the start? The basement door wasn't closed then, so no mishaps would have occurred."

"Don't you think it's more dramatic to do it at the last moment?" Lumian retorted with a question.

Naturally, the actual reason was that he had recently gained the ability to traverse the spirit world and hadn't ingrained a reflex to use it. When the pitch-black wooden door in the basement shut, he had been hesitant to attempt teleporting for fear of it failing.

Later, Franca successfully completed her Magic Mirror Divination. Through it, Lumian confirmed his ability to remain connected to the outside world within the seal, which allowed him to make the definitive teleportation.

Amid Franca and Jenna's baffled expressions, Lumian massaged his aching head and announced, "Let's find an inn. I need to rest and restore my spirituality."

"Okay." Franca wasn't in a hurry to secure an inn. Instead, she turned into an empty alley and produced an ornate makeup mirror.

"Why are you using divination?" Jenna queried inquisitively.

Franca's lips curled into a smile.

"I'm using it to divine the reflection in my other mirror."

Seeing Jenna's perplexity, she elucidated, "I left a small mirror that looks like a shard outside that basement."

With that, Franca caressed the mirror and chanted an incantation.

Before long, the mirror projected an image: Sallent, the mystic potion store proprietor, stood before the pitch-black wooden door, his posture hunched as he cried out, "Only death endures forever!"

Chapter 322 Pleasure

"Only death endures forever?"

Lumian and Jenna struggled to grasp the gravity of the situation unfolding before them. Their attention turned towards Franca.

Franca observed as Sallent bowed and offered his prayers before departing from the dimly lit basement. The mirror's enigmatic display dissolved into darkness, marking the end of the divination. She spoke contemplatively, "He seems to be from the Numinous Episcopate."

...

Numinous Episcopate? Lumian, who had encountered references to this secret organization within Aurore's grimoires, knew that it originated from the royal lineage of the Balam Empire on the Southern Continent and ancient Death believers. The organization's mission seemed to involve

awakening or reviving Death while expelling colonists to restore the Balam Empire to its former glory.

Aurore's knowledge of the Numinous Episcopate was somewhat superficial, lacking details about prominent figures, rituals, or specific practices.

“The Numinous Episcopate?” Jenna's lack of familiarity was apparent in her voice.

Franca proceeded to provide a succinct overview of the Numinous Episcopate's background, aligning with Lumian's understanding.

She concluded, “In the Southern Continent, the Numinous Episcopate holds a comparable status to the Rose School of Thought. Although they don't resort to blood sacrifices or terrorism like some secret faith-based organizations, rituals are inherent to their nature. The Numinous Episcopate's pursuit of death's revival necessitates sacrificial rites.”

“Right, the Numinous Episcopate's leader is a demigod nicknamed Pale Empress.”

Pale Empress? Given the Numinous Episcopate's similarity in strength to the Rose School of Thought, it's plausible that Pale Empress is an angel... Lumian rubbed his head, lacking the energy to analyze further.

Jenna's gaze shifted toward the Highland Mystic Potion shop, her confusion evident.

“Why would the shop owner, an Intisian, join the Numinous Episcopate?”

The Numinous Episcopate's goal was to eradicate colonists and rebuild the Balam Empire. Intis was one of the colonial powers established in West Balam.

Sallent, though having lived in the Southern Continent for over a decade and reaping the rewards of being an Intisian, found himself in a puzzling predicament. His allegiance to the Numinous Episcopate, despite these benefits, raised questions. Sallent wasn't one of the lowest-class denizens of Trier like Jenna who didn't have a clear concept of colonial interests.

Franca muttered, “Who knows? Numerous possibilities exist. Enforced conversion after being captured, manipulation by mysterious forces, gradual enticement with escalating benefits leading to devout belief, or a transformative experience thanks to being rescued by a kind Death believer.

“In any case, the Numinous Episcopate displays cunning by employing a genuine Northern Continent native to operate a mystical potion shop, peddle mummies, and act as an inconspicuous spy. Their strategy appears well-orchestrated, defying easy suspicion.”

Observing Lumian's weariness, Franca decided to not delve further. She located a nearby inn and secured lodgings for them.

Upon Lumian's awakening, sunlight streamed through the glass window, casting a warm glow on Franca and Jenna, who were seated at the table. The sky was serene, adorned with fluffy clouds resembling wisps of cotton.

Franca and Jenna savored a burrito seasoned with spices, enveloping succulent beef and mutton, while Lumian indulged in a plate of roasted onions, potatoes, corn, and assorted meats. A sweet corn-based beverage graced their table, emanating a delightful aroma.

As Lumian sat up, a chuckle escaped his lips. “Looks like you two had quite the time.”

Munching on her food, Franca mumbled, "I don't often venture to the Star Highlands, and I accomplished what I set out to do. Naturally, it's time to unwind.

"What's this called? It's called... Dammit, forget it. You get the idea!"

Despite a prolonged attempt, Franca struggled to articulate her thoughts in the appropriate language. Eventually, she abandoned the effort, prioritizing her meal.

Jenna gestured to her right. "We brought you some lunch."

A strip of fried beef, coated with a crimson sauce exuding a subtle alcoholic aroma, lay before Lumian.

"I figured you might be hesitant to venture out due to the language barrier," Lumian admitted, promptly satisfying his hunger.

He had previously realized that only a minority of the locals understood Intisian, and even then, only on a basic level for rudimentary communication.

Franca, swallowing a bite of burrito, sipped on a cup of steaming corn juice.

"Body language is universal."

Jenna added with a grin, "Franca's gestures are truly something to behold. She even mimics pig squeals, cow moos, and sheep bleats to communicate her meat preferences to vendors unfamiliar with Intisian. Yet, the nobles here are a departure from my expectations. They appear more akin to Northern Continent counterparts than their Southern Continent peers."

In this relaxed ambiance, the trio enjoyed a leisurely lunch, recounting their escapades as if they were on an authentic holiday.

Under the cover of night, within the Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman district, nestled at Rist docks, an abandoned building stood—a site Lumian had previously set ablaze.

Cognizant of the potential disturbances that advancements within an apartment might trigger among nearby residents, Franca heeded Lumian's advice and selected this vacant location.

Promptly erecting a wall of spirituality, Franca collected the ashes of the incinerated mummy—thanks to Lumian—along with the other requisite ingredients.

Meanwhile, Lumian and Jenna maintained a careful distance, intently observing as Franca adroitly mixed the ingredients and consumed the potion.

A brief hush enveloped the scene, then Franca's visage twisted in anguish.

Almost instantly, her flaxen hair, formerly bound in a ponytail, broke free of its constraints. Propelled by an invisible force, the hair drifted and extended, resembling a radiant web expanding in all directions.

More ethereal strands emerged, dense and elongated. Swiftly, they populated the space embraced by the wall of spirituality, fashioning a spectral woodland of filaments.

Once again, Jenna bore witness to the mystifying and surreal attributes of the potion,

while obscured by the burgeoning hair. Alongside Lumian, she patiently awaited the anomaly to subside.

Whether this passage of time spanned dozens of seconds or stretched beyond two minutes, the ethereal flaxen hair finally withdrew, returning to Franca's form.

With a jubilant countenance, Franca pivoted to face her companions, her limpid eyes radiating contentment.

“Everything went quite seamlessly. I'm anticipating future advancements to be quite cumbersome and challenging.”

Curiously, Jenna found Franca's flowery blouse and off-white breeches harmonizing impeccably with her demeanor for the first time. The attire seemed to accentuate an ineffable allure, evoking a blush and a warmth in Jenna's ears, despite her own femininity. On the other hand, Lumian experienced an unfamiliar and unwanted warmth and reaction.

As Franca acclimated to the powers of the Demoness of Pleasure, Lumian and Jenna's racing hearts eventually steadied, restoring a semblance of normality.

Concluding their task and dismantling the spiritual barrier, Franca rejoined them, sporting a radiant smile. Her eyes shimmered akin to a lake glinting with reflected light.

“How much of an improvement are we talking about?” Lumian posed a direct question.

A rough comprehension of the situation would facilitate better teamwork!

Franca's eyes danced playfully as she responded, a grin adorning her face. “Take a guess.”

“I'm not a Demoness. How can I guess?” Lumian's retort barely left his lips before he frowned.

An intangible force had coiled around his legs and body!

Then, with a sudden rush, Lumian's form was engulfed in crimson flames that erupted from within him, engulfing the enigmatic threads.

Only now did Lumian and Jenna perceive the intangible tendrils, tinted in fiery hues resembling translucent spider silk.

Amidst her amusement, Franca inquired of Lumian and Jenna with a mischievous glint, “Do you understand now? Perhaps you'd like to explore another?”

“No!”

“No need.”

In unison, Jenna and Lumian retorted, their voices echoing their apprehension.

Franca maintained her smile, suggesting, “Are you truly certain you don't wish to give it a try? I assure you, a mere touch can envelop you in true pleasure.”

“Dammit!” Jenna instinctively retreated a step, her expletive punctuating her reaction.



Lumian regarded Franca, grappling with whether she was indeed teasing him or harboring some genuine intent.

Yes, the target should be Jenna... I can't rule out the possibility of using simple contact to embarrass me... As Lumian's thoughts raced, Franca suddenly composed herself and said seriously, "In addition to the two I mentioned earlier, my proficiency in Black Fire, Frost, Curse, and Mirror magic has all been elevated. Their integration has expanded as well. For instance, I can utilize a mirror to focus on a target and employ Black Fire to enact a curse. Another scenario involves my utilization of Mirror Substitution and Staff Substitution to counteract fatal harm while gaining some measure of recuperation.

"My capabilities as an Assassin and Instigator have also been enhanced."

She succinctly summarized her advancements without delving into particulars.

Lumian nodded, mulling over Franca's capabilities. He inquired thoughtfully, "Do you possess a charm-like ability too?"

Franca's smile hinted at an answer, but she chose to remain silent.

Jenna observed Franca for a moment and then noted something else, pointing at her and remarking, "You've become even more beautiful!"

Franca's individual features and overall appearance had transcended any imperfections. Her demeanor radiated an undeniable brilliance—a striking, flamboyant beauty that demanded no disguise.

"Is that so?" Franca responded, her surprise evident.

Lumian couldn't resist stroking his chin, pondering whether Madame Hidden Blade would genuinely switch to Iron-blooded Knight when going from Sequence 5 to Sequence 4.

As Lumian bade Franca and Jenna farewell and embarked on his return to Auberge du Coq Doré, a sudden realization swept over him. He lowered his voice and inquired, "Temiboros, what's the next boon after Contractee?"

Yet, Termiboros remained silent, offering no reply.

Lumian let out a scoff.

"It's fine. Once I locate the padre, he'll divulge the information."

Although his confidence might waver internally, maintaining an outward appearance of assurance was essential in times like these.

The day of the prophesied event arrived swiftly.

In Quartier de la Princesse Rouge, at the crossroads of Rue de la Muraille and Rue du Cheval Blanc, Lumian disembarked from a public carriage with a casual grace. Clad in a white shirt, a black vest, brown trousers, and sleek leather shoes, he cast his gaze upon the slumbering neighborhood that lay ahead.

## Chapter 323 Psychological Profile

Lumian stood at an intersection, his hands casually tucked into his pockets as he strolled leisurely toward Rue de la Muraille.

This street held more significance to the people of Trier than even the renowned Avenue du Boulevard. It was their aspiration.

In the days before Emperor Roselle ignited the Industrial Revolution, Trier's cityscape hadn't sprawled to the extent it had now. It nestled in the easternmost corner, fortified by stout city walls and vigilantly guarded by soldiers. Their military encampment wasn't distant, which prompted the emergence of numerous brothels and prostitutes nearby.

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As the sands of time sifted through, Rue de la Muraille garnered its reputation, and Trier's population burgeoned. A modest market burgeoned into a realm of prestige and extravagance that stretched across the Northern and Southern Continents.

Lumian passed beneath the sheltering canopy of Intis parasol trees, his gaze taking in opulent palace-like structures alongside unassuming apartments. They all shared a common trait—windows adorned with frosted glass and the occasional green shutter.

Rue de la Muraille appeared to be rousing from its midday slumber. The road hosted few pedestrians, but each one bore a distinct air. Some dashed by in somber gray-blue work attire, driven by haste, while others donned antiquated finery. They glanced around before slipping into apartment complexes. Cameras slung around necks captured candid moments before these wanderers vanished into ornate edifices. Attempts at projecting an Intisian facade couldn't mask true identities, betrayed by hairlines and exaggerated heights.

Moreover, Lumian's keen eye caught sight of an iron-gray robot, towering at two meters. A steam-spewing outlet adorned its back, accompanied by gears, torsion springs, screws, and bent pipes—a symphony of decorative mechanics.

Perched on the robot's left shoulder, a lavishly dressed man flaunted intricate makeup. His leisurely observation spanned pedestrians, dignitaries shrouded in gold or silver masks, and groggy men stumbling into wakefulness.

Here, the ordinary and elite intertwined in a peculiar harmony.

As Lumian advanced, he methodically surveyed his surroundings, his gaze unrelenting in its pursuit of his target.

In a flash, he spotted Albus approaching from a side alley.

The Iron and Blood Cross Order member, sporting dark-red locks, acknowledged Lumian with a sly grin. He lifted his right hand, pointed at his own head—provocation in motion.

Under Gardner Martin's directive, Albus was tasked with tracking down Padre Guillaume Bénet. It seemed Albus was insinuating a competition of sorts, pitting Lumian against himself to see who'd uncover the “prey” first.

Beyond Albus, the Iron and Blood Cross Order likely deployed several official or peripheral affiliates. In this, Gardner Martin had kept his promises.

Undeterred by Albus's gesture, Lumian pressed on, deeper into Rue de la Muraille.

Guided by the revelations of Demoness of Pleasure Franca's Magic Mirror Divination, the prophecy's domain narrowed:

Guillaume Bénét's presence was expected on five streets, including Rue de la Muraille and Rue du Cheval Blanc, within the week.

However, Rue de la Muraille's length, its expanse, and the thronging populace created a nebulous landscape for Lumian's quest. Carpet searches and widespread net-casting was virtually impossible. Success hinged on the possibility of enlisting aid from the authorities and mustering an army to seal off this domain, vigilantly guarding every entrance to Underground Trier.

Previously, Lumian could only hope that the Iron and Blood Cross Order, a secret organization teeming with formidable Hunters, boasted superior tracking and manhunt techniques. Or perhaps, Termiboros—an Inevitability angel—might drive them to converge. As long as the distance between Lumian and Guillaume Bénét was moderate, they would “reunite” as though preordained.

However, a new trail had emerged.

This advancement was predominantly the fruit of the mystical knowledge he had acquired as a Contractee!

Within this trove of knowledge lay a menagerie of uncanny creatures, summonable or recruitable, complete with the requisite costs for forging contracts. The compendium detailed the abilities obtainable and the subsequent penalties incurred post-contract.

Merging the exhibition of Guillaume Bénét's contractual capabilities from his memory and dream, Lumian pieced together a fragment of insight:

Summoning Abyss Demon Flowers necessitates a sacrifice of fresh human blood. The downside—an increased desire for coitus.

Invisibility mandates thirteen portions of prepared meat. The downside—an intensified susceptibility to hunger.

Slow Flight sacrifices one's romantic infatuation perpetually. The downside—an urge to show off.

Bone Curse predicates the sacrifice of a living person. The downside—drowsiness.

The Soul Assimilation Mystic Spell exacts no fewer than three human souls. The downside—random bouts of dizziness, numbering four to five daily.

Internal Explosion demands the sacrifice of any Beyonder characteristic. The downside—unrelenting spirituality drain, tantamount to permanent reduction of spirituality capacity.

From the detailed description of the Soul Assimilation Mystic Spell, Lumian conjectured that the padre had inadvertently met an additional, covert cost.

That was his name!

The Soul Assimilation Mystic Spell affected the target's Spirit Body by invoking their true name, causing them to experience dizziness and other reactions, amplified by deeper comprehension of the target and employment of verbiage echoing the spirit world.

In contracting with a spirit world entity armed with the Soul Assimilation Mystic Spell, Guillaume Bénét inadvertently disclosed his true name. Entities endowed with such powers could wield a person's true name for manifold feats—a potentially profound latent hazard.

This clandestine peril was merely one amid numerous akin enigmas housed within a Contractee's mystic wisdom. Therefore, Lumian opted for an extensive screen of spirit world creatures, personal interaction followed by experimental engagement.

Based upon the known downsides accompanying the contracted abilities, Lumian hatched an educated hypothesis.

After Guillaume Bénét, a man driven by insatiable desires, found his appetite for sex surging, he had definitely sought out women. The prophecy's alignment with Quartier de la Princesse Rouge harmonized with the results unearthed from the Magic Mirror Divination about the five nearby streets.

Furthermore, he found his hunger more voracious than ever, and the act of intimacy left him drained of vigor. Thus, the likelihood was high that he would gravitate towards a brothel that catered to both carnal and culinary needs or invite a woman back home.

Guillaume Bénét was not only a man of fervent desires but also an ambitious soul, thirsting for power. Being confined in the village and before the contractual abilities imbued his life with adverse effects, his lust mirrored an expression of power. Otherwise, it was impossible to explain how his desires sprawled across every woman, an inclination spanning the spectrum between esteemed paramours and those of lesser stature.

To him, appropriating the companions of other men became a testament to his standing, might, and allure.

Stepping onto Trier's soil, a place where his provincial accent drew disdain from the citizens, he undoubtedly sought vindication, manifesting his claims in his own unique manner.

Fused with his relentless pursuit of strength and his past style, Guillaume Bénét very likely went after sought-after courtesans, stoking the fires of envy amongst the local denizens. He might even spirit one or two of these coveted women away to grace his home.

This comprehensive analysis of the padre's character and psyche wasn't Lumian's solitary undertaking. Rather, it emerged from the expertise of Anthony Reid, a Psychiatrist. Armed with Lumian's intricate portrayal of Guillaume Bénét, Reid painted a psychological canvas, a vivid portrait of this heretic's inner workings.

Thus, two distinct paths unfurled to ensnare his prey. The first entailed staking out upscale brothels, where both meals and famous courtesans awaited. The other trail veered towards investigations surrounding courtesans who had entered matrimony, taken on mistress roles, or even vanished within the past two months.

For the former pursuit, the mantle rested upon the shoulders of the Iron and Blood Cross Order. Lumian's current task revolved around unearthing a conduit to intelligence about Rue de la Muraille's clandestine tales.

Anthony Reid, an adept intelligence broker, held a key. He was well-acquainted with Bühler, a Ghost Face columnist renowned for exposing scandals and whispers that wove through the fabric of Rue de la Muraille.

Bühler, a connoisseur of drinking and writing, would frequent a corner of Hope Café where he could survey the entrance before venturing into the brothels.

With his objective clear, Lumian embarked on a steady stride toward the café nestled amidst Rue de la Muraille.

En route, he revisited the entirety of the task at hand, stirred by an indescribable emotion.

His divination capabilities paled in comparison to Franca's. A lone Prophecy Spell rested in his arsenal, a tool he dared not wield recklessly. The finesse of Anthony Reid's psychological profiling and information-gathering expertise dwarfed Lumian's own. However, mobilizing these allies allowed him to harness these strengths, akin to gaining possession of these abilities.

Lumian couldn't foretell the ramifications of ascending to godhood. Yet, one thing was certain: beneath Sequence 4, one's prowess met constraints. Cooperative squads harnessed the potential for synergy, enabling them to confront even higher Sequences sans those with godhood.

Soon, Lumian caught sight of Hope Café, its entrance adorned in a milky-white veneer.

After pushing open the heavy door, he cast his gaze upon the corner granting anyone a vantage point.

A slender-faced man in his thirties, his ebony hair framing azure eyes, his beard trimmed meticulously and waxed to precision, met Lumian's gaze—his attention fixated on the entrance.

Sensing Lumian's scrutiny, the man's visage transformed. He reached for the soft-covered notebook and crimson fountain pen upon the table, on the verge of vanishing through the back door.

In response, Lumian drew his revolver and dispatched a shot toward the café's rear exit.

With a resounding bang, the bullet embedded itself into the wood.

The café's patrons were jolted into alarm, their reactions oscillating between concealment and inquiry, engendering chaos.

The bearded man stood immobilized, neither sure if he should run or stay.

Under the collective gaze of bartender, patrons, and staff, Lumian advanced toward his target, revolver in hand, amusement playing across his features.

“Are you Monsieur Bühler?”

“Yes, that's me.” Bühler forced a smile.

Lumian gestured toward Bühler's original seat and spoke nonchalantly,

“Take a seat. I've come to purchase information.”

A sigh of relief escaped Bühler as he hunched, retracing his steps to settle into the chair.

Lumian occupied the opposite seat, putting down his revolver. With a trace of playfulness, he queried, “Why the preference for such a dim corner?”

Bühler sighed and said, "In my line of work, reprisals are a constant concern. You're well aware that some individuals detest seeing their names or likenesses entangled in the web of scandals across newspapers and periodicals.

"This corner grants me an unobstructed view of the entrance, affording early detection of any potential troublemakers. And, should the need arise, I can effect a swift escape through the back."

#### Chapter 324 Which Is True and Which Is False

After a brief mention of the reason for selecting his seat, Bühler glanced up at Lumian, a self-deprecating smile on his lips.

"I didn't expect you to open fire so quickly."

Lumian's hand rested casually on the revolver by his side as he offered a faint smile in return.

...

"It seems the folks you've encountered before are law-abiding citizens."

Bühler's instincts, honed from past experiences of being beaten, urged him to retort. But as he compared Lumian's demeanor with those of his previous encounters, he found a strange logic in the man's words.

Thanks to the shelter of the law, he, a columnist for Ghost Face, had managed to survive up to this point!

"Are you not afraid of attracting the police?" Bühler turned to look at the waiter, who dared not approach with the menu and drink list. "Firing a gun in a place like this isn't a minor incident. Someone should have already alerted the authorities."

Lumian chuckled.

"That's why we have to hurry."

His words punctuated by deliberate actions, Lumian picked up his revolver, rotated the cylinder, and slotted a yellow cartridge into the empty chamber, right before Bühler's eyes.

"I want to know which courtesans have left Rue de la Muraille, this haven of extravagance, in the last two months," Lumian inquired with a calm resolve.

Instinctively, Bühler shook his head. "They aren't true courtesans. Those women possess their lavish residences and permanent paramours. They frequent high society, wielding influence over industries and policies with their words alone. This place merely acts as a reserve for courtesans."

"I'm only interested in those who fit my description." Lumian dismissed the specifics of courtesanship.

Bühler's gaze flickered between the revolver in Lumian's grip and said, recollecting,

“Four of them. Lil' Jort wed a Loen merchant and relocated to Backlund. ‘White Vase’ Sophie became the lover of Member of Parliament Batis, attending high society banquets and salons. She had a chance of becoming a true courtesan. ‘Dew Rose’ Mary fell victim to mental illness and mutilated her face with scissors one morning. She’s confined to an asylum. ‘Condiment Beauty’ Paulina vanished from Rue de la Muraille without a trace, as though whisked away by someone of status.”

As Bühler recounted, he noticed the dashing figure before him, ready to fire at the slightest provocation, producing a post-it note and a fountain pen, meticulously jotting down notes.

Swallowing unease, he continued, “I encountered Paulina on Rue Vincent not long ago. She seemed well off, with a four-wheeled carriage, a maid, a valet, and even a butler.

“Sadly, I had pressing matters then and failed to determine her place of residence.”

Rue Vincent... Lumian's memory jogged. It was one of the five streets Franca had divined. Farthest from Rue de la Muraille, it exuded a quieter, upscale aura.

Based on Bühler's account, he suspected Paulina had become Guillaume Bénét's paramour.

For a fugitive, a prospective courtesan proved a safer choice than frequenting Rue de la Muraille. Guillaume Bénét was intelligent and capable. His present yearnings for intimacy and his voracious hunger hadn't rendered him a mindless imbecile. He would surely opt for a less risky strategy.

Just then, hurried footsteps resonated outside the café as three police officers neared the entrance.

Coolly, Lumian donned his dark-blue cap, stashed his note and pen, and slid 50 verl d'or notes onto the table before Bühler.

With these tasks accomplished, he reclaimed his revolver, stood up, and proceeded to the café's rear door. Swiftly, he opened it and departed.

Bang!

The police officers burst into Hope Café through its main entrance.

On the elegant street of Rue Vincent, stately villlike houses adorned both sides of the road. The road was wide and well-kept, with only occasional pedestrians and carriages passing through.

After Lumian turned into the street, he found himself at a loss.

He couldn't infiltrate every house and search every room, could he?

Besides, he wasn't the most suitable candidate for this kind of investigation. Franca would be better suited for it, but involving her was risky.

After a brief contemplation, Lumian allowed a smile to grace his features. He strolled toward one of the houses and pressed the doorbell.

A young valet opened the dark-brown door. His appearance suggested no trace of Southern Continent lineage, and he gazed at Lumian in bewilderment. In a clear Trierien accent, he inquired,

“Sir, how may I assist you?”

With an amiable grin, Lumian replied, "I'm here to inquire about the most splendid madam residing on this street."

"..." The valet was momentarily speechless. This was the first instance he'd encountered someone seeking such peculiar information.

Or perhaps not. While such matters were whispered about behind closed doors and boasted about in taverns, there were occasionally individuals who exhibited curiosity about such affairs. However, who would approach a stranger's door in the sweltering sun to inquire?

What was this person up to?

Before the valet could react, Lumian produced a 10 verl d'or note and offered it with a genial demeanor.

The valet's eyelids twitched. He hesitated for a moment before accepting the payment.

He suspected this young man to be a counterfeit Dandyist, specialized in duping affluent ladies of their bodies and riches. The appearance and conduct matched the descriptions found in newspapers.

However, if the lady wasn't the valet's mistress or lady, why refuse the reward?

When the stranger acquired what he sought, a certain madam would also receive some gratification!

The valet cast a furtive glance around before lowering his voice.

"The lady in Unit 50 is exquisitely beautiful. A genuine Trierien, she married a foreigner from the southern lands. That accent..."

As the valet spoke, he shook his head with a mixture of indignation and scorn, as if he had harbored this sentiment for some time.

Lumian's smile broadened.

Indeed, under the sway of his burgeoning impulses, the padre couldn't resist sharing his prize with the neighbors—a stunning Trierien courtesan.

He might not host grand banquets or waltz to proclaim his conquest, nor would he escort his lover for a public appearance. Nonetheless, he would inevitably find subtle ways to make his neighbors aware that even foreigners could possess resplendent courtesans as mistresses.

At times like this, Guillaume Bénet had to exercise prudence in disguising himself. However, his mistress's beauty wasn't something easily concealed. She might even meticulously dress herself to exhibit her remarkable presence.

Of course, Lumian couldn't be certain if the lady was Paulina, the presumed mistress. Yet, the gradual collection of anticipated information through bold assumptions and careful confirmation made him feel he was steadily closing in on Guillaume Bénet.

Beyond the gates of 50 Rue Vincent, Lumian glanced at the facade as an ordinary passerby might.

The three-story beige structure stood before him, surrounded by a lush green lawn and a garden vibrant with colors. A gardener tended to the greenery, offering a partial view.



Lumian promptly averted his gaze from the building's pillar, wary that prolonged observation could arouse suspicion.

As for any possibility of being recognized by the padre, Lumian held no concern. Prior to setting out, he had employed Niese Face to alter his appearance and communicated to his companions that it was due to cosmetics.

Lumian's striking appearance—a fusion of golden and black hair—could be anyone's. As long as Guillaume Bénét lacked the ability to penetrate the illusion or actively employ it, it was unlikely he'd realize his pursuer had infiltrated the vicinity.

Lumian's current plan was to leave Rue Vincent and switch places with Jenna or Franca. He would then ensconce himself in the shadows across from Unit 50, patiently observing until all suspicion around the target was dissipated.

He refrained from adopting the guise of a tramp this time, given the scarcity of such individuals on this refined street. While a rare appearance might occur, these transients were promptly shooed away by the household staff.

Just as he prepared to depart from the beige edifice, Lumian turned his head in a casual manner. His gaze alighted on a figure visible through the living room window.

The figure stood at a modest height, barely reaching 1.7 meters. Clad in a dark shirt and black trousers, the person possessed a slightly stocky build. Their nose bore a gentle curve, and their black hair fell in a mid-length cascade.

Lumian's pupils dilated for a fleeting moment before swiftly returning to their normal state.

A wisp of a smile tugged at the corners of his lips, and an invisible fire seemed to ignite in his eyes.

Despite the adept disguise, Lumian would recognize him even if he were reduced to ashes!

It was Guillaume Bénét, the padre of Cordu!

Lumian wrestled to contain his surprise, his gaze steering onward.

Simultaneously, his mind raced as he evaluated the next course of action to undertake.

Before long, he reached the end of Rue Vincent.

At that very juncture, a parrot adorned with green and white feathers took flight from Rue de la Muraille and perched itself on Lumian's shoulder. It chirped excitedly, “We've located the target!”

Located the target? Then who did I just see? Another padre? Lumian was momentarily flabbergasted and perplexed.

Which one was the genuine Guillaume Bénét? Had he erred in judgment, or had the Iron and Blood Cross Order and “Rat” Christo been deceived?

Fifteen minutes earlier, at the Dill Brothel on Rue de la Muraille.

Within the annex bar on the first floor, Albus savored his Lanti Proof while discreetly observing the attendants, laborers, and the overseer who managed the establishment.

His assessment encompassed the clientele as well, but it yielded nothing of note. Many concealed their identities by donning assorted masks, making it nearly impossible to unveil their true selves.

Having gained a preliminary insight into the inner workings of the Dill Brothel, Albus seized the chance to make his way toward the washroom. He veered onto the path leading to the kitchen when an attendant approached, carrying a collection of post-it notes.

This attendant's responsibility encompassed recording the requirements of each room and relaying orders to the kitchen.

Albus, marked by his dark-red hair, advanced and retrieved a handful of glistening coins along with a substantial bundle of banknotes from his pocket.

The attendant's features twisted into a blend of perplexity and intrigue.

Albus smiled and said, "I'm on the hunt for a scoundrel. Uncertain about his guise, I'm merely aware he shares your build and possesses a penchant for consorting with the most celebrated ladies. Post-exertion, he seeks sustenance to satiate his hunger immediately.

"If you're able to furnish me with the relevant particulars, all this is yours."

### Chapter 325 Visit

The attendant's gaze locked onto the handful of gold coins and the banknotes, their unique ink fragrance captivating his senses. He couldn't help but hold his breath, caught in the allure of the treasure before him.

After a few heart-pounding moments, he swiftly surveyed the area, ensuring no prying eyes were nearby. Gradually, a sense of relief washed over him.

"all of it?" The attendant's voice quivered as he swallowed with difficulty.

...

With a precise flick of his wrist, Albus tossed a gold coin worth 5 verl d'or into the attendant's waiting palm. A confident smile tugged at his lips as he spoke, "That depends on the value of the information you provide. Rest assured, you'll receive another 20 verl d'or, no matter what."

The attendant gingerly bit the gold coin, stealing a glance back at the path they had traversed. His voice dropped to a hushed tone as he shared, "Just as you surmised, the man from the south, in Room 2 on the sixth floor, frequents the company of the most renowned courtesans. He possesses a penchant for pre-ordering his meals, which we dutifully deliver to his quarters every half hour."

A southerner with a penchant for famous courtesans and a habit of pre-ordered meals. Room 602... Albus wasn't one to skimp on appreciation. He tossed two 10 verl d'or coins, etched with the likeness of a warship, to the attendant.

Seizing the calmness on Rue de la Muraille, Albus covertly ascended to the sixth floor, concealing himself on the balcony at the corridor's far end.

Within mere minutes, the attendant tasked with meal deliveries arrived at Room 602, carried by a steam-powered mechanical elevator. A silver-white metal serving cart accompanied him. Carefully, he pressed the doorbell.

Albus straightened up, aligning his view with Room 602's entrance. His gaze intensified.

The door swung open, revealing a man of slight stature, not exceeding 1.7 meters. His attire comprised a pitch-black half-mask, a crisp white shirt, and pale-hued boxer shorts.

Removing his trousers but leaving his upper attire on... Concealing tattoos, perhaps? The more Albus observed, the stronger his conviction that the occupant of Room 602 matched the likeness of Guillaume Bénét from the wanted posters.

Abstaining from “disturbing” his quarry, Albus settled back into a white-paneled armchair on the balcony. From his pocket emerged a gray-furred rat—one of Beast Tamer Christo's pets.

Lumian had engaged the services of the “Rat,” his abilities allowing easy communication and efficient coordination among team members.

Naturally, Christo served as the intermediary and the “translator.”

Albus tenderly patted the rat's head, signaling it with a gesture—a thumb and index finger forming a ring, with the remaining fingers raised.

This signified the discovery of the prime suspect.

With a high-pitched squeak, the rat darted from Albus's grasp, off to find its owner at a nearby tavern.

Upon learning from Christo's pet parrot that members of the Iron and Blood Cross Order had located the padre, Lumian found himself plunged into a momentary maelstrom of shock and confusion.

Had they truly found Guillaume Bénét? Then, who did I see?

If the occupant of 50 Rue Vincent is Guillaume Bénét, where did the counterfeit they see come from?

In the whirlwind of his thoughts, a realization struck Lumian with the force of lightning.

Substitution Spell!

Guillaume Bénét must have enacted the Substitution Spell ritual!

It was one of the five specialized ritualistic magics Lumian had acquired as an Alms Monk. The padre, now a Sequence 5 Fate Appropriator, was evidently familiar with it.

This ritual enabled the user to choose another person to inhabit their identity for a period upon sensing impending danger. By gaining the genuine or fake approval of those around them and establishing a strong mystical connection, a ritual could then finalize the switch.

If the Substitution Spell succeeded, the stand-in would be indistinguishable from the original in the eyes of others, although their self-awareness and performance might be compromised to a degree. Nevertheless, their core identity would remain.

When the substitute faced imminent disaster, the one who cast the Substitution Spell could alter their own fate, thus avoiding the impending calamity.

Of course, this hinged on the substitute being kept unaware of the impending danger.

While this ruse could prove effective on other Beyonders, Lumian was well-acquainted with the circumstances surrounding the Substitution Spell. Thus, he couldn't be easily deceived.

For Lumian, the paramount issue at hand was this: Which individual was the true Guillaume Bénét, and which was the substitute?

To deal a decisive blow to the padre and apprehend him with minimal casualties, Lumian needed to consolidate his forces and make a choice. He couldn't attack both entities simultaneously.

Gardner Martin had merely agreed to assist in locating the "prey," without extending further support. Consequently, the majority of individuals dispatched by the Iron and Blood Cross Order were Low-Sequence Beyonders or even regular people.

If Lumian opted to solicit Gardner Martin's aid, it might take hours for the Iron and Blood Cross Order to assemble sufficient reinforcements. Guillaume Bénét didn't possess limitless endurance, and the courtesan wasn't a Demoness of Pleasure who could allow an extended encounter. He would definitely be gone by then.

The question remains: What decision would Guillaume Bénét make? Would he have the substitute remain at the residence to divert danger while he ventured out for personal pursuits? Alternatively, would he dispatch the substitute to showcase his characteristic behavior, drawing danger away from himself? Lumian found both scenarios challenging to dismiss.

After deliberation, his gaze shifted to the green and white parrot. He addressed it, "Locate 'Red Boots' Franca and ask her to divine the authenticity of the Guillaume Bénét at 50 Rue Vincent and the one present here."

The parrot stared at Lumian as if questioning his sanity. "I'm just a parrot."

What I said is too complicated. It can't understand or memorize everything? Lumian swiftly arrived at a decision.

"Guide me to 'Red Boots' Franca. Actually, first lead me to Christo."

Time remained on their side. The individual at 50 Rue Vincent couldn't elude them. The team responsible for the mission could convene briefly, exchanging essential information.

In the shadows they lingered, while their foes roamed in plain sight. As long as they didn't startle the targets, they could afford to wait. Of course, they had to conclude before Guillaume Bénét's deed with the courtesan reached its conclusion. After all, tailing an individual posed inherent risks, especially when dealing with the padre and his array of bizarre and unfamiliar abilities.

In a narrow alley near Rue de la Muraille.

The afternoon sun cast its radiant touch upon the mostly dismantled barricade, while even the breeze seemed to take a momentary pause.

Franca, now garbed in an Assassin's attire, and Jenna, disguised as a female mercenary, rendezvoused with Anthony Reid, still clad in his military green attire, and Lumian, sporting a cap, a black vest, and a white shirt.

Lumian delivered a succinct briefing, omitting details about the Substitution Spell due to time constraints, referring to it merely as a form of witchcraft capable of generating lifelike substitutes.

Before Lumian could inquire further, Franca retrieved a mirror from her possession. As her fingers grazed the surface, she intoned an incantation.

Soon, an aqueous luminescence radiated from the mirror, accompanied by an aged voice.

“They are both real.”

Both real... Franca turned to Lumian in surprise.

The witchcraft responsible for creating the substitute proves potent—resembling the original down to appearance and fate. Conventional divination methods stand powerless against such deception!

Both real... Lumian had anticipated this response and had already devised an alternative course of action.

Sensing his silence, Franca drew a deep breath, hesitatingly suggesting, “D-Do you need me to consult another source?”

She aimed to seek confirmation from the entity renowned for unerring divination.

Yet, this approach risked unveiling a question that could render her socially deceased before Jenna, Lumian, and Anthony Reid.

She envisioned the other party asking, “Do you often entertain the idea of doing the deed with Jenna?”

How would she navigate her future interactions with Jenna?

Lumian shook his head, asserting, “No need. I have a plan.”

Turning his attention to Jenna, he directed, “Conceal yourself in the shadows diagonally across from Room 602 in Dill. Keep a vigilant watch on that Guillaume Bénét's activities.

“If he concludes his affairs and prepares to depart, but we haven't arrived yet, refrain from impulsive pursuit. Instead, discreetly monitor his movements from a distance and deduce his chosen path.”

“Understood.” Jenna nodded, mentally rehearsing her upcoming task.

Lumian shifted his focus to Franca and Anthony Reid.

“Let's proceed to 50 Rue Vincent together. I'll directly confront Guillaume Bénét. Franca, maintain invisibility and follow me closely. We mustn't launch an attack until we're certain of his authenticity.

“Anthony, secure the perimeter outside. If the Guillaume Bénét on Rue Vincent proves to be counterfeit and we hasten to Dill, covertly monitor the madame there, tracking her movements. In case Guillaume Bénét manages an escape, she could serve as a pivotal lead for subsequent pursuit.

“If the 50 Rue Vincent counterpart is genuine and a skirmish erupts, approach discreetly and provide reinforcement.”

Franca harbored no objections to this arrangement. Aware of Lumian's teleportation abilities, she grasped that once he confirmed the Rue Vincent Guillaume as fake, he could facilitate swift

transition for the primary combatants to the opposite location, preventing the two Guillaumes from “exchanging information.”

Assessing the calculated risks, Anthony endorsed the plan, confirming his willingness to execute his designated role.

50 Rue Vincent, near the beige three-story building.

Observing Franca's seamless invisibility, Lumian raised his right hand and swept it across his face.

In an instant, he transformed into a man in his thirties, attired in a black uniform with an inspector's epaulet.

Niese Face!

Satisfied with his condition, Lumian proceeded to the designated building and pressed the doorbell.

The door swung open, revealing a man garbed as a butler. His gaze landed on Lumian as he inquired with a touch of confusion, “Officer, how may I assist you?”

“I'm here regarding a missing vagrant case linked to this street. I'd appreciate a conversation with your master,” Lumian nonchalantly fabricated.

A subtle shift occurred in the butler's expression.

“Please wait a moment, Officer. I shall inquire with our master.”

After a brief pause, the butler returned to the doorway, addressing Lumian, “Officer, our master invites you to the small parlor on the ground floor.”

Lumian offered a slight nod and trailed the butler into the abode at 50 Rue Vincent.

The living area exuded spaciousness, hosting a bluish-gray cat huddled in one corner, its presence accompanied by the ceaseless chirping of caged birds. Positioned in the aisle, a black dog, reminiscent of a hound, remained seated, its gaze unwaveringly fixated on the unfamiliar entrant.

Circumventing an elegant sofa, the butler led Lumian into a parlor towards the rear. There, a man with midnight hair, azure eyes, and a slightly hooked nose reclined in an armchair. He sported a dark-hued shirt and black trousers, his demeanor one of relaxed arrogance as he gently caressed the head of a sizable brown-furred dog.

“Officer, in what way may I be of assistance?” The man inquired, rising with deliberate languor.

It's him—Guillaume Bénét! Padre Guillaume Bénét! Lumian's pupils contracted, closing the distance to a mere five meters.

Then, he parted his lips and voiced, “Ha!”

Action was the sole path to distinguishing the genuine from the imposter!

Chapter 326 Substitute

“Ha!”

Lumian's right chest glowed faintly. His Spirit Body quivered as a yellowish beam shot forth from his mouth.

It instantly struck Guillaume Bénét, dressed in a dark shirt and black pants, causing him to collapse in confusion and shock.

...

Spell of Harrumph!

He's fake! Lumian's eyes narrowed as he assessed the situation. He wasn't too surprised by the outcome.

It was evident that this wasn't the real Guillaume Bénét—a Sequence 5 Fate Appropriator. The way the man reacted to the attack, coupled with his lack of familiarity with Beyonder powers and mysticism, made Lumian believe that the substitute was an ordinary person thrust into an unfamiliar world.

Disregarding the bewildered butler, Lumian swiftly turned on his heels and sprinted out of the compact living room.

As he ran, he whispered, “To Dill!”

Franca, draped in her hooded, leather-armored black robe, materialized in front of Lumian.

Lumian grabbed her shoulder, allowing the black mark on his right shoulder to flicker with a dark light.

Amidst the swirling maelstrom of vibrant hues, the duo found themselves on the balcony of Dill's sixth floor.

Having sent Jenna to inform Albus previously, Lumian had already memorized the coordinates.

Upon seeing her companion arrive, Jenna, dressed as a female mercenary, emerged from the shadows. She pointed at Room 602 and lowered her voice.

“It's not over yet.

“Dammit, he's dragging this out!”

“The second round, perhaps?” Lumian chuckled.

According to Albus, the occupant of Room 602 had already blown his load once before having afternoon tea. Now, it had begun again.

“The soundproofing here is impressive,” Franca remarked, her head tilting as she listened for any signs of activity from within Room 602.

Jenna observed as Lumian wiped his face, disguising himself as a typical Dill brothel attendant. She clicked her tongue and voiced her thoughts.

“That woman in there screams occasionally. Dammit, is that perverted padre into some abusive stuff?”

Jenna, an underground singer frequenting bars and dance halls, had cultivated an open and passionate image. Her close rapport with Franca, who managed the dancers, exposed her to a world beyond the ordinary. She had zero experience, but her insights were substantial.

Franca caught on swiftly. She modulated her voice and clicked her tongue.

Lumian, his Niese Face transforming him, glanced at Franca, silently requesting her to sprinkle fluorescent powder in the corridor outside Room 602.

A countermeasure against Guillaume Bénét's invisibility!

Lumian knew that the invisibility didn't erase traces or scents. Should Guillaume Bénét escape into the corridor during combat, the fluorescent powder would create a luminous trail, guiding Lumian's pursuit.

However, Lumian reconsidered and decided that the use of fluorescent powder might be too conspicuous. Guillaume Bénét could easily detect the abnormality and escape using his bizarre abilities before Lumian could launch a surprise attack.

After a moment's reflection, Lumian leaned in to whisper to Franca, "Deploy Invisibility to conceal yourself in the corridor. Use invisible spider silk to create a web that covers the target's door from the ground to the ceiling."

This approach would neutralize the effectiveness of Invisibility, while also entangling Guillaume Bénét if he attempted to employ Slow Flight.

"No problem." Franca adjusted her black hood and entered the corridor.

In a blink, her form dissolved, as if a snowman had melted in the sun.

Seven to eight seconds later, a gentle breeze brushed against Lumian's legs.

He was taken aback for a moment before comprehending.

Franca is using the invisible spider silk to signal readiness.

Since this dude advanced to a Demoneess of Pleasure, everything she does carries a sense of teasing... Yeah, she just advanced and might not have full control over the potion's power. She could be unwittingly affected...

Muttering inwardly, Lumian shifted his attention to Jenna and instructed, "Conceal yourself in the shadows here. If Guillaume Bénét flees this way, you can shoot or execute an assassination. If that fails, withdraw immediately. If he heads in another direction, don't pursue."

"Got it." Jenna, well-versed in these situations, didn't push for more involvement.

She understood that her capabilities could be effectively deployed only under specific circumstances.

With his team arranged, Lumian pivoted and directed his gaze at the wooden door of Room 602.

He inhaled deeply, exhaling slowly to steady his nerves.

With that, he fetched an armchair from the balcony and positioned it in the corridor.



The invisible spider silk avoided him as he moved some distance away from Room 602 and set down the chair.

In the following moment, he lightly tapped the chair's back. Crimson flames flowed from his palm, slithering over the chair like serpents.

As the armchair caught fire, Lumian jogged toward Room 602 without attempting to conceal his movements. He rapped his knuckles against the wooden door.

“What is it?”

A voice tinged with contained anger reverberated from within Room 602, indicating a pivotal juncture.

“Fire! There's a fire!” Lumian shouted in feigned panic.

“Son of a sow!” The male voice inside cursed in a Riston Province accent.

Simultaneously, Hunter Lumian detected a distinctive motion—someone getting off the bed.

Two to three seconds later, the door swung open, revealing a naked man wearing an iron-colored half-mask and a white shirt, his lower half exposed.

A brunette, clad in a fishnet nightgown, was still draped over him.

Holy heck, can't you even let go of her? Franca's amused commentary echoed in Lumian's mind from her invisible position diagonally across.

However, Lumian's focus was unshaken. When the suspected Guillaume Bénét appeared, his gaze flickering towards the smoky, flaming chair, Lumian acted swiftly.

“Ha!”

Another yellowish beam shot forth, piercing through both the man in the iron-colored half-mask and the woman in the fishnet nightgown, enveloping them.

A glimpse of shock and panic flashed across the eyes of the supposed Guillaume Bénét, revealing his grasp of Beyonder powers.

Then, his eyes dulled, and he collapsed, a fraction after the woman.

As the sound of something heavy thudding to the floor echoed, Lumian seemed to enter a surreal trance.

Impossible. A Fate Appropriator like Guillaume Bénét couldn't be knocked out by a Contractee's Spell of Harrumph...

Is he a decoy?

The one at 50 Rue Vincent was an imposter too!

Where is the real Guillaume Bénét?

Shaking off his momentary daze, Lumian knelt, peeling off the iron-colored mask from the unconscious man.

The face beneath was unnervingly familiar—it was the hooked-nose countenance of Guillaume Bénét.

Darkening with concern, Lumian pushed the half-dressed woman away from his target and tore open the white shirt.

In the next heartbeat, his eyes fell upon three black marks resembling signatures on the unconscious man's upper body—one on the left chest, one on the right chest, and another on the abdomen.

This wasn't Guillaume Bénét!

Guillaume Bénét held more than three contracts—probably a dozen or more!

All fake? All substitutes? Lumian clenched his fists, his eyes igniting with an invisible blaze.

He rose, dragging the man, an identical look-alike of Guillaume Bénét, back into Room 602. Then, he found a blanket, swathed the unconscious woman, and deposited her in the corridor.

In the interim, Franca discerned the falsity of the prey once again, vanishing her invisibility. She summoned frost and doused the flames consuming the armchair.

As she transferred the woman from the corridor to a vacant room, Lumian extended his right hand, fingers closing around the throat of the Inevitability bestowed.

With a decisive snap, he broke the man's neck, rendering him unconscious and lifeless.

Following that, he shut the wooden door, drew the ritual silver dagger, and sanctified it. A wall of spirituality enshrouded Room 602.

Subsequently, Lumian initiated the Summoning Dance, opting to engage in a preliminary, purpose-driven spirit channeling through this method.

He had chosen not to enlist Franca's aid for a reason: he was uncertain about the peculiar creatures the deceased had contracted. It was possible they would induce corresponding corruption. Only Lumian, having long been an Inevitability bestowed, remained unaffected by the spirit channeling process.

The sedatives and the last remnants of truth serum from the Bliss Society were reserved for use on the real padre.

Diagonally opposite 50 Rue Vincent.

Perched on the second floor of the building and ensconced in cover, Anthony Reid, steadfastly observing the target, espied a graceful lady in a pale-green gown hurrying out, accompanied by her valet, maid, and butler. The group entered a carriage, deftly relocated from the rear to the front entrance, before embarking toward the far end of Rue Vincent.

Without precipitously giving chase, Anthony meticulously memorized specific details concerning the carriage and the horses.

Amidst the fervent and contorted dance, the departed spirit detached from its corporeal vessel, hovering midair. It cast a glare laden with animosity and perplexity upon Lumian.

Drawing his own blood, Lumian enacted a command, compelling the spirit to bind to him.

Although desire and voracity ignited within him, Lumian remained resolute, detecting an additional presence.

Summoning the Abyss Demon Flower...

Invisibility...

Transfiguration... Dammit!

An involuntary curse escaped Lumian's lips.

He began to grasp the unfolding situation!

The individual at 50 Rue Vincent was possibly a product of the Substitution Spell. The one at the Dill brothel, on the other hand, had been fashioned as a substitute by Guillaume Bénét, utilizing Transfiguration, exploiting its negative effects.

He was vigilant against anyone exploiting his negative effects to track him down!

Transfiguration was a contractual ability capable of altering a person's appearance, physique, and disposition. It also possessed a measure of resistance against divination. The price exacted was one's own visage, with the detrimental side effect manifesting as a desire for the exploitation of others.

Lumian steadied himself, summoning to mind the genuine Guillaume Bénét—his visage, his deeds. This resonance united with the memories that had left the most indelible mark on the spirit of the deceased, enabling Lumian to hunt for clues.

In due course, a cluster of seven or eight memories quivered slightly. Lumian selected one, striving to magnify it for deeper understanding.

#### Chapter 327 The Real Guillaume Bénét

The memories of the false Guillaume Bénét surged, and Lumian found himself immersed in the familiar confines of 50 Rue Vincent's cozy parlor.

Draped in an air of regal poise, the counterfeit Guillaume Bénét stood before the armchair, addressing the recipient of these memories with calculated words, "Take this money and venture to Rue de la Muraille. There, seek out the renowned courtesan of utmost repute. But you must assume my looks, veiled by a mask."

With humility and deference, the memory's owner bowed. "Understood, Archbishop."

...

And thus, this memory concluded. Lumian held a steadfast conviction that the Inevitability bestowed before him was a meticulously crafted proxy, a construct devised by none other than Guillaume Bénét himself.

It appeared that he had likely garnered a cohort of adherents to Inevitability. From among them, he had singled out a candidate from southern Intis, one who swiftly reaped three successive boons. This candidate was meticulously endowed with the same abilities as him: the summoning of the Abyss Demon Flower and the shroud of Invisibility. This granted him an impeccable guise, perfectly mirroring the true him thanks to the contracts' negative effects.

Of course, Transfiguration remained an integral, indispensable ability.

From this vantage, it became evident that Guillaume Bénét hadn't neglected the adverse ramifications of the specialized covenant. He might have contemplated this from inception or perhaps gained insight subsequent to a dire prophecy, reviewing his recent undertakings. Regardless, this counterfeit Guillaume Bénét—proficient in Transfiguration—appeared to be a deliberate ruse.

Lumian suspected the presence of other Inevitability devotees who clandestinely monitored the Dill brothel. They clandestinely shadowed the sham Guillaume Bénét, primed to relay swift notification to the authentic padre should danger befall his double.

In such a scenario, Guillaume Bénét enjoyed a distinct advantage—whether he elected to abscond, leaving the product of this Substitution Spell to grapple with looming peril, or opted to ensnare his antagonists using the doppelganger as bait.

Synthesized with the fragments of the fake Guillaume Bénét's recollections, Lumian surmised that the genuine Guillaume Bénét primarily resided at 50 Rue Vincent. Yet, he permitted the substitute to operate overtly, effectively obfuscating his true whereabouts.

Upon this realization, Lumian harbored a pang of vexation.

Had Albus not unearthed the sham Guillaume Bénét within the confines of the Dill brothel, Lumian wouldn't have been lured away from the decoy; he would have been affixed on the Guillaume at 50 Rue Vincent. This would have spared him the frenzied teleportation prompted after the incapacitation of the Substitution Spell's byproduct. Lumian would have gravitated towards scouring the building, conceivably unearthing the genuine Guillaume Bénét.

Granted, absent the synchronous “appearance” of Guillaume Bénét, Lumian wouldn't have entertained notions of a Substitution Spell. He'd have likely fallen prey to deception, swerving far from the path leading to the authentic padre.

With this epiphany at the forefront, Lumian cast aside his intention to scout for lurking Inevitability adherents. Recognizing that the bona fide Guillaume Bénét had been alerted, Lumian terminated his Summoning Dance and dissolved the wall of spirituality. Turning to Franca and Jenna, shrouded in separate shadows, he intoned, “Let's head to 50 Rue Vincent now.”

Presently, Lumian clung to the hope that vestiges of clues lingered or that Anthony Reid, entrusted with overseeing the locale, had gleaned pertinent insights...

Franca and Jenna emerged from the shadows one after another, wasting no time to inquire about the current situation. Lumian grabbed their shoulders and activated spirit world traversal once more.

In the blink of an eye, their forms solidified within the modest confines of 50 Rue Vincent's parlor.

Absent were the butler, valets, and maids, leaving an unattended figure—unconscious, the result of the Substitution Spell—laid out on the carpet.

A meticulous scan of the surroundings concluded with Lumian's approach. He knelt beside the proxy, employing a variety of techniques to rouse him from his stupor.

As the counterfeit Guillaume Bénét's eyes fluttered open, they met an unfamiliar visage.

Startled, he jolted upright, fear tinting his tone. “Who are you? Why did you barge into my house? Get out! I'll call the police! I'll call the police!”

He recollected the recent attack—a curse-like assault!

Lumian drew his revolver and pressed it against the fake Guillaume Bénét's forehead.

The substitute fell silent.

“Where is the true master of this residence?” Lumian's voice resounded, deep and steady.

As if pierced by a sudden realization, the imposter Guillaume Bénét spat out, “I am the true master! “I'm the master here!”

Lumian's lips curled into a smile.

“In that case, I offer my sympathies. Your wife, it seems, ran off with the butler with your valuables. The valets and maids, meanwhile, seem to have embraced an opportunistic approach—essentially relieving you of anything tangible except this house.

“In a while, the police will arrest you, citing your involvement in the slaying of a vagrant and perpetrating cultic rituals and extensive deceit.”

A mosaic of fact and conjecture, Lumian's words emerged with an intent to intimidate the substitute, dismantling any fantastical illusions.

Considering the retreat of the madame, butler, valets, maids, coachman, and gardener from 50 Rue Vincent, Lumian inferred their conversion into believers of Inevitability, orchestrated by the genuine padre. This intricate maneuver camouflaged a multitude of cultic practices and eccentric observances, all harmonized through the Substitution Spell.

The false Guillaume Bénét at Dill, having reached Sequence 7 Contractee status, was indicative of multiple instances of boon-request rituals in Trier. Innocents would undoubtedly become sacrifices, and the best candidates were undoubtedly tramps.

At Lumian's declaration, the imitation Guillaume Bénét gazed about, bewildered and panic-stricken, his voice piercingly beseeching, “Paulina! Paulina!”

Paulina... It's indeed the Condiment Beauty. Unfortunately, she's now a heretic... Lumian watched as the fake Guillaume Bénét fell silent, his eyes filled with despair.

“Any final words?” Lumian inquired once more.

The fake Guillaume Bénét shuddered and said, “I'm real. I'm really the master of this place!

“However, that woman—that woman is a succubus. She surreptitiously lured someone and ensconced him within the cellar!

“Sh-she's having an affair with a devil!”

Affair with a devil... In the basement... Was she secretly meeting the real padre in private? Yes, the negative effects of Guillaume Bénét's desire for coitus will always exist. They won't disappear just because he has two substitutes... Lumian scrutinized the mock Guillaume Bénét, who tenaciously

clung to his façade as the genuine master of 50 Rue Vincent. Left hand poised, he controlled his might, and with precision, delivered a calculated blow behind the imposter's ear.

The fake Guillaume Bénet fainted again.

Lumian's strategy entailed swift exploration of the residence, as allowing the imposter to run amok could inadvertently trigger calamity.

He rose to his feet, massaging his throbbing temples, and turned to Franca and Jenna for an update. "Any word from Anthony Reid?"

"No." Franca shook her head gently. "It seems he followed your directive to trail Madame Paulina."

Lumian tersely acknowledged.

"Then let's search this place and await his feedback."

Franca adjusted her black hood and emphasized, "One team of three. Don't split up."

This was the "territory" of the heretics. Even if they had already escaped, residual vestiges might still remain. Should they split their efforts and encounter mishaps, timely rescue would be jeopardized.

When the authorities carried out such operations, they had to be at least in groups of three or within sight of each other if they wanted to split up.

Lumian issued a pointed gesture toward the staircase adjacent to the parlor, "Let's proceed to the basement."

The trio descended, and as they did, Franca leaned to Jenna, her tone hushed,

"Ciel's exchange with the counterfeit was textbook instigation. When you return, dissect the intent behind each phrase."

"Okay." Jenna absorbed the counsel like a parched sponge.

In due course, they reached the basement door. Lumian turned toward his companions,

"Preparations before we venture inside."

To thwart lingering echoes of Inevitability's powers or unconventional creatures, precaution was paramount.

Promptly, Lumian, now adorned with altered visage and partially lengthened hair, pushed the door open, revealing the basement's dim recesses.

Within, an unremarkable array of miscellaneous items cluttered the space. No conspicuous anomalies were apparent.

Just as Franca readied for Magic Mirror Divination, Lumian, with his Hunter's acumen, discerned subtle traces.

With metallic clinks, he unveiled a concealed door.

Beyond lay a stairwell descending further into the subterranean depths.

The trio descended cautiously, arriving after moments at a vast yet rudimentary chamber, bathed in gas lamp radiance.

It was unknown if Guillaume Bénét had created it himself or if he had sealed off a portion of Underground Trier and modified it into a private “territory.”

In the center of the stone-floored hall stood an altar, surrounded by ghastly white human bones, complete sheepskin, cowhide, and giant canine skin.

Upon seeing this, Lumian was taken aback as he recalled one of the five special ritualistic magics that Alms Monk had:

Animal Creation Spell!

Simultaneously, remembrances of the felines, avians, and canines inhabiting the floor above, and the brown-furred dog nestled beside the mock Guillaume Bénét, surged forth.

Dog... Dog... Animal Creation Spell... With an epiphanic rush, Lumian pieced together the genuine Guillaume Bénét's concealment.

He had invoked the Animal Creation Spell to transmute himself into the hulking, brown-furred canine. In this form, he paraded brazenly before his counterfeit and the surrounding onlookers.

With a recitation of the preordained incantation, the true Guillaume Bénét could rapidly molt his canine facade, resuming his human guise.

In the confines of the parlor, the counterfeit Guillaume Bénét remained enshrouded in an unconscious reverie, utterly oblivious to the stark duality between reality and illusion.

Cautiously, he inched the guest room door ajar, greeted by a jarring tableau. Before him sprawled his beautiful wife, Paulina, ensconced upon the sumptuous bed, unclothed, whilst a hulking brown-furred canine loomed beside her. At the bedside, a plate bearing a medium-cooked steak was positioned...

Amidst clenched teeth, Lumian communicated the enigma of the Animal Creation Spell and his speculative hypothesis to Franca and Jenna, his words resounding, “I hope we find that damned dog. No, he should have shed his dog skin by now.”

Animal Creation Spell... Humans turning into dogs... Jenna was alarmed.

The world of mysticism is so bizarre and terrifying!

The three of them worked together and swiftly searched for traces.

Before long, Jenna picked up something from a crevice in the stone slab and exclaimed in surprise, “I've found something!”

Franca ran over and realized it was brown dog fur.

Both approached Lumian, who continued his investigative fervor, presenting their find.

Lumian's elation was palpable. He postulated Guillaume Bénét's evasion via an underground covert route, disentangling him from Paulina and the rest.

Then, they discovered a few strands of brown dog fur. Following the fur, they found another hidden door.

After opening the hidden door in the rock wall, Franca performed a simple Magic Mirror Divination and received a revelation that nothing was amiss. Then, she followed Lumian and Jenna in.

At that moment, Jenna, who was in the middle of the group, lost sight of Lumian. Franca was still following behind her.

Without waiting for Jenna to speak, Franca surveyed the room and frowned.

“We've circled back to the sacrificial hall.”

Emerging through the secret door, Lumian entered an expanse echoing a quarry's cavern.

With gas lamps conspicuously absent, Lumian summoned forth a crimson blaze to pierce the shadows.

Almost simultaneously, he sensed that Jenna and Franca hadn't followed him.

We got separated just like that? Puzzlement swirled within Lumian's mind, overridden by a low voice that echoed from the abandoned mine's depths: “Lumian Lee!”

## Chapter 328 Bottle of Fiction

“Lumian Lee!”

Lumian found himself frozen in place, his gaze distant as he reacted to the ominous growl.

In a shadowy corner of the abandoned mine, a figure outlined itself.

...

Clad in a complete coat of brown dog skin, the figure's torso and abdomen burst open, revealing a human form adorned in a white robe, embellished with intricate silver and black threads.

Without a sound, the canine skin dropped to the ground, unveiling a man of slight stature, barely reaching 1.7 meters.

His thin black hair framed a face with sharply intense blue eyes, and a slightly upturned nose added to his air of authority. This was none other than Guillaume Bénét, the padre of Cordu Village!

At that very moment, a smile graced Guillaume Bénét's lips. He held a white human bone in his grasp, his eyes aflame with a fanatical zeal that suggested he was on the cusp of receiving a newfound boon from the forces of Inevitability, a boon that could reshape his destiny.

Guillaume Bénét's initial instinct was to flee from 50 Rue Vincent the moment he saw his decoy incapacitated by the strange spell, and his adversary vanishing through the aid of spirit world traversal.

In doing so, the decoy could fulfill its full potential of averting disaster. He would escape the looming catastrophe, embarking on a fresh start in a new location, unburdened by the present circumstances.

Yet, within an instant, his abilities as a Fate Appropriator alerted him to the anomaly in the assailant's destiny and the lingering traces of a formidable entity aligned with the Inevitability pathway.



From this revelation, he deduced that the individual responsible was Lumian Lee, the very person harboring the angel he had once tirelessly invoked!

Rapid thoughts raced through Guillaume Bénét's mind. As a devoted adherent to the might of Inevitability, he was instantly consumed by zealous fervor.

He sought to capture or eliminate Lumian Lee!

He aspired to break the seal, allowing Inevitability's angel to truly descend upon the land!

He yearned to obtain a godhood boon, breaking free from the constraints of mortality. He longed to stand as Inevitability's chosen representative, guiding the troves of foolish humanity.

Having swiftly assessed the situation on both fronts, Guillaume Bénét ordered Paulina and the others to flee, luring any potential allies of Lumian Lee away from the scene. Meanwhile, he left behind the “substitute,” creating a trail of clues for Lumian Lee to follow—leading him into the basement to unveil a hidden door.

With his preparations in place, Guillaume Bénét entered the sacrificial chamber, deliberately preserving the sheepskin, cowhide, and dog skin. This would enable Lumian Lee, already versed in the Animal Creation Spell, to swiftly uncover the truth.

Simultaneously, he shook off a tuft of dog fur, inadvertently revealing his escape route. He chanted the incantation he had prearranged, dispelling the Animal Creation Spell. Drawing upon his concealed power, Guillaume Bénét unlocked the door leading to Underground Trier—a contractual power known as the Bottle of Fiction.

This ability, a source of personal avarice, enabled Guillaume Bénét to convert designated, modest-sized spaces—those harboring symbolic elements like doors and windows—into realms encapsulated within the Bottle of Fiction. He could impose simple entry conditions, permitting only those who met the prerequisites to enter, while others would be promptly returned to their original positions.

Guillaume Bénét's stipulation for entry was “one bearing the power of Inevitability.”

This criterion was one he shared with Lumian Lee. Regardless of whether Lumian had embraced Inevitability's boon, as a carrier of the Inevitability angel, enmeshed in the threads of fate, he undeniably possessed Inevitability's power. This design ensured that Lumian's allies couldn't breach the Bottle of Fiction's barrier without a boon of Inevitability. It left only Lumian Lee and himself secluded within. And if they had indeed embraced Inevitability, they would both remain influenced by the great existence—transforming them into equivalent companions during pivotal moments.

Guillaume Bénét sidestepped the utilization of individuals hailing from Cordu as entry criteria into the Bottle of Fiction, as it posed a vexing challenge to confirm such origins. Such a determination demanded consultation with the spirit world, unlike the more direct assessment of one possessing a distinct power.

Furthermore, should Paulina and the others manage to elude their pursuers and return to this very spot, they could provide essential aid through the opening of the bottle.

Having meticulously orchestrated his plan, Guillaume Bénét concealed himself, poised for Lumian Lee's entry into the Bottle of Fiction.

As anticipated, upon seeing Lumian Lee, now under an altered guise yet devoid of any traces of the Inevitability angel's influence, Guillaume Bénét took swift action, invoking the Soul Assimilation Mystic Spell.

Understanding that Lumian Lee wasn't the individual's original name but had been assumed for nearly six years, recognized by all those around him, Guillaume Bénét was certain this identity held a mystic connection that could serve as the true name.

Endowed with the knowledge of Cordu as its padre, he possessed a certain insight into Lumian Lee's circumstances. With conviction in the efficacy of the Soul Assimilation Mystic Spell, he anticipated it would gravely disorient Lumian Lee.

Observing Lumian Lee's form, frozen at the threshold of the Bottle of Fiction, head bowed and body swaying with instability, Guillaume Bénét's grin expanded.

Acting without hesitation or speech, he hurled the white human bone he clutched, intending to employ a curse spell capable of rendering the target comatose indefinitely.

With this achieved and Lumian Lee under his sway, his intention was to retrieve the pre-prepared ritual sheepskin, enshroud the captive, and intone the incantation, transforming him into a voiceless, nearly powerless sheep.

At that juncture, Guillaume Bénét could lead the sheep elsewhere, endeavoring to shatter the seal and unleash the imprisoned angel.

Once successful, he would ascend to sainthood, becoming a potent human figure bestowed with godhood powers!

Smack!

As the bone landed, Guillaume Bénét surged forward, rapidly enunciating a Hermes incantation.

“Blind, d...”

Midway through the chant, the padre—having made all of Cordu village a sacrificial offering—suddenly experienced a tightening within his chest, an uncommon premonition heralded by fate.

For him, such premonitions occurred rarely. Including this instance, it was the second occurrence. The prior occasion had led him to reassess his actions upon arriving in Trier, spurring him to execute the Substitution Spell and Transfiguration, generating a substitute.

With absolute faith in Inevitability, Guillaume Bénét ceased his chant and lunged to the side.

In the next second, he heard Lumian's voice.

“Hmph!”

A nearly imperceivable white beam shot forth from Lumian's nostrils, impacting the precise spot where Guillaume Bénét had stood. The beam streaked through the air, vanishing upon contact with the uneven gray-black terrain.

Lumian's gaze lifted, his eyes extraordinarily clear, seemingly untouched by the Soul Assimilation Mystic Spell.

Concealed beneath his elongated hair, his ears were snugly filled with soft paper balls!

In anticipation of residual effects upon entering the basement, he had taken precautionary measures, blocking his ears and altering his appearance to fend off the Soul Assimilation Mystic Spell's influence.

How could I be affected if I can't even hear you call my name?

Admittedly, the paper balls couldn't wholly stifle sound. A faint shout did reach Lumian, though he failed to discern it as his name. The impact was but a mild vertigo, quickly dissipating.

Capitalizing on this opportunity, he deduced the affliction he had confronted to be the Soul Assimilation Mystic Spell. With feigned gravity, he baited his lurking adversary into revealing himself, launching a surprise counter with the Spell of Harrumph.

Yet, Lumian hadn't envisaged Guillaume Bénét as his assailant.

Unwilling to flee just yet, he clung to his resolve to confront the foe and liberate the imprisoned angel!

Such a determination heightened Lumian's intensity, a fusion of anxiety and exultation, an undercurrent of madness underscoring his elation.

Instantaneously, Guillaume Bénét vanished upon landing beside him. Ebony tendrils, contorted like serpentine forms, descended from the mine's apex, shrouding the Bottle of Fiction in an enveloping embrace, blossoming into colossal flowers as crimson as blood.

Circling the entryway, Lumian retrieved the iron-gray military alcohol flask, uncapped it, and withdrew the Decency brooch.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh! Emerald-green arrows exuding a pale pallor streaked forth from the rear of the black vine, piercing the space Lumian had just vacated.

Where these arrows connected, the rocks and earth seemed to undergo the assault of concentrated acid, manifesting glaring and exaggerated signs of corrosion.

After donning the Decency brooch, Lumian's form agilely evaded the Ghastly Green Arrows, targeting his cranium. Simultaneously, he genuflected and inclined forward, palms pressed to the gravel and dirt.

Abruptly, vermilion flames surged forth, forging a crescent-like barrier.

This fiery barricade extended in all directions, kindling the obsidian vines in its path and inciting the vivid flowers, their fierce maws agape.

An inconspicuous, saccharine aroma permeated the air, inducing a drowsy haze, an inclination toward slumber.

Guillaume Bénét, unveiling himself after launching the Ghastly Green Arrows, nimbly shifted his position. Inhaling the anesthetic gas engendered by the blazing Abyss Demon Flowers, he beheld the crimson wall poised to transmute the entire abandoned mine into an inferno.

Why would Lumian Lee ignite the Abyss Demon Flowers, knowing they induce sleep? A momentary bewilderment flashed across Guillaume Bénét.

In a flash, his insight converged with Lumian's stratagem.

Lumian aimed to cultivate an environment saturated with anesthetic gas, an environment impartial to ally or adversary alike!

In essence, this would induce slumber in Lumian Lee as well as Guillaume Bénét. Lumian's companions stood sentry outside the Bottle of Fiction. It was conceivable they would soon decipher a means to shatter the contract spell's hold!

Comprehending this, Guillaume Bénét emitted a disdainful snort, his visage adorned with a metallic sheen.

Steel Body!

This was also a contract ability he had never exhibited in front of Lumian Lee.

Temporarily morphing him into a metallic entity, it rendered Guillaume Bénét impervious to the anesthetic gas's effects!

Naturally, metamorphosing into a metallic entity would curtail his capacity to wield most of his abilities.

Outside the Bottle of Fiction.

Upon grasping that she and Jenna had returned to the sacrificial chamber while Lumian had mysteriously disappeared, Franca swiftly procured a mirror.

Stains of blood and black splotches marred the mirror's surface.

Puzzled, Jenna inquired, "Why are you employing Mirror Substitution?"

Wouldn't it be more sensible to make another attempt at traversing the hidden door?

With an air of solemnity, Franca explained, "This mirror carries the Mirror Substitution spell I prepared for Ciel prior to our mission. It allows me to cast a reversed curse on Ciel.

"Presently, I'll employ a milder curse to assess if I can establish a connection with him."

Should she succeed in placing a curse upon Lumian, it would imply the connection remained intact. If the bond hadn't been severed, an alternative resolution had to be pursued!

### Chapter 329 Metallic Creature

Simultaneously with Franca's explanation, inky flames emanated from her right hand, melding with the mirror that belonged to Lumian's substitute.

Jenna observed with a mixture of apprehension, her breath held involuntarily.

...

Within the Bottle of Fiction.

Just as the wall of flames surged forth, kindling the Abyss Demon Flowers, a pang of agony gnawed at Lumian's heart, birthing a faint shroud of black flames upon his chest.

In response, his Spirit Body descended gradually, drawn into an abyssal darkness, a void obliterating light.

Curse? Lumian, ensconced within the cradle of crimson flames, was caught off guard.

The reasons behind this unexpected curse eluded him.

On the one hand, he had preemptively plugged his ears, blunting the impact of the Soul Assimilation Mystic Spell. On the other, Guillaume Bénét lay concealed among the dormant Abyss Demon Flowers, offering no overt indications of invoking contract abilities. Furthermore, he remained unscathed, leaving behind neither flesh nor blood. Every strand of his discarded hair had been consumed by the encroaching flames.

As the black flames emerged, the curse lingered at a subdued level, manifesting as a faint affliction that refrained from impeding his movements. Instantaneously, Lumian formulated a hypothesis.

This curse came from Franca!

Employing Mirror Substitution, she sought to reach out to him!

With renewed determination, Lumian thrust his hands in the direction of the padre's covert location.

Resounding with crackling, another barrier of crimson flames materialized, fire enveloping the descending Abyss Demon Flowers.

Leveraging this veil to obscure Guillaume Bénét's line of sight, Lumian pivoted and sprinted toward the entryway of the Bottle of Fiction.

His actions and his overt choice resonated with unmistakable clarity, conveying to Guillaume Bénét: Why should I fight you within your chosen battleground? If my comrades are barred from entry, I'll venture outside and unite with them!

Emerging from his concealment behind a cluster of Abyss Demon Flowers, Guillaume Bénét radiated a metallic gleam across his exposed skin.

Blazing tongues of fire surged toward him, yet they could only "strip away" a fraction of fabric, unable to sear his flesh.

Through the fiery veil, the Cordu padre bestowed a smile upon Lumian's indistinct figure.

Given the capability to freely traverse the Bottle of Fiction with requisite conditions fulfilled, he had ingeniously laid a trap at the entryway, awaiting Lumian's unwitting ensnarement!

Having assumed a metallic form, his utility was confined to boons involving his body, fate, and three distinct contract abilities untouched by his transformation. Among the latter was:

Shadow Burial!

A black mark on Guillaume Bénét's torso wavered, summoning pallid-white and abyssal-black arms that extended from the encroaching shadows, ensnaring Lumian, mid-sprint toward the entryway.

Lumian, with a forceful stomp, catapulted into the air, seemingly aiming to vault over the eerie appendages emerging from the shadows, seeking sanctuary at the hushed, inky exit.

Behind him, a crimson fireball materialized, poised to detonate at a moment's notice, transmuting into a vessel of obliteration.

Simultaneously, fierce fireballs ignited to his left and right, as if poised to counteract the grasp of the arms.

Guillaume Bénét's metallic visage bore a smile more discernible than before, though it remained deprived of vitality—stern and emotionless.

He anticipated Lumian's imminent leap into the Bottle of Fiction's exit.

The strange arms accompanying the Shadow Burial served as a diversionary tactic, forestalling any suspicions from arising!

It's a pity that I can't use Bone Curse in my metallic state. Otherwise, this would be a good opportunity... Guillaume Bénét hesitated to dispel his Steel Body and deal Lumian another blow.

That way, he wouldn't be able to transform into a metallic creature again anytime soon. The abandoned mine now permeated with anesthetic gas would shortly transform into an inferno. For weak humans lacking godhood, this hostile terrain was untenable. Even Alms Monks could sustain themselves only a brief interval longer.

In the throes of hesitation, Guillaume Bénét ultimately opted to persist with Shadow Burial, permitting the nightmarish arms to continue their relentless encroachment upon Lumian.

With a vigorous leap, Lumian neared the exit of the Bottle of Fiction, almost within grasp.

At that moment, the pitch-black exit—a shadowed orifice devoid of flame—suddenly writhed faintly, akin to a shadowy maw yearning for sustenance.

Undetected, a suffused aura of “shadow” had enshrouded the secret door's surface, a profundity seemingly imbued with life!

This was a trap Guillaume Bénét had meticulously laid. The mechanism lay dormant during Lumian's initial entrance, solely activating when Lumian attempted exit. This safeguard was devised to preempt Lumian from having any danger premonitions when initially entering the Bottle of Fiction, deterring him from braving its confines.

Lumian perceived the sensation of plummeting into an abyss, the final lifeline eluding his grip.

The deceptively thin veil of darkness coiled, an amalgam of endless shadows that converged into an abyssal maw, an aperture on the verge of engulfing him.

Mid-flight, Lumian extended his right palm, yet just before it made contact with the shadowy maw shrouding the hidden door, he abruptly withdrew it, mimicking a gesture of prying open a door.

In tandem, the Decency brooch nestled upon his right chest emitted a subdued golden glow.

Distortion!

Lumian distorted the action of opening the door with the concept of “unsealing this confined space!”

From the outset, his intent to depart the Bottle of Fiction was absent. Instead, he sought to find a way for his companions to infiltrate, thus furnishing reinforcement.

This enclave laden with combustible resources stood as a haven for a Pyromaniac!

Boom!

With a resounding detonation, the crimson fireball positioned to Lumian's left erupted, issuing a horizontal thrust that exacted a substantial toll. His attire lay rent, and his flesh bore charred

imprints, inflicted by the fiery onslaught. Gradually nearing the shadowy vortex, the forceful explosion propelled him away from the exit of the Bottle of Fiction and beyond the enshrouded region brimming with appendages swathed in pallid-white and abyssal-black.

Resounding with a thud, Lumian tumbled, ensconcing himself behind a rampart of surging flames. This maneuver forestalled the further encroachment of the shadowy expanse, obliging the strange arms to contend with the blistering blaze.

Outside the Bottle of Fiction.

A frigid zephyr brushed against Franca and Jenna, wafting from the hidden door's interior.

Swiftly, the chill metamorphosed into a searing fervor. Behind the hidden door lay a derelict mine engulfed in a sea of crimson flames, the blazing inferno punctuated by the descent of undistorted fire dragons, their incandescence unbridled.

The remaining black vines, the crimson flowers, and the strange arms all succumbed to the fiery onslaught, pursued relentlessly by the raging conflagration.

Signaling to Jenna, Franca receded into the shadows as she drew closer to the hidden door.

Jenna understood Franca's intentions and rationally retreated into the shadows outside the hidden door, concealing herself.

She knew that it would be difficult for her to participate in the battle with her strength. Thus, she chose to bide her time, awaiting the enemy's emergence through the threshold, poised to exploit a fleeting opportunity to deliver a decisive, lethal strike.

Within the ajar Bottle of Fiction, Lumian, having concluded his somersault, propped himself up with a single hand.

Locking his gaze onto the distant Guillaume Bénét—his form akin to that of a metallic marionette—Lumian's lips curled wordlessly, yielding an eruption of crimson flames that engulfed his flesh and attire.

A familiar pang of torment reverberated across Lumian's psyche, jolting him awake from the lethargic stupor.

It's been some time! Lumian's grin was tinged with distortion as he hurtled toward the metal-encased Guillaume Bénét. His forward momentum stirred the encompassing crimson flames, elongating behind him like a shimmering, unfurled cape.

Wary of Lumian's earlier utilization of the harrumph spell, Guillaume Bénét, resembling a puppet forged from steel, evaded direct confrontation, executing artful shifts in position.

Discerning Lumian's strategy of harnessing the flames to stave off the Abyss Demon Flowers-induced anesthetic gas, Guillaume Bénét discerned this endeavor to be fleeting. At best, Lumian's fiery gambit would delay his descent into unconsciousness. Certain matters couldn't be resolved by self-harm!

Having adopted the form of a metallic entity via Steel Body, Guillaume Bénét remained impervious to the anesthetic gas's effects, even forgoing the need to draw breath. This form also minimized the conflagration's impact on him. Guillaume Bénét was convinced that Steel Body's efficacy would persist until Lumian Lee succumbed to unconsciousness.

Furthermore, his assessment revealed Lumian's substantial spirituality expenditure, coupled with Lumian's evident abstention from spirit world traversal.

This deduction led Guillaume Bénét to surmise that the harrumph spell likely bore limitations on its frequency of use.

Of course, sustained evasion was untenable. Lumian Lee's actions hinted at him using some unconventional means to open the Bottle of Fiction, suggesting his companions had likely infiltrated covertly through invisibility. Guillaume Bénét couldn't allow this duo to demonstrate the potency of their teamwork.

Nimbly maneuvering around the plummeting tendrils of flaming vines, Guillaume Bénét executed a sudden pivot, facing Lumian with unwavering intent.

His metallic countenance mirrored the flaming luminance, refracting a kaleidoscopic iridescence.

Myriads of diminutive “rainbows” coalesced, cleaving Guillaume Bénét as though he gazed upon his mirror image.

Light Incarnation!

One of the three contractual abilities accessible in his Steel Body state.

Its premise lay in leveraging light to forge a fleeting incarnation, capable of channeling an individual's capabilities.

Two metallic Guillaume Bénets surged toward Lumian simultaneously.

Thud! Thud! Thud! Each stride they undertook fostered corporeal expansion, culminating in the metamorphosis into metallic titans, which tore asunder their white robes adorned with silver-black threads.

Elevating his right hand, Lumian summoned into being a host of crimson Fire Ravens that swirled about him.

The Fire Ravens promptly surged toward the two Guillaume Bénets, demonstrating no clemency.

Given the inherent challenge of distinguishing authenticity from imitation within a short span of time, Lumian adopted a stratagem of unleashing an onslaught indiscriminately—comprising both genuine and illusory manifestations!

For truth could not be falsified, nor could falsity be genuine!

In an abrupt detonation, the Guillaume Bénét before him disintegrated.

Rumble!

Accompanied by the explosion, amid which a multitude of Fire Ravens were prematurely engulfed in combustion, a Water Cannon sculpted from dark-green liquid surged forth from the fake Guillaume Bénét's fragmented remnants.

The Water Cannon, of astonishing alacrity and proximity, penetrated Lumian's fiery shroud, impinging upon his form. As a consequence, Lumian's physique began exhibiting telltale signs of liquefaction.

Draynere Gland Poison!



One of three contractual abilities he could use as a metallic entity!

With a brittle crack, Lumian's corporeal structure fractured, metamorphosing into mirrors.

A mere ten meters from Guillaume Bénét, Franca, owing to the activation of Mirror Substitution, involuntarily escaped her state of Invisibility.

Observing her emergence, Guillaume Bénét's blue irises assumed a pallor bordering on translucence. A deft push of his right palm propagated the emergence of an expansive river of mercurial sigils encircling Franca.

Pitting himself directly against Lumian Lee proved to be a disconcerting engagement for Guillaume Bénét. His paramount and most formidable Fate Appropriator ability remained inaccessible, for its utilization would catalyze a consequential backlash from Inevitability.

Since it couldn't be used on Lumian Lee, it could be used on his companion!

Chapter 330 Forewarned is Forearmed

A Fate Appropriator harbored two primary abilities:

Firstly, the capacity to magnify a corresponding fate tributary, thereby setting in stone an imminent destiny for the target. This process could be expeditious, yet its future influence spanned a mere ten seconds. The resulting efficacy was contingent upon environmental compatibility; a more congruent backdrop augmented the probability of the event materializing in the forthcoming future.

Secondly, the ability to swap an accumulated fate for a fragment of the target's own destiny. Absent a premeditated arrangement, one had to either kill the adversary to access their fate or employ their personal fate as a substitute. Relatively more protracted in execution than magnifying an impending fate tributary, this method prohibited one from assailing the target or inducing harm mid-process.

...

At this moment, Guillaume Bénét, who wasn't fighting one-on-one, clearly didn't want to engage in a fate exchange. His plan was to utilize the current environment and magnify Lumian Lee's female companion's fate tributary of being affected by the Abyss Demon Flower's anesthetic gas to make it a reality.

Of course, as the woman in the black hood hadn't fallen asleep and wouldn't be paralyzed or knocked unconscious for ten seconds, the sole recourse was to expedite the process while steering it toward the most dire outcome.

In a similar vein, this elucidated one of the rationales behind Guillaume Bénét's abstention from interfering with Lumian Lee's fate tributary.

What he refrained from attempting was the exchange of the adversary's fate or the inversion of key tributaries into the principal course, lest he suffered the backlash invoked by Inevitability. He wouldn't have a problem if he only made Lumian Lee slip and fall, achieving futures that wouldn't have significant impact.

The mercurial river encircling Franca was reflected in Guillaume Bénét's lightened eyes. After some discernment, he grabbed at one of the tributaries formed by the mercury symbol that wrapped around itself.

Concurrently, Franca arched her neck, thereby unveiling her supple neck and moist vermilion lips under the hood's shadows.

Peculiarly, a palpable flutter stirred in Guillaume Bénét's chest, reverberating to his nether regions as he recollected scenes of his liaisons with courtesans along Rue de la Muraille. Yet, these recollections paled in allure compared to the figure opposite him, despite her visage remaining partially veiled.

Despite his momentary lapse, Guillaume Bénét promptly reinstated his focus.

Capitalizing upon this fleeting respite, Franca—enlightened to the general scope of a Fate Appropriator's abilities courtesy of Lumian—sparked latent black flames, engendering frost that enshrouded her form.

Opaque filaments converged, manifesting palpable encasement amid the frigid shroud, akin to a cocoon.

Unperturbed, Guillaume Bénét's lips curled into a smirk, unfazed by the unfolding situation.

If a Fate Appropriator's abilities were so easily rendered ineffectual, they wouldn't be called Fate Appropriators!

Furthermore, as long as the target's fate tributary was magnified or underwent a fate exchange, they wouldn't be able to break free even if they used a substitute.

With measured deliberation, Guillaume Bénét extended his right palm and executed a slight wrist rotation, magnifying a particular fate he had chosen.

Nonetheless, in this precise instant, he perceived the hooded lady's fate river adopting an uncanny semblance of illusory ambiguity, an etherealness so pronounced as to border on feigned fabrication.

A decoy!

Guillaume Bénét's endeavor to augment the fate tributary was abruptly thwarted. The cocoon disintegrated, frost fragmenting and black flames metamorphosing into coruscating beams of light.

Yet, the focus of the protection wasn't Franca herself, but rather, a mirror!

Capitalizing on Guillaume Bénét's momentary bewilderment, a casualty of the Demoness of Pleasure's allure and his self-imposed adverse effects, Franca seized the initiative. Employing Mirror Substitution, she ensconced herself in layers of black flames, frost, and spider silk, confounding the adversary while concealing the real lethal peril.

Thus, she extricated herself from the figurative crosshairs, evading the adversary's targeting. Simultaneously with the failure of Guillaume Bénét's attempt to amplify the fate tributary, a figure garbed in an Assassin's attire manifested behind him, its visage partially obscured by a classic brass revolver, aimed steadfastly at the enemy's cranium before pulling the trigger.

Bang!

The iron-black round collided with the dodging Guillaume Bénét's head, emitting a distinct metallic clang.

Guillaume Bénét's head, bedecked in a metallic sheen, yielded to the impact, though its structural integrity endured, deflecting a potentially lethal strike.

Nearly in tandem, Lumian, having used Mirror Substitution to evade the effects of Draynere Gland Poison, and draped in flaming clothes, emerged nearby. Dropping to a genuflecting posture, he pressed his palms to the ground.

In response, twin crimson fire serpents surged into being, consuming the incendiary vines while spreading the flames along their trajectory, ultimately converging to form a colossal pair of fire dragons.

Both entities surged toward Guillaume Bénét. However, their purpose wasn't to ingest their quarry, but to intertwine and coalesce, giving rise to an ostentatious and brilliant conflagration-blooming flower.

As the fiery flower unfurled before him, Guillaume Bénét grappled with comprehending Lumian Lee's intentions.

With his Steel Body, his resistance to flames was steadfast for the time being, but the other party wouldn't go as far as wasting an opportunity and do nothing but perform fire magic, right?

This was Bribe!

Lumian had “gifted” Guillaume Bénét with a blazing flower—an emblem signifying incineration and obliteration. Capitalizing on the Decency brooch, he had completed a Bribe, thereby attenuating the adversary's defenses.

Although Lumian Lee's true motives remained opaque, Guillaume Bénét's intuition kindled with the conviction that this augured unfavorably.

In rapid succession, Guillaume Bénét invoked Light Incarnation anew, fragmenting into three iterations as he advanced toward Lumian. As Franca's assault faltered, she vanished anew.

Witnessing the three iterations of the metalized Guillaume Bénét rapidly engorge, Lumian conjured a new cohort of Fire Ravens and distributed them evenly amongst the trio of adversaries.

Then, turning his form and slowing his pace, he primed himself for a prospective evasion of the ensuing Water Cannon conjured from Draynere Gland Poison.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh! The crimson Fire Ravens landed precisely on the three metalized Guillaume Bénets.

Rumble, rumble, rumble!

They exploded simultaneously!

A torrent of dark-green liquid surged forth from one of Guillaume Bénét's forms—Water Cannon. Lumian, braced for the assault, deftly evaded, his gaze fixed upon the collision of aqueous impact against the rocky wall, a tremor rippling through the Bottle of Fiction.

Yet, as Lumian's evasion completed, he detected a colossal shadow enshrouding his feet. Thereupon, a medley of pallid-white and obsidian-black arms extended forth from this obscurity.

In contrast, Lumian's other choice of direction was shrouded in a dark shadow.

At Sequence 5, Light Incarnation permitted Guillaume Bénét the creation of up to three incarnations, each incarnation fake. One harbored Draynere Gland Poison, while the other pair wielded Shadow Burial, intent on ensnaring Lumian within their shade-infused grasp.

Curved, grotesque limbs ensnared Lumian's ankles, striving to haul him into the nebulous depths.

Amid this peril, a figure emerged from the inky depths—a half-naked, metallic-finished Guillaume Bénét.

Shadow Burial was a form of shadow concealment for him!

By capitalizing on three Light Incarnations—which consumed a large amount of spirituality—to veil his position, thereby detaining Lumian temporarily, Guillaume Bénét engineered his stealthy approach via the shadows, orchestrating a decisive assault.

His body suddenly expanded as he punched Lumian behind the ear.

A thunderous crack resonated as Lumian's form fragmented akin to a glass pane, fracturing into myriad minuscule fragments subsequently claimed by the pallid-white and obsidian-black arms.

Mirror Substitution!

It was precisely due to the implementation of Mirror Substitution that Franca refrained from intervening on Lumian's behalf when she saw him restrained by the strange arms extending from the shadow. Rather, she bided her time, anticipating Guillaume Bénét's advent to administer a terminal blow.

Amidst the cracking sounds, Franca's hooded, black-robed figure involuntarily appeared once more, quickly spotted by the padre.

Guillaume Bénét had been waiting for this opportunity to stop himself from being affected by the charm and turn his blue eyes light-colored again.

He saw the mercurial river of fate and began to choose the fate of being paralyzed by the burning gasses of the Abyss Demon Flowers.

Yet, an abrupt surge of peril seized Guillaume Bénét's consciousness, compelling a stark realization: interference with the adversary's fate would undoubtedly yield cataclysmic repercussions.

Impossible! Moments earlier, such consequences hadn't arisen! Yet, as he scrutinized the figure before him, Guillaume Bénét, who had been able to interfere with his target's fate normally previously to near success, saw a hooded woman hiding behind the hooded woman. The woman behind her held a palm-sized mirror that illuminated his figure.

In an instant, Guillaume Bénét understood what was going on.

The hooded woman standing in front of him, revealing the river of fate, was Lumian Lee!

After activating Mirror Substitution, he took the initiative to appear in front of his companion. Seizing the opportunity, he used a Transfiguration-like ability to change his appearance and disguise himself as his companion!

You do realize, using the same trick won't work twice? Franca, who was hiding behind Lumian, chuckled when she saw this.

Seeing Lumian under attack, she took out her teammate's Mirror Substitution and threw it in front of her. Taking advantage of the cover and the enemy's drawn attention, she aimed another mirror at Guillaume Bénét.

Without hesitation, Franca's palm was enveloped in black flames as she swiped the mirror's surface.

Curse!

Demoness's Curse!

In a simultaneous eruption, a quietly smoldering black flame ignited from within Guillaume Bénét's metallic form.

Elated that his Steel Body rendered him impervious to conflagration, inflicting only minor wounds, he soon perceived an anomalous drain on his spirit, coupled with indications of severe ethereal scorching.

In the span of an eye's flutter, the Cordu village padre emitted a tormented cry.

Instantaneously, his metallic semblance plummeted to the earth with a cacophonous clatter, reconstituting into a form unadorned by metal, starkly naked and manifestly fleshy.

At the same time, Franca, too, experienced a visceral tremor, her countenance assuming a pallid hue.

“Rebirth!”

The contract ability in question facilitated Guillaume Bénét's revival within the slayer's body!

Guillaume Bénét's spirit smiled and hastened to replace the woman holding the mirror and take control of her body.

Yet, he confronted a disconcerting reality: before him stood an enshrouded woman brandishing a mirror, baring her lower visage in a manner reminiscent of malevolent allure.

She's in front... Then whose body did I Rebirth into? A disorienting befuddlement inundated Guillaume Bénét.

Meanwhile, Lumian, ensconced within Franca's semblance, donned a knowing grin, gradually retracting his right palm from the padre's lifeless cadaver, the Decency brooch aglow with a dusky-golden luminescence.

Distortion!

How could he not guard against Guillaume Bénét's Rebirth ability when he already knew that Guillaume Bénét's mistress had chosen such an ability?

Lumian couldn't overtly commandeer Guillaume Bénét's Rebirth with his seal and corruption alone. Nevertheless, Lumian, resembling Franca with uncanny precision, had already instructed Franca to bring the Earth Blood ore.

Innately repellent to even the Montsouris ghost, the Earth Blood ore imposed an unseen force field compelling Guillaume Bénét's Spirit Body's circumvention.

Leveraging the Distortion afforded by the Decency brooch, coupled with the Earth Blood ore's obstructive efficacy and the Niese Face's transformation, Lumian orchestrated Guillaume Bénét's Rebirth within his very body!

Although Lumian's visage paled and his frame quivered slightly, a smile graced his lips as he extended his hand towards his left chest, gently declaring, “Padre, everyone is waiting for you.”