

Inevitability 471

Chapter 471 Topsy-Turvy

Angoulême, racing towards église Saint-Robert with Imre and Valentine to gather more intel and receive the latest orders, suddenly found himself blinded by sunlight. It was as though he had been shrouded in darkness for too long, struggling to adapt to the sudden brightness.

After a few moments, he and his teammates gazed skyward.

In Trier, where it had been late at night, the scene had transformed into a sunny afternoon!

Feeling the warmth of the sun, Angoulême couldn't shake off the chill crawling down his spine. He sensed that the problem had escalated dramatically, and a catastrophe loomed on the horizon.

In the blink of an eye, a series of explosions echoed from the Rist Docks, Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman, Suhit's steam locomotive station, and the nearby depot and warehouses.

Thunderous rumbles echoed through the air. Even from a distance, Angoulême and his comrades witnessed the crimson flames and burning structures. Gunshots, salvos, and shouts pierced through the chaos.

The entire market district plunged into anarchy.

Is Quartier érase's military rebellion thinning Trier's Beyonder forces to support the insurrection in the market district? This can't be the same group responsible for the earlier docks and factory strikes at dawn... What is happening? Angoulême's expression hardened as he changed course, hastening towards the epicenter of the most intense explosions.

Imre and Valentine followed closely behind.

...

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

Gardner Martin donned his silver-white full-body armor and positioned himself by the window. A smirk played on his lips as he observed Angoulême de Fran?ois and his team departing the area.

The leader of the Savoie Mob could already envision the chaos unfolding at the Rist Docks, Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman, and other key locations.

Without reservation, he unveiled the hidden might of the Iron and Blood Cross Order in the market district, aiming to sow maximum chaos in the shortest time possible.

Whether it was "Blood Palm" Black overseeing Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman, Vincent Lorraine at the Rist Docks, Parsifal managing the depot, or Faustino, the infiltrator at Suhit's steam locomotive station, each was leading a team in acts of arson, detonating explosives, and unleashing indiscriminate destruction and carnage.

"Fortunately, we were well-prepared. Even if we had to expedite our plans, we can still complete the corresponding ritual," Gardner Martin remarked to Supervisor Olson, standing not far behind him.

Olson, resembling a starving bear, clutched his small brown suitcase, his voice indifferent as he inquired, "You didn't eliminate the Demoness?"

Gardner Martin grinned.

"No need to waste effort on such a foolish Demonee. She poses no real threat. Moreover, taking her down would be time-consuming, and you're aware of their formidable survivability. It might cause us to miss the crucial moment.

"As for the others causing trouble, I dispatched Albus to the military camp in Quartier érase. Lumian..."

At the mention of Lumian, Gardner Martin's smile broadened.

He lifted the visor of his helmet, peering out the window once more.

Under the brilliant sunlight, the flames of Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman painted the sky crimson. Shouts, cries, gunshots, and explosions reverberated through the air.

Gardner Martin tilted his chin upward, closed his eyes, and contentedly awaited the unfolding climax of the play.

The ritual was on the brink of completion.

...

In the painting world, the westering sun in the sky assumed a heightened realism, its glow merging with the faint shadow in an uncanny dance.

Similar transformations unfolded across every structure. Vendors and pedestrians on the streets ceased to be lifeless figures, now frantically darting about in pandemonium, desperately seeking refuge.

The subterranean market district and its surface counterpart gradually transitioned into tangible existence. One was now bathed in flames like an oil painting, and the two began to mirror each other, interweaving as "projections" in the spirit world.

Suddenly, like illusory objects flipping upside down, the painted market district emerged on the surface, severing its complete seal with the rest of Trier. The authentic market district had transformed into a mural within the cave, linked to the underground.

In the actual Trier, Salle de Bal Brise existed in darkness, mitigating the effects of the seal.

Within that darkness, the three-headed, six-armed giant, Lumian, adhered to the enigmatic door. With a resonant creak, it slowly swung open, stained with blood and red rust, revealing a crevice seemingly ablaze with invisible flames.

Rumble!

Trier shuddered in its entirety, and the sunlit sky descended into a twilight adorned with fiery clouds.

...

Quartier érase, Red Swan Castle.

Count Poufer, roused from his slumber, snapped awake in the midst of a dream.

Blood-stained sunlight filtered through the thick curtains, accompanied by cruel and frenzied screams.

The beige castle, adorned with ancient bloodstains, trembled violently, as if a colossal entity beneath the ground clung to its foundations.

Poufer felt a summoning and a magnetic pull from the depths of his soul. Excitement painted his expression as he hastily vacated his bed and dashed out of the bedroom.

In his frantic haste, he disregarded slippers and eschewed a change from his dark-red cotton robe. Barefoot, he sprinted down the corridor, the hem of his robe swinging behind him.

How many nights had he yearned for this awakening?

It signified the long-awaited recognition from the remnant spirit of his ancestor, the fulfillment of the prophecy by the mysterious leader of the Secret Order, and the dawn of hope for the Sauron family to reclaim their strength. It meant the end of the curse that haunted the other Saurons and the promise of rebirth!

Count Poufer understood the potential consequences for himself, but he faced the situation without flinching or hesitation.

Hadn't every member of the Sauron family, choosing to reside in Red Swan Castle and not relocating after reaching adulthood, been mentally prepared for this moment?

To become the vessel for their ancestor's resurrection, to merge with Him, was an honor for every Sauron family member!

Descending the stairs, Count Poufer entered the underground maze.

In the darkness behind him, a figure emerged from the vicinity adjacent to the stairs.

It was Elros, donned in beige hunting attire with her long auburn hair tied into a ponytail.

The girl, bearing both the Sauron and Einhorn bloodlines, followed her cousin at a steady pace, her presence silent yet profound.

...

In Apartment 601, 3 Rue des Blouses Blanches, in the market district.

Franca and Anthony Reid found themselves momentarily bewildered as they witnessed the sun appearing and hanging low in the west.

It's past 2 a.m. What sun could there be?

What was going on?

Why was this strange phenomenon happening?

Their thoughts were abruptly shattered by the reverberations of explosions and gunshots in the market district. Anthony visibly trembled, instinctively attempting to dodge the unforeseen onslaught.

Fortunately, having chosen to remain in Trier earlier, he managed to regain control more effectively than in past episodes.

A shared glance exchanged between Franca and Anthony revealed surprise, confusion, and underlying worry.

"Has the catastrophe struck?" Anthony Reid queried in a deep, resonant voice.

Franca, brow furrowed, mused, "But according to Bouvard's corpse's prophecy, the catastrophe was accompanied by rain and water, and now..."

Before she could complete her sentence, her spirituality alerted her to something outside the window.

An unmistakable phantom materialized in the building opposite, the two figures overlapping and swiftly parting ways.

Simultaneously, a wave of dizziness enveloped Franca, as if she had plunged weightlessly and failed to utilize an Assassin's Feather Fall.

Anthony Reid experienced a similar sensation. He spoke solemnly,

"Indiscriminately affecting everyone?"

"The effect of a ritual?"

A ritual to trigger the catastrophe?

Just as Franca considered suggesting leaving the apartment to approach The Fool's cathedral at the Lavigny Docks for a clearer understanding, her attention was drawn to the abrupt changes in two items tucked within her hidden pockets.

She quickly made a judgment based on the locations they were located.

One was the palm-sized Primordial Demoness figurine, which, even through clothing, exuded an abnormal coldness.

The other was the ancient silver mirror from the underground, an object connected to a peculiar mirror world. It trembled subtly, as if stirred or resonating with the current environment and nearby objects.

Wh— Franca's eyes narrowed.

Coupled with the simultaneous movements of the two items, she suspected the presence of a high-level Beyonder of the Demoness pathway nearby!

...

In the Sacred Heart cloister, now transformed into a sun, the continuous cries of an infant filled the air.

The cries unsettled Madam Magician with a starlit visage, causing a multitude of door-shaped insects to crawl in and out. Miss Justice, her skin covered in grayish-white scales, was compelled to Placate herself.

The piercing sunlight forced the two Major Arcana card holders to instinctively shut their eyes. Before them, voids intersected, and layers of starlight blocked the spreading flames "into the distance."

They recognized the incoming force all too well.

It was the divine power of the Eternal Blazing Sun!

Although this true god hadn't physically descended from the spirit world into reality, Lady Moon, who had nurtured a deity, and the newborn baby she held, indirectly channeled some of His strength.

The power of a god!

Magician and Justice, though struggling to endure, remained composed. They knew they weren't alone.

Upon discovering Lady Moon's hideout in the Sacred Heart Cloister, they had anticipated the worst-case scenario.

...

On the Blue Avenger at the Lavigny Docks, The Hanged Man Alger, adorned in a sailor's attire with dark-blue hair, positioned himself at the bow of the ship. Witnessing the sudden brightening of the sky and the sun hanging low in the west, a mix of worry and excitement washed over him. Swiftly, he retrieved an item from his possession.

It was a card featuring Emperor Roselle with raised hands and a papal tiara adorning his head. Behind him, the depiction showcased lightning, violent winds, and tumultuous waves.

The Tyrant card!

One of the Cards of Blasphemy crafted by Emperor Roselle.

The Hanged Man Alger had made a special trip to Trier, abstaining from involvement in operations elsewhere, anticipating the worst calamity!

Through prior communication, pre-installed imprints, and adept prayers, as a Saint of the Sailor pathway, he possessed the ability to employ the Tyrant card. This allowed him to temporarily harness someone's power, enabling resistance against the sun in the sky without jeopardizing the stability of the astral world.

Whoosh!

As Alger bowed his head in prayer, the Tyrant card illuminated, causing Trier's sky to darken. Countless water droplets descended to the ground beneath the sunlight.

Rain, a deluge of torrential rain.

Chapter 472 Weather

In the midst of the torrential rain, The Hanged Man Alger concluded his prayer.

His body involuntarily straightened, and his head snapped up.

The Tyrant card in his hand suddenly thickened and brightened, transforming into a luminous book.

The pages of the book rapidly flipped, revealing various forms of Emperor Roselle. He alternated between the attire of a Sailor, sporting a nautical hat, and singing with head held high amidst the waves...

The scene settled on the Emperor donned in a papal tiara and a pontiff's robe.

His interaction with the dim sky summoned a colossal bolt of lightning, piercing through the clouds.

Rumble!

Amidst the thunderclaps, the illusory figure of Emperor Roselle merged with The Hanged Man Alger.

His demeanor abruptly became dignified, and the Srenzo River around the Blue Avenger instantaneously calmed, resembling a windless lake.

“Adorning” the papal tiara and “draping” the pontiff's robe, The Hanged Man Alger conjured a silver staff condensed from lightning.

Stepping forward, he ascended into the sky, surrounded by the wind.

Rumble!

Above Trier, thunder roared, and a visible hurricane swept up myriad dark clouds, forming a colossal, dark, and ominous vortex.

Within the vortex, dense bolts of lightning of various hues intertwined, extending out to shroud the blazing sun in the west.

Whoosh!

The rain, like an opened faucet, cascaded into every nook of Trier, creating a misty fog that enveloped everything.

In the blink of an eye, a layer of water covered the ground, illuminated by both sunlight and lightning.

The citizens, roused by the morning sunlight, now felt an impending apocalypse as they stared at the pitch-black backdrop untouched by the blazing sunlight and snake-like lightning.

In the profound darkness corresponding to Salle de Bal Brise, Lumian, a colossal giant standing over ten meters tall with two additional illusory heads and four exaggerated arms, witnessed the mysterious door to which he was attached slowly creaking open with a weighty grinding sound. Gradually, a crack emerged, and within the fissure, formless flames flickered.

This time, less than a tenth of the nearby spiritual light spots remained. The various mystical symbols and connections had either dissipated or weakened to an extreme degree.

The iron-black door, tainted with blood and rust, finally broke free from its constraints, and the crack became more pronounced.

Before the collision of torrential rain, lightning, and the sun, the formless flames behind the door retreated silently, unveiling an endless path with no discernible end.

Holding Jenna tightly, Lumian couldn't resist the ominous pull and descended through the door.

His left chest glowed, and, along with the entire Hostel and the other twelve rooms, they were on the verge of passing through the mysterious door.

In the real market district, on the second floor of Salle de Bal Brise.

As reality and fiction switched, Gardner Martin, Supervisor Olson, and the members of the Iron and Blood Cross Order, who hadn't gone to set fire to Rist Docks and other locations, seamlessly transitioned into the painting world.

They remained on the ground, beside the deep darkness that represented Salle de Bal Brise. This was thanks to a figure who had silently materialized behind them.

Behind Supervisor Olson stood a man in formal attire, sans a bow tie. Aged between his thirties and forties, he possessed a high nose bridge, deep-set eyes, and light-blue irises. His slightly curled brown hair framed an unusually stiff countenance, his eyes reflecting open disdain and arrogance.

Behind Gardner Martin stood an old man with meticulously combed dark-red hair, clad in a blue military suit adorned with a sash and medals.

Though wrinkles marked the old man's face, his dark eyes emanated sharpness capable of toppling houses and uprooting the earth wherever they landed.

They were the president and the most powerful vice president of the Iron and Blood Cross Order. Under their guardianship, Gardner Martin and Olson remained unaffected by the heretics' ritual, refraining from entering the painting world.

As for the other upper echelons of the Iron and Blood Cross Order, they wreaked havoc in various parts of Trier, diverting the attention of official Beyonders.

Observing the dark depths of Salle de Bal Brise morph into a pair of blood-stained iron-black doors, the four members of the Iron and Blood Cross Order entered without hesitation, as if they had executed the maneuver countless times before.

In the deepest depths of Red Swan Castle, within the hall located in the underground maze.

Count Poufer, clad in a robe and barefoot, had already arrived. By the glow of white candles, he fixated on the rusty bronze coffin.

The coffin's lid shifted, unveiling illusory purple flames that filled the interior.

These flames merged with the iron-black ring embedded in the ground, beneath the bronze coffin. They blended with the viscous blood and withered hearts within the ring, forming an entrance—a deep entrance tainted with blood and rust.

Through this entrance emanated a lofty, bloody, and frenzied aura from the underground.

Count Poufer trembled under the influence of the aura, yet his eyes burned with fanaticism and fearlessness.

This was his first proximity to the ancestor's mind!

A twisted smile adorned Poufer's face as he strode forward, passing through the peripheral glow of candlelight and approaching the anomalous bronze coffin.

In the entire world, only the Sauron family members with the corresponding talents who had bided their time in Red Swan Castle, the mysterious leader of the Secret Order, and the long-dead Emperor Roselle knew that beneath Red Swan Castle lay another breached seal of Fourth Epoch Trier.

The repairs had been completed using the hearts of generations of important Sauron family members as a seal, yet the problem proved irreversible.

Vermonda Champagne Sauron, who once dominated the Sauron family, had gone mad and entered the upper levels of Fourth Epoch Trier!

His frenzied spirit lingered at the seal, inextinguishable. His anguished roars echoed, affecting everyone in Red Swan Castle and those of the same bloodline.

Now, it was time to put an end to the curse that had caused the Sauron family's decline and trapped the Saurons in nightmares!

Count Poufer felt a potent sense of mission and honor. With the conviction that he would die here, he laughed maniacally, pressed his hand to the edge of the bronze coffin, and lay down.

His figure plummeted into the deep entrance stained with blood and rust.

As Count Poufer vanished into the bronze coffin, Elros Einhorn, in a beige hunting suit with a ponytail, entered the hall.

Her gaze swept over the white candles and the bronze coffin, scrutinizing the changes in the seal. She then cut her finger, dripping three drops of bright red blood on the ground.

Lowering her head, she recited solemnly, "The embodiment of Iron and Blood, the symbol of the Calamity of War, the Priest who controls the weather, the great Snarner Einhorn..."

After finishing the incantation, the blood on the ground boiled, expanding into a blood-colored lake before condensing into a figure clad in iron-black, blood-stained armor.

Standing over 1.8 meters tall, with long dark-red hair and flamboyant golden earrings, the figure exuded androgynous, handsome features.

Darkened brown eyes fixed on Elros as the figure nodded gently and spoke, "Well done. In the previous war, the family lost its most important object. We must seize every opportunity to make up for our losses, even if it's just a portion."

With that, Snarner Einhorn entered the deep entrance of the bronze coffin.

Elros's eyes flickered as she observed the scene.

Finally, she sighed and said, "Regardless, the Sauron family's curse will end..."

In Apartment 601, 3 Rue des Blouses Blanches.

Franca, with a mixture of surprise and concern, took out the Primordial Demoness's bone figurine and the ancient silver mirror she had obtained from underground.

Uncertain about the significance of the abnormality in these two items, she decided to place them at a distance. Her plan was to wait and observe subsequent changes before deciding on the next course of action.

At that precise moment, the classic silver mirror unexpectedly reflected the Primordial Demoness figurine, even though it wasn't in its line of sight. This occurrence triggered a seismic disturbance throughout Rue des Blouses Blanches.

Dark light surged from the mirror, enveloping Franca and Anthony Reid before they could employ any abilities.

As the darkness subsided, only the coffee table, sofa, and various furnishings remained in Apartment 601.

Adjacent to the mural depicting a segment of the market district, behind the ecstatic Painter, an ancient silver mirror detached from the painting world and gently descended into the shadows. Gradually sinking deeper and deeper, it swiftly vanished.

Amidst the indescribable heat and the swirling world, Lumian and Jenna landed on a ground covered in pale-black stone bricks.

Their eyes were met with the sight of a magnificent city in the distance, featuring asymmetrical black buildings and vibrant red houses.

A thin fog intermittently shrouded the city, giving it the appearance of a mirage, the kind occasionally encountered by pirates and sailors.

In the wilderness beyond the city, dark clouds gathered, lightning flashed, thunder rumbled, and rain poured. A colossal figure, dozens of meters tall, stood surrounded by these natural phenomena, barely visible and indistinguishable.

“He” lingered outside the city, enveloped in smoke, flames, hail, lightning, torrential rain, and violent winds, as if perpetual.

Is this Fourth Epoch Trier? Lumian speculated, though uncertainty lingered. This wasn't quite what he had expected.

Jenna subconsciously turned to look at him and noticed that he had reverted to his original appearance, no longer abnormally huge. He no longer possessed three heads and six arms.

Chapter 473 Weakening of Corruption

“You've recovered,” Jenna whispered to Lumian.

She refrained from speaking loudly, fearing that it might agitate her companion and trigger the same mutation again. Plus, there was the concern of attracting the ominous giant's attention, shrouded in smoke and rain that made it elusive.

Lumian locked eyes with Jenna and realized from the reflection that he was back to normal.

Subconsciously, he responded, “This means the Hostel ritual, conducted by the heretics using me as a template, has ended...”

Suddenly alert, Lumian scanned the area.

With the Hostel ritual concluded, he anticipated the arrival of the evil gods' bestowed from the other twelve rooms.

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His gaze focused on an unusual area adorned with pale-black stone bricks, dominating the scenery.

It sprawled out, filling Lumian's field of view, except for where it stopped short of the distant grand city and the colossal figure amidst the turbulent weather.

Stretching across his vision, grayish-white stone pillars loomed every 20 to 30 meters, some standing tall and others succumbing to collapse. These pillars, broad enough to span the reach of three to four people, obstructed Lumian's and Jenna's view beyond.

The sky above, supported by these stone sentinels, took on an odd translucency, as though an unseen fire silently raged, invisible to the naked eye.

The resulting glow cast an eerie brightness, akin to dusk on a war-torn battlefield. Lumian, lacking Dark Vision, could perceive his surroundings clearly without conjuring a crimson fireball.

He didn't notice Madame Pualis and the other bestowed of evil gods.

“Did the residents of the Hostel not enter, or are they scattered in various places, arriving at random locations?” he mused aloud.

Unfazed, he redirected his focus, hoping Jenna possessed the pertinent information.

Though Jenna grappled with the concept of “random,” she grasped Lumian's intent.

Without delving deeper into that mystery, she pivoted to the more pressing concern.

“What should we do now?”

At the same time, Jenna made a connection.

The Hostel was created using Ciel as a template... Based on the mystical knowledge involved in a Demoness's curse, could Ciel harbor an evil god's bestowed within him? Uh... He seemed to have mentioned before that he had Mr. Fool's seal on him, and the one sealed is an evil god's bestowed? The transformation was actually similar to the effects of a curse, but due to the seal, there were no serious consequences?

What do we do? Lumian assessed the chaotic scene before him: a colossal, blurry giant amid smoke, rain, lightning, and flames. He chuckled,

“Our move now is to put some distance between us and that giant.”

“We'll head in the opposite direction of the city, find a secure hiding spot, and observe the unfolding events. Our goal is to locate an exit swiftly.”

Despite feeling an unusual pull towards the giant and the city, Lumian managed to resist. He was no longer under the intense attraction that had gripped him before—now that he lacked an angelic level. Rationality prevailed as he carefully considered the risks and benefits.

The giant, undoubtedly godlike in nature, seemed to be in a state of madness. Lumian, a Sequence 6 Conspirer, couldn't afford to approach it casually. Just a glance could make him lose control!

The city, possibly Fourth Epoch Trier, held its own dangers—one that caused even demigods to perish within—with potential undead creatures and corruption like the old bones. Lumian had The Fool's seal and the aura of Blood Emperor Alista Tudor, but he couldn't feel as relaxed, carefree, or fearless as returning to Cordu before the corruption.

If he had entered the Fourth Epoch's Trier with such intentions, he might have turned into an irrational, perpetually lingering monster sealed with an angel in the blink of an eye.

With that, Lumian turned and sprinted in the opposite direction of the giant's figure in the ever-changing weather, away from the magnificent city.

He needed to put some distance between himself and the looming threat. Nobody could predict if the massive creature would make any noise!

The unrestrained voices of high-level Beyonders posed a grave danger to Mid-Sequence Beyonders.

Jenna put her trust in the seasoned Ciel and followed him with grace. They maneuvered past the grayish-white stone pillars, some standing tall while others lay in ruins, pushing further into the area paved with light-black stone bricks.

As Lumian sprinted, a slight frown creased his forehead.

He could feel a significant drain on his spirituality after the intense battle in the painting world and multiple Spirit World Traversals. If another mishap occurred, he questioned how long he could endure.

I need to find a way to replenish my spirituality... In reality, it's midnight. Should I lay low until 6 a.m.? Lumian contemplated as he dashed forward.

In the fake market district on the surface, torrential rain cascaded upon Séraphine and the other "rooms."

They stood on the street across from Salle de Bal Brise, their chests radiating with various hues.

One by one, figures materialized, piercing through the void and descending into the profound darkness. They entered the iron-black door tainted with blood and rust within the depths of the shadows.

Séraphine gazed at the surreal scene, her vacant eyes and rigid expression suddenly overtaken by sorrow. Rainwater drenched her long brown hair.

Beside her, Gabriel's face beamed with joy as he spoke in an otherworldly tone, "Is it over? Can we be together forever?"

Séraphine's rain-soaked face twisted. She instructed Gabriel, "Leave this place and stay away from me!"

"Why?" Gabriel questioned, perplexed.

Séraphine's role as a Hostel Room had been fulfilled. There shouldn't be anything else, right?

The monster could resume its normal life.

Séraphine uttered in pain, "With the tenants gone, the Hostel's rooms no longer hold any value..."

Before she could finish, a pair of transparent dragonfly-like wings sprouted from her back, etched with open, cold eyes.

Silently, Séraphine's form disintegrated. The wet lake-blue dress lost its support and plummeted to the ground. Adorned with writhing flesh and blood, each piece bore dragonfly-like, dreamy wings and eye-like patterns.

S raphine's head remained relatively intact. Surrounded by blood dragonflies, a few wheat ears and mushrooms sprouted from her face. Raindrops struck her face and slid.

She opened her mouth, as if leading to another world, and her voice turned shrill.

“We're not bestowed, but the work of pixies!

“Go!”

Gabriel stared vacantly at S raphine, a composition of blood dragonflies and a head. An indescribable sorrow etched across his empty, cold face.

In the midst of the pouring rain and sunlight, he instinctively took a few steps in the opposite direction before halting.

The playwright turned, retracing his steps toward S raphine.

A gentle smile curled on the corners of his mouth.

“I'd forgotten. I'm already a monster. Where can I go?

“I'm grateful you let me run on my own in the end.”

As Gabriel spoke, he bent down, allowing his knees to touch the ground and the puddles.

His arms enveloped the countless blood dragonflies and S raphine's struggling head, and he planted a deep kiss on the lips adorned with wheat ears and mushrooms.

Thud! Thud! Thud! The blood dragonflies sliced through his flesh with their wings, burrowing into his body, draining his life force.

He persisted in the kiss.

Raindrops pelted them.

Before long, translucent and dreamy wings emerged from Gabriel's back, stained with blood.

Amidst the spine-chilling gnawing sounds, Gabriel's body collapsed and melted, likewise for S raphine's head.

In the midst of the ensuing blood, strange-shaped dragonflies with translucent wings, resembling meatballs, soared into the air, resembling bright fireworks in a storm.

Suddenly, blazing sunlight descended, engulfing the area and the abnormal bodies.

Not far away, Angoul me, Valentine, and Imre spread their arms in unison.

Upon returning to  glise Saint-Robert, they remained unaffected by the ritual, no longer within the world of the painting. They stayed grounded, and once the situation stabilized, they made their way to Salle de Bal Brise.

Quartier  raste, Sacred Heart Cloister.

Storms and lightning veiled the golden sun, but for now, they couldn't thwart the sunlight from piercing through.

This caused the entrance to Salle de Bal Brise to blur and tremble, yet it persisted. The painting world that had swapped with the surface gradually became ethereal, drawing nearer to returning to the rock wall.

After Magician and Justice escaped the onslaught of sunlight, they realized they had lost Lady Moon's trail.

The former's eyes sparkled with resplendent stars.

Soon, she "saw" Lady Moon's silhouette.

The evil god's Blessed didn't conceal herself as she forcefully entered the unstable darkness and the mysterious, illusory iron-colored door.

With a flash of starlight, the Major Arcana card holders, Magician and Justice, arrived outside Salle de Bal Brise.

The two hesitated, uncertain whether to pursue her.

At that moment, Justice softly exclaimed, "I feel that the underground's allure and beckoning towards me have weakened..."

Their hesitance stemmed from the fact that delving deep underground into Fourth Epoch Trier would subject them to immense and abnormally terrifying corruption for demigods.

The heretics didn't mind. Essentially, they had gone mad. At most, their madness would be more intricate and thorough, but they had no choice but to consider this issue.

"The corruption has weakened?" Magician was surprised.

As far as she knew, only two individuals could cause this phenomenon:

One was Mr. Fool or The Celestial Worthy of Heaven and Earth for Blessings. By temporarily bolstering the seal's power, They could curb the various corruptions in Fourth Epoch Trier and diminish them.

The other was the deity who had gained a rudimentary grasp of the greatest abnormality underground: "The Lord that created everything, the omnipotent and omniscient God, the Lord who reigns behind the curtain of shadows, the ruler of the mind world, and the degenerated nature of all living things."

Justice, adorned in a simple yet elegant dress, turned her head to glance at Magician, discerning her thoughts.

The woman nodded slightly and uttered, "It would have been abnormal if He hadn't intervened in this incident. You, too, know what He wants most."

Magician didn't hesitate. With a sigh and a chuckle, she stepped into the faltering darkness.

Justice followed closely behind.

As they vanished, sunlight flooded the sky from Saint Viève Cathedral on Trier's island area, coalescing into a miniature sun.

The sun's rays pierced the darkness of Salle de Bal Brise, illuminating a translucent woman in a white robe adorned with golden threads. She possessed a captivating beauty and emitted a holy aura, as if impervious to the touch of dust.

Trier's guardian angel paid no heed to the Sacred Heart Cloister as she passed through the illusory door with a crack.

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Simultaneously, a whistle resonated from the patriarchal cathedral of the God of Steam and Machinery to the north of Trier.

As if part of a ritual, it emitted an iron-black chimney, serving as the building's spire.

A substantial amount of pale-white fog billowed into the air, contorting and writhing to take on a discernible form.

The figure that materialized was tall and handsome, with long chestnut hair. Cloaked in a monk-like gray robe and a white apron,

He was Saint Bornova, recently assigned to the Church of the God of Steam and Machinery in Trier.

Unlike Saint Viève, the Angel didn't enter the seal; instead, He hovered in the air, vigilant against potential mishaps, including an attack from the Rose School of Thought's Abomination.

At that moment, a colossal hurricane erupted, enshrouding the golden sun above the Sacred Heart Cloister in dark clouds, lightning, and torrential rain.

With the advent of this apocalyptic phenomenon, the already unstable effects of the ritual, disrupted by various interferences, could no longer be sustained. The figures in the paintings lingering on the ground and the illusory illusions of surrounding buildings became instantly recognizable as fake.

This virtual reality-like scene seamlessly overlapped with the tangible market district once more.

Just as the surface and the underground were on the brink of switching, a figure materialized abruptly in front of the mirror-like darkness of Salle de Bal Brise.

This figure sported straight eyebrows and blue eyes, along with long chestnut hair cascading to the waist. Adorned in a white shirt with ribbons and flowers, a brown captain's coat with intricate patterns, beige pants, and dark brown leather boots, the ensemble exuded an eclectic charm.

In her left hand, she gripped a golden item engraved with mysterious patterns, resembling a miniature lamp.

Silently, the wick extending from the lamp's mouth spontaneously ignited, emitting a viscous, aqueous golden light.

Within the luminous glow, a distorted and indistinct pale-gold figure materialized. In a dignified and majestic voice, it conveyed,

“To resolve your father's problem, we can only allow Him to accept another corruption at the same level—one more compatible with Him—forming a certain balance...”

The woman holding the peculiar lamp scrutinized the pale-golden figure deeply before her body suddenly turned ethereal, disintegrating into countless symbols and words. Like a torrent, she surged through the iron-black door and the completely collapsed darkness.

Franca and Anthony Reid, emerging from the dark light, regained their vision to find themselves in a dimly lit mine.

A feeble light seeped into the mine from a distance, offering limited visibility.

Damn it, did I enter that special mirror world again? Did the anomaly in the market district cause the Primordial Demoness's figurine to resonate with the ancient mirror, triggering a chain reaction? Franca cursed inwardly.

What is this called? When it rains, it pours!

As a Spectator, Anthony Reid's immediate response upon confirming his condition was to observe his surroundings.

He noted that the mine wasn't overly expansive, with no other tunnels branching off. There was only one path ahead, leading toward the faint light.

Franca, in that moment, realized that this place differed from her previous visits. It felt like she had reached the end of a particular dead end. Granted, she and Lumian had never thoroughly explored this special mirror world, making it normal for them to be unfamiliar with uncharted areas.

"Where are we?" Anthony Reid inquired of Franca, who clearly held some knowledge, when he saw a figure emerge from a crevice in the rock wall beside him.

The figure curled up and hugged him, trembling.

The figure, dressed in military-green attire and sporting a light-yellow crew cut, was Anthony Reid himself!

As if sensing Anthony's gaze, the figure turned his head, his dark brown eyes filled with resentment and malice.

Unfazed, Franca sighed with familiarity. "Your mirror version isn't too aggressive."

The trembling Anthony Reid vanished.

Franca averted her gaze and briefly elucidated their location and the means of departure.

Upon checking her belongings, she realized that only the ancient silver mirror was missing. The Primordial Demoness's bone figurine remained securely in her possession.

Franca concluded, "The problem now is that the path out is guarded by a powerful monster. I relied on Ciel's uniqueness to divert it last time. I don't know what to do now.

"Let's find another exit first. Yes, we have to hurry. Staying in this mirror world for too long will cause problems."

"Alright." Anthony Reid, lacking experience in this area, chose to heed Franca's suggestion.

The two of them paid no mind to the faces lurking in the darkness on either side. They swiftly moved forward and entered the only tunnel.

As they progressed, the illumination increased, and visibility improved.

After walking for a while, Franca and Anthony Reid halted at a suspected exit.

It resembled a cave, sealed by pure light.

After exchanging glances, Franca initiated the use of Magic Mirror Divination and other methods to confirm the authenticity and danger of the exit.

However, she received no response.

“Phew...” Franca exhaled and said to Anthony Reid, “Let's give it a try. If it's not right, we'll retreat. There's no other way.”

“Okay.” Anthony Reid nodded and placed his hand on the door of light alongside Franca.

Their figures passed through.

Lumian and Jenna sprinted between towering, collapsed grayish-white stone pillars until they reached the edge of the area covered in pale-black stone bricks.

However, what awaited them was still the pitch-black and blood-red city, with the giant figure shrouded in violent winds, lightning, heavy rain, smoke, and flames.

The only change was their perspective, now positioned on the side instead of facing the giant and the turbulent weather.

Confused, Jenna muttered, “We were running in the opposite direction. Why did we circle back?”

Lumian glanced back and explained, “As a Hunter, it's unlikely for me to get lost. The current situation suggests that there's a problem with the directions of this space. Perhaps, no matter where we run, we'll eventually return to this vicinity.”

Fortunately, the distance between them and the giant figure had barely increased, estimated to be two to three thousand meters.

Upon hearing Lumian's explanation, Jenna cast her gaze forward.

Beyond the pale-black stone bricks, in the wilderness connected to the majestic city, mirror fragments were scattered. They weren't large, but there were thousands of them.

Lumian surveyed the scene, contemplating an alternative plan.

A sudden realization struck him—a swift method to rapidly restore his spirituality.

In a space effective at weakening the influence of an evil god, he could execute a ritual, siphon the boon, and ascend to Sequence 6 Ascetic of the Inevitability pathway!

By destabilizing various states, the ritual would promptly restore and amplify Lumian's spirituality.

In essence, he could exchange the stability of his current state for the enhancement and replenishment of his spirituality.

Before initiating the ritual, Lumian needed to ascertain one crucial detail.

Would this place render Mr. Fool incapable of observation?

If that were the case, Termiboros might exploit the ritual to escape with the unintelligent seal itself. After all, the core of the ritual involved breaking the seal and drawing out the corresponding power of Inevitability!

Just as Lumian was about to instruct Jenna to keep a vigilant watch, a figure emerged from a shattered mirror in the wilderness.

Their pupils dilated, and instinctively, Lumian and Jenna sought cover behind the grayish-white stone pillar and the partially collapsed rubble.

The figure swiftly materialized, standing over 1.7 meters tall and clad in a black cloak.

Lumian stole a quick glance in that direction before retracting his gaze.

The figure seemed oddly familiar.

Before long, a familiar voice rang out from the side.

“You're not slow either.”

Th-this is Gardner Martin! He's involved too? Lumian didn't dare to peek out.

Then, he recalled the identity of the cloaked figure.

The Carbonari member he had encountered, the one followed by Franca!

Shouldn't the Carbonari be causing chaos on the surface? Lumian wondered.

At that moment, Jenna produced a mirror and gestured if Lumian needed assistance.

She could use mirror magic, utilizing mirror-like items to display their reflections onto a designated mirror.

Numerous mirror fragments lay nearby at the edge of the wilderness.

Lumian shook his head slowly and mouthed and gestured to Jenna, signaling her to “Wait a moment.”

He decided to act at a critical juncture. There was no need to take unnecessary risks at this point.

At that moment, a mellow, deep voice responded to Gardner Martin, “Where's the president of your Iron and Blood Cross Order?”

“Headed there, of course,” Gardner Martin replied with a smile. “It's the stage for important figures, and we have our own mission.”

He paused a beat before continuing, “Why are you still wearing the cloak? Is it someone new beneath?”

“You're still as cautious as ever,” the deep voice sighed.

Lumian and Jenna heard the rustling of clothes.

Lumian immediately signaled Jenna with his eyes.

Jenna took the hint and recited the incantation silently, her hand resting on the mirror.

The aqueous light on the mirror's surface flickered, revealing a figure.

The figure wore a cloak without the hood. His hair was thick and slightly curly, and his eyes were as sharp as an eagle's. His beard was neatly trimmed, and the bridge of his nose was slightly raised.

Wh— Lumian recognized the person.

Philip!

The deceased General Philip!

475 Conspirer

Recognizing the black-cloaked man as the late General Philip, a surge of realization struck Lumian's mind, cutting through the darkness.

He connected various dots and reevaluated details he had previously deemed a stretch.

Earlier, Lumian had queried Gardner Martin about his support for Hugues Artois, the spokesperson of numerous evil gods. Martin asserted that he was well aware of Artois's nature and the sinister forces backing him. Martin endorsed Artois for parliament with the belief that he would repeatedly bring calamity to the market district, compelling citizens and workers to rally behind the Iron and Blood Cross Order, preparing for a future government overthrow.

Until today, Lumian had accepted this reasoning on the surface. Even if Martin hadn't disclosed the complete truth, he had unveiled a fraction of it. However, now it appeared that 90% of Martin's statement was a fabrication!

Hugues Artois had been groomed by the late General Philip and thrust into politics. Gardner Martin had clearly established a cooperative relationship with General Philip long ago. His backing of Hugues Artois wasn't merely an opportunistic exploit; rather, he had been intricately involved in the plan from the outset!

Similarly, General Philip, having feigned his death and diverged from his intended fate, utilized the Dreamseekers charity organization to finance Painters and other evil god-bestowed. Simultaneously, he joined the Carbonari, fomenting riots and rebellions. Lumian found this not entirely surprising, but the connection with Gardner Martin and the Iron and Blood Cross Order added an intriguing layer to the details.

By the time the Hostel ritual officially commenced, Lumian had already grasped the essence of this conspiracy. Yet, some explanations seemed a bit forced. For instance, how had Meyer Maipú, having left the Bliss Society in frustration and returned to the market district to prove himself, managed to contact the Painters or the evil gods' bestowed planning the Hostel ritual?

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One plausible explanation was that Susanna—while still the high priestess of the Bliss Society—had established connections with other cults before her demise. As Maipú Meyer's lover and a crucial member of the Bliss Society, he should have had some contacts. However, upon closer scrutiny, it felt a tad contrived. Did Maipú Meyer truly maintain good relationships with believers of other evil gods? Would he naturally seek their aid when confronting challenges to prove himself?

Despite Maipú Meyer's knowledge of an Angel sealed within Lumian's body, he couldn't fathom exploiting this information beyond offering sacrifices. Unless the Mother Tree of Desire bestowed a revelation directly, why wouldn't the Recipient, potentially having received a divine revelation, flaunt it? Why face ostracism from other Bliss Society members?

Lumian found that all the details made more sense now that Gardner Martin and his connection to General Philip were revealed as part of the conspiracy.

Following the Tree of Shadow disaster, Gardner Martin tasked Lumian, Franca, and their subordinates in the market district with investigating the incident and Hugues Artois's assassination. However, he would undoubtedly gather information about the Bliss Society's actions, mistakes, and issues through General Philip.

In these circumstances, Maipú Meyer, seeking a return to the market district, naturally established a connection with General Philip, who had shown interest in such matters, and provided crucial information. Consequently, Gardner Martin had long been aware of what was sealed within Lumian.

The entire Hostel ritual might have been conceived by him, General Philip, and the Painters.

One of them harbored a longstanding desire for Fourth Epoch Trier and possessed extensive knowledge of secrets and mysticism. They understood the seal's operation and its past leaks. Salle de Bal Brise, owned by the Savoie Mob, and 13 Avenue du Marché served as a testing ground for the Iron and Blood Cross Order's new members.

The other had a deep connection to the domain of fate. Through the financial support of the Dreamseekers charity organization, he had united many cults, accumulating vast knowledge in various aspects.

The reason why Hugues Artois had numerous evil gods' bestowed protecting him wasn't merely due to his ability to interact with problematic individuals or the deeply ingrained "enlightened" perception he had on others. Instead, it was because his backer, General Philip, a veteran of large-scale wars, had long been dedicated to cooperating with heretics to achieve a crucial goal.

Lumian suspected that Gardner Martin hadn't officially tested him and allowed him to join the Iron and Blood Cross Order out of initial trust. Instead, he had finalized the Hostel plan and decided to keep Lumian under close watch, exerting various influences and manipulating him.

If the Tarot Club hadn't intervened and the ritual hadn't been hastily advanced, it was highly likely that Gardner Martin or a demigod of the Iron and Blood Cross Order would have been the one to ultimately confront Lumian and transport him into the painting world to activate the ritual!

As these thoughts raced through his mind, Lumian's understanding became clear.

Everything Gardner Martin had undertaken since the Tree of Shadow disaster was geared towards the Hostel ritual!

As expected of a former or current Conspirer... Lumian sighed sincerely.

Certainly, Gardner Martin might not have been aware of the residual aura of Blood Emperor Alista Tudor that Lumian carried, but he likely harbored suspicions. However, he couldn't fathom the core issue. After all, he was aware that an Angel was sealed within Lumian Lee's body, a walking anomaly bound to attract attention.

Regarding whether Gardner Martin knew about another organization backing him and Franca, Lumian believed that Martin had sensed something awry, but the precise details remained elusive. Even Maipú Meyer, not present at the Tree of Shadow ritual, was unaware of the events during that time.

Lumian signaled Jenna to cease the mirror magic to evade detection by Gardner Martin and General Philip. Meanwhile, he pondered.

Why does the Iron and Blood Cross Order covet Fourth Epoch Trier so intensely, going to such lengths in preparation? What is their ultimate goal?

If I hadn't arrived in Trier, stayed at Auberge du Coq Doré, and attracted the Fallen Tree Spirit Susanna Mattise, what would have been the original plan of the Iron and Blood Cross Order and the various cults? How did they intend to bypass the seal and unlock the door to Fourth Epoch Trier?

As the latter question surfaced, Lumian recalled something.

Gardner Martin had once directed “Rat” Christo's smuggling caravan to transport an item into Trier through an underground tunnel. This item activated the special mirror world hidden underground. Later, Franca sensed that item while tracking the black-cloaked Carbonari member, General Philip, who had faked his death...

Now, General Philip had also entered this place, suspected to be Fourth Epoch Trier!

They had made extensive preparations, including orchestrating a massive riot. Their goal was to use that item and its connection to the mirror fragments in the wilderness to infiltrate this place through the seal leak that once appeared beneath Salle de Bal Brise. Later, they had a better choice—me...

Dammit! Gardner Martin's words about why he supported Hugues Artois's election as a member of parliament were mostly true! He did need such a person to incite public anger in the market district, not to overthrow the government, but to satisfy the ritual!

Heh heh, pushing villains into power while posing as the leader of the resistance. He's both the antagonist and the protagonist. He's truly extracting the value from all the people in the market district dry... Lumian reacquainted himself with the Sequence name “Conspirer” through Gardner Martin.

At that moment, Jenna grasped Lumian's meaning and discontinued the mirror magic.

Gardner Martin smiled and said, “It's indeed you, Philip. Let's enter Fourth Epoch Trier.”

Philip... Jenna, who had only a vague impression of General Philip's photo from the shadows, now realized that the cloaked man Franca had been trailing was General Philip, the one who had faked his death.

Philip's deep, mellow voice resounded.

“Aren't you going to find Lumian Lee? If he becomes your loyal subordinate and joins your team, you can immediately complete the ritual, consume the potion, and advance to a demigod.”

Gardner Martin sighed and responded, “I find it a pity too. An Angel is sealed within him, and he alone is a team. I've given him many chances, but he never understood what loyalty meant. Now, I have an alternative. Let him perish naturally in Fourth Epoch Trier.”

An Angel sealed within him? Jenna's eyes widened as she looked at Lumian.

Lumian smirked and scoffed at Gardner Martin's words.

I'd be a fool to believe you!

The person scheming to use me from the start talking about loyalty and pity?

Just as Gardner Martin and General Philip turned around to walk toward the magnificent city, two figures emerged from a mirror fragment in the nearby wilderness.

It was Franca, dressed in a blouse, beige white breeches, a small dark brown coat, and black leather boots, along with Anthony Reid, clad in military green.

Franca scanned the surroundings and spotted Gardner Martin, encased in full-body silver armor with his visor raised.

Anthony Reid's gaze locked onto General Philip's face, featuring a prominent bulge on his nose.

The eight eyes met, and the air momentarily froze.

Count Poufer's figure materialized at the edge of the wilderness, in front of the pale-black stone bricks.

Gazing at the giant shrouded in storms, lightning, flames, and smoke, standing dozens of meters tall, he sprinted over with the fanatical expression of a sacrificial lamb.

It was Vermonda Sauron, who had lost control and gone underground.

The former Archangel, the Conqueror, who was very close to a deity's throne!

476 Calamity Giant

Count Poufer charged through the tempest, battling fierce winds, drenching rain, and bolts of lightning. Meanwhile, the Pixie in the distinctive blue beret—the overseer of the Hostel, positioned near the shroud of darkness around Salle de Bal Brise—took advantage of the moment and slipped through the enigmatic iron-colored door.

Fully aware of the peril awaiting her inside, she felt compelled by the will of a deity. Even the prospect of death didn't daunt her. It would only earn her the deity's favor and a return to the eternal realm of fantasy.

Regrettably, upon her arrival, she found herself suspended in the midst of the raging storm, amidst smoke and flames.

The colossal figure was clearly reflected in her eyes.

It resembled a horrifying charred giant, its once-fleshy exterior now absent. The charred metal skeleton, engulfed in blazing purple flames, formed what seemed like an intact body, but cracks riddled its structure. Continuously emanating illusory symbols—lightning, hail, fog—the majestic

purple flames and the iron-black metal skeleton held inscrutable knowledge, representing countless real phenomena.

Drip, drip. Blood-hued, magmlike pus oozed from the cracks, transforming into black purple flames and various weather phenomena midair.

Witnessing this, the Pixie in the blue beret combusted from within.

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Instinctive fear flashed in her eyes as she desperately reached into the void, entering an intangible state.

Yet, her physical form did not change for the better.

With a swift whoosh, every cell in the Pixie's being ignited, including the translucent dragonfly-like wings on her back.

After enduring agonizing contortions, she metamorphosed into a Pixie crafted from crimson flames. Lifeless eyes stared out from her now-empty gaze.

Within the fiery dragonfly wings, the altered Pixie danced around the giant's figure, as if escorting him.

Rumble!

Count Poufer was struck by bolts of lightning, and nearby, purple flames erupted.

Drenched in the relentless rain, enduring hailstones that battered him until he bled, he persevered through the thick smoke.

Perhaps due to the Sauron family's bloodline coursing through him, he remained unaffected by the surrounding chaos.

As the smoke cleared and the storm abated, Poufer eagerly gazed at the towering giant, dozens of meters tall.

Within the iron-black skull and amidst the purple flames, a distorted face of pain intermittently flickered.

The face bore some resemblance to Poufer, except its eyes, weathered and blood-black, were deathly still and vacant.

Upon spotting the giant, Count Poufer also ignited in flames.

Excruciating pain wracked him, yet his gaze remained fixed on the giant's face.

Amidst the encircling purple flames, faces filled with venom, hatred, and madness, as if cursing all living beings, alternated. Men and women, bearing a resemblance to both the giant and Count Poufer, emerged on the surface of withered hearts floating in the flames.

Poufer glimpsed the family's forebears from the oil paintings. Despite the difficulty, his mouth curled up, his face contorted by the flames.

In the turmoil, he transformed into a flaming pixie as well. However, instead of circling the rampaging giant, he was drawn by his family's bloodline into the perilous purple flames on the iron-black head, into Vermonda's face that flickered in and out.

In an instant, the two fused.

Vermonda's mouth twitched, a hint of liveliness in his eyes.

He opened his mouth and let out a scream filled with destructive desire and madness.

With this scream, the ground, scorched by the purple flames, shook dramatically, and earth puppets crawled out.

These puppets—equally tall at three to four meters tall, charred with an iron hue—were speckled with dark-red blood.

Transforming as they squirmed, the earth puppets became soldiers, guarding the area with a semblance of life.

Almost simultaneously, a fiery meteor descended from the heavens.

Streaking across the sky, it plummeted towards the edge of the fog.

Bang!

A figure emerged amidst the meteorite-like crash and ensuing tremors, standing upright.

It was Snarner Einhorn, adorned in iron-black, blood-stained armor.

The 1.8-meter-tall Angel, with long dark-red hair and flamboyant earrings, didn't hesitate. His body expanded, unveiling a Mythical Creature form reminiscent of Vermonda Sauron's current state. It was a giant, a representation of calamity, crafted from flames and various symbolic elements.

Under the silent blaze of invisible flames in the sky, across the wilderness, Pualis de Roquefort, draped in an elegant black dress and a veiled hat, fixed her gaze on the majestic city not far away.

She didn't get her husband, butler, and children to enter the Hostel. Instead, she arranged for them to temporarily depart Trier and reside in a suburban town beyond the city wall.

After a brief survey, Madame Pualis turned her attention to the man merely 20 to 30 meters away.

Despite appearing in his fifties, his dense blond hair showed only slight traces of gray, and his lake-blue eyes were clear.

Neatly encircling his mouth, the beard framed his unusually deep facial features. It was evident he had been a handsome man in his youth.

He was the Circle Inhabitant of the Sinners, Voisin Sanson!

Roche Louis Sanson's father.

Madame Pualis shifted her gaze back to the seemingly boundless city, sensing an inexplicable calling from somewhere. It was gradually contracting and expanding, akin to the embrace of a long-forgotten mother.

She took a step forward.

Franca hadn't anticipated encountering Gardner Martin immediately upon exiting the mirror world.

As an undercover agent for both the Tarot Club and the Demoness Sect, she felt a twinge of guilt instinctively. The urge to casually greet him with a “what a coincidence” surfaced subconsciously. However, she was no longer the naive rookie from her initial transmigration. Her worldly and

combat experiences ranked among the elite in the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society. Swiftly reacting, she yelled at Anthony Reid, “Duck,” and, turning invisible, lunged to the side.

Almost simultaneously, dozens, perhaps hundreds, of blazing white fireballs materialized around Gardner Martin. His eyes were profound, body clad in silver armor, as the fireballs howled and erupted at the previous location of Franca and Anthony Reid.

Anthony, his gaze fixed on General Philip's black-cloaked figure, heard Franca's warning, “duck,” echoing in his ears.

Experienced, though unsure of what to expect, he followed his teammate's advice. Adjusting his body mid-air, he kicked down with both feet, hurtling toward General Philip without picking a side.

Amidst the explosive chaos, General Philip was astonished to find a slightly greasy middle-aged man in military-green camouflage clothing glaring at him with hatred, launching towards him.

Does he hold a grudge against me? Philip wondered, his eyes darkening as focus slipped away.

He “saw” a myriad of intertwined fates and discerned the threads' approximate origins.

So, you're a survivor of the sacrificial company... Lucky enough to escape back then, and now you dare return for revenge? General Philip sneered with disdain.

As a Sequence 5 Reaper of the Hunter pathway, he made the decision to put his faith in the great Goddess of Fate and receive the corresponding boon. This choice stemmed from his firsthand recognition of the limitations and issues within his original pathway in the mysticism domain, along with the impending apocalypse he couldn't avoid.

His aim was clear—to swiftly ascend to demigod status, securing the protection of a mighty existence to endure the impending apocalypse. Ordinary channels simply couldn't provide him with what he needed.

Despite the initial weaknesses and constraints of the Goddess of Fate's pathway, he accepted it without hesitation.

It was worth noting that the boon corresponding to Sequence 9, Dreamless, merely granted him a dreamless state and the ability to sense the flow of fate. Consequently, he forfeited the potential of gaining revelations through his spirituality via dreams.

Sequence 8 Musicians were a slight improvement. In certain worlds, Musicians often blinded themselves to enhance their focus on the voice of fate before playing it like a symphony. However, this method demanded extensive preparation and sufficient time to orchestrate the tune in order to influence a target's fate.

As for Sequence 7 Fate Pryers, they shared essential similarities with Seers. However, unlike Seers, they didn't require a medium to directly perceive or hear the revelations of fate.

By Sequence 6, the bestowed of the Goddess of Fate finally acquired relatively potent abilities. Those who glimpsed fate could convey it and directly impact a target, but each usage came with a significant drawback—a self-imposed silence lasting for an extended period.

This Sequence was known as Mute.

Only after faking his death and breaking free from his original fate did the Sequence 5 Deceased no longer bear the previous restrictions. They could now function relatively normally.

As a dual Sequence 5, General Philip unraveled the threads of fate, discerning the origin of Anthony Reid's animosity. He chuckled, releasing a voice that seemed confined for an eternity.

“Fate can't be avoided. You'll ultimately end up as my sacrifice.”

Amidst these words and the explosive tumult, Anthony Reid's mind replayed the harrowing scene of the camp attack, causing him to break out into a tremble.

Thud! He landed on the ground and clutched his head in fear.

Not far away, concealed behind a half-collapsed grayish-white stone pillar, Lumian and Jenna both heard Franca's urgent cry to “duck.”

Franca has entered too? How did she do it? Lumian wondered, a sense of alarm coursing through him.

477 Frenzy

Lumian felt a brief moment of surprise before taking a shot in the dark.

Considering that General Philip likely used a special item to access the underground mirror world, Lumian figured Franca, equipped with the ancient silver mirror boasting the same powers, should have a shot at it too.

The why and what of it didn't matter now. Those questions could wait until after dealing with Gardner Martin and General Philip or finding a way to slip past them. There might be a chance to escape this place.

At the fringes of the wilderness, Gardner Martin's attempts to flush out Franca from her invisibility failed, even after a series of explosions.

His former lover had vanished to some unknown spot.

Being a Demoness of Pleasure, Franca relied on her Assassin abilities, leaving no footprints, masking her scent and spiritual aura. It made her a formidable challenge to track, countering a Hunter's knack for gathering environmental intel.

Gardner Martin, donned in silver-white full-body armor, kept on the move. Familiar with the Demoness pathway's traits and abilities, he knew that, having ascended to Pleasure, Franca didn't need blood, hair, or nails for her curses. Reflecting him into mirrors and enveloping him in black flames would do the trick. He couldn't stand still for more than three seconds, to prevent himself from being reflected in the mirror.

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As he swiftly maneuvered, Gardner Martin glanced at Philip and Anthony, the information broker. He noticed the latter lying on the ground, clutching his head and trembling. Anthony sporadically used Placate on himself, resigning from resistance. Philip's black cloak expanded slightly, and crimson, nearly white flaming ravens materialized beside him, as if preparing for a grand sacrifice.

Observing the scene, Gardner Martin paid no heed to the ongoing battle. He raised his right hand and lowered his visor.

A broadsword, aglow with condensed light, materialized in Gardner Martin's grip, casting a radiant and holy Sunrise Gleam over a vast expanse. Its brilliance dispelled illusions, compelling shadows to retreat and revealing Franca's ponytailed form more than ten meters behind him.

This was the power of a Sequence 6 Dawn Paladin of the Warrior pathway.

The power emanated from Gardner Martin's silver armor, a numbered Sealed Artifact bestowed by the authorities. He had acquired it in an operation a few years back, slaying two Purifiers of the Eternal Blazing Sun Church and claiming the armor from their fallen bodies.

“Number: 247.

“Name: Pride Armor.

“Danger Grade: 2. Dangerous. Use with care and moderation. It can only be applied for operations that require more than three people, or by deacons and diocesan bishops.

“Security classification: Official Purifiers and above.

“Sealing Method: Place it in a dark chamber and select physically strong humans to guard them with a rotation every three hours.

“Description: Late into the war between the Loen Kingdom and the Feysac Empire, a plethora of meteors descended from the sky, causing widespread catastrophes.

“This armor was discovered in a ruined building in the suburbs of Port LeSeur. The humans inside had met a brutal end.

“Through experimentation, it bestows upon the wearer the might of a giant. It blankets an area of 48 meters in Sunrise Gleam. These rays dispel illusions, erase shadows, and nullify invisibility effects. They also affect Wraiths and Shadows, diminishing their peculiarities and even weakening evil spirits.

“It possesses decent defensive capabilities and can be damaged but regenerates slowly. Depending on the extent of the damage, recovery can range from half an hour to a day. For detailed data, refer to Appendix 2.

“It also grants the wearer the ability to manifest a hefty, robust, yet sharp two-handed broadsword. Each strike carries a purifying effect, and dismantling the radiant broadsword results in a formidable Hurricane of Light. This phenomenon can obliterate the human body, vanquish Wraiths, and harm evil spirits.

“The wearer's combat skills see a significant boost, accompanied by heightened arrogance. They hold disdain for those standing behind them and targets concealed in the darkness or invisible.

“It indiscriminately eliminates weak humans within a 50-meter radius. Should the wearer weaken, they too become a target.

“The criteria for determining one's physique are inconsistent, sometimes very high, sometimes low. Initial findings suggest a correlation with the armor's condition and the surrounding environment. Most humans with regular exercise or those who rely on potions to enhance their physique pass the assessment without incident. For exceptions, it was later discovered they suffered from undetected serious illnesses or indulged excessively in the past two days.

“No matter who you are, caution is warranted when positioned behind this armor, though attacks don't always occur.

“Similarly, the wearer is vulnerable to its attacks when using other mystical items. Experimental results show heightened reactions when facing items from the Evernight pathway and the Earth pathway.

“The wearer of the armor eventually experiences varying degrees of betrayal, irrespective of whether they still wear the item.

“At night, this armor is very quiet, exhibiting minimal aggressiveness. However, under a moonlit sky, its demeanor becomes notably irritable, reaching maximal offensiveness.

“The highest level of experimental subjects is Sequence 5...

“Appendix 1: The wearer of the armor grows taller to varying degrees. Multiple wearings do not stack.

“Appendix 2...”

Under the influence of the Sealed Artifact, 2—247, Franca materialized.

Gardner Martin, wearing a visor, hesitated briefly before slashing with the radiant broadsword in his hand.

Simultaneously, a multitude of crimson, nearly white Fire Ravens condensed around him.

Surrounded by crimson Fire Ravens, General Philip locked eyes with the prone Anthony Reid. With a slight lift of his chin, he declared, “Accept your fate.”

Anthony sensed the imminent danger but found himself powerless to resist. Trembling, memories of that haunting night flooded his mind, making it difficult to put up any resistance.

However, as he recalled General Philip's words about becoming a sacrifice, the tragic fate of his comrades, and the years of investigation, anger ignited within Anthony.

It's him!

He's the one responsible for harming my comrades, those rough but endearing individuals, and my companions who once had my back!

Suddenly, Lumian's earlier question echoed in Anthony's thoughts.

“Up to this day, do you still wrestle with the fear from that night, the sounds of sudden gunshots? Do you truly possess the courage and determination to press on?”

Anthony remembered his response:

“Perhaps I perished in that attack. What remains is an avenging spirit, relentless in its pursuit of truth and retribution.

“I can be destroyed, but I can't give up...”

That's right. I should have died long ago. My sole purpose in life is revenge. And today, my true enemy stands before me!

Why should I be afraid? I'm not even afraid of death. Why fear gunshots, explosions, or being a sacrifice?

Wouldn't the worst outcome be death and being sacrificed to an evil god? I was already mentally prepared!

This time, I chose to stay in Trier, not to flee from potential catastrophe but to make amends for my regrets.

Now, the opportunity has presented itself!

The flames of revenge roared within Anthony Reid's heart. He lifted his gaze to meet General Philip's slightly reddened, hatred-filled dark-brown eyes—once his superior's superior's superior.

Go to hell! Anthony cursed inwardly as he unleashed a Psychiatrist's Frenzy.

This ability could manipulate the emotions or destabilize the mental state of the target, pushing them into a frenzied state and inflicting severe mental damage.

In some cases, it could even lead the target to lose control.

Just as General Philip prepared to unleash a swarm of Fire Ravens, a surge of Danger Premonition hit him. Before he could react, the intended sacrifice raised his head, locking eyes with him, bloodshot dark-brown eyes burning with intensity.

With a buzzing sound, Philip's head snapped back, his thoughts thrown into disarray.

Ever since embracing the Goddess of Fate, originally being a Sequence 5, he, armed with the corresponding knowledge, could keenly sense shifts in his personality and thoughts. His body had undergone gradual changes as the power of the boons increased.

For Philip, mentally prepared as he was, this was acceptable. One concern nagged at him—his mental state had become unpredictable. Sometimes rational, sometimes fanatical, sometimes cold, and sometimes calm. His behavior was capricious.

It mirrored those great existences.

General Philip's mind felt like a storm had been unleashed within it. His facial skin swelled, and his pale-white hair crinkled, resembling someone submerged in water for days.

Invisible threads materialized from each pore, tinged with a faint mercurial hue, giving Philip's flesh the appearance of being ablaze with flames.

General Philip briefly succumbed to Frenzy.

At that moment, a figure materialized behind him.

It was Lumian, dressed in a partially tucked white shirt, brown pants, and oil painting-like black leather shoes.

Recognizing Franca's voice and sensing the onset of the battle, Lumian didn't immediately rush out to provide assistance. Instead, he opted to wait for the right opportunity.

Aware that his current spirituality dictated a single optimal choice, Lumian needed to eliminate either Gardner Martin or General Philip swiftly. Franca, Jenna, and Anthony could then join forces to handle the remaining adversary.

Choosing a target was no easy decision for Lumian.

Gardner Martin, corrupted by 13 Avenue du Marché and the Commanding Officer of the Iron and Blood Cross Order, possessed numerous peculiarities. Lumian couldn't guarantee that a combination of punches would conclusively finish him. General Philip, with his boon involving fate, might sense danger ahead of time, making Lumian's surprise attack unlikely to succeed.

Both options carried substantial risks, forcing Lumian to exercise restraint and wait patiently.

As long as Franca and Anthony remained alive for the time being, Lumian would hold back.

Patience was a fundamental quality of a Hunter, equally crucial for a Conspirer.

However, Lumian's waiting wasn't blind. Relying on Jenna's mirror magic and the shattered mirrors in the wilderness, he observed the situation closely. Prepared to intervene and save Anthony, Lumian found the opportune moment when Anthony turned the tables on Philip with a Frenzy.

This was an opportunity!

Lumian gazed at General Philip, struggling in his frenzied state, and coldly exclaimed, "Hmph!"

Two beams of white light shot out and struck Philip.

The Deceased's eyes lost focus suddenly, and his body swayed, on the brink of collapse.

Lumian had already raised his right hand, bent his pinky and ring finger, and aimed at the back of General Philip's head, mimicking a revolver.

Bang! With an added sound effect in his mind and a slight lean backward, a crimson fireball rapidly compressed and shot out from the tips of his index and middle fingers, hurtling towards the target like a bullet.

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Bang!

The crimson fireball, unleashed from Lumian's fingertips, honed in on its target, striking General Philip's head with deadly precision. The explosion that followed resembled a cannonball's impact.

Philip's body disintegrated starting from the point of impact, as if a hammer had shattered a mirror reflecting his form.

Amidst the chaos concealed by the explosion, shards of glass scattered across the wilderness, joining the reflections of those already present.

Lumian's eyes widened as he observed the unexpected turn of events.

Does the Deceased pathway also possess Mirror Substitution?

Or does General Philip wield a mystical item from the Demoness pathway?

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Such thoughts raced through Lumian's mind as he processed the scene. Philip's black-cloaked figure swiftly reappeared more than ten meters away. His eyes, once frenzied, now regained clarity.

Simultaneously, Jenna, disguised as a female mercenary, materialized from invisibility behind General Philip. She aimed her revolver at the Deceased, who had narrowly escaped the fatal attack and negative state.

To be honest, Jenna found herself in a perplexing and shocking situation.

The revelation that General Philip possessed Mirror Substitution didn't catch her off guard. However, she hadn't processed the implications before realizing he had “chosen” to position himself right before her, as if anticipating her to backstab him.

Originally, Jenna had devised a plan to exploit Lumian's clash with General Philip. Her intention was to utilize Invisibility, slip away from her hiding spot, and reach the wilderness's edge. Her goal: to assist Franca, cast a curse if Lumian's strike fell short, or create a frosty hindrance on the ground. Unexpectedly, General Philip had “escaped” to a location directly in front of her.

Such a golden opportunity couldn't be ignored!

Confused by the unfolding events, Jenna instinctively raised her right hand, aiming her revolver at the back of General Philip's head.

Though unsure of the reasons behind this bizarre turn of events, she suspected it was connected to the lucky gold coin she had received from Will.

Bang!

Jenna squeezed the trigger, and a yellow bullet, wreathed in black flames, shot out from the muzzle, hurtling toward General Philip's skull.

Meanwhile, Franca emerged from the radiant Sunrise Gleam, witnessing Anthony Reid overcoming his fear to employ his abilities on General Philip. Lumian had for some reason arrived in the vicinity, appearing mysteriously behind Philip.

Without time to dwell on her surprise, Franca swiftly raised her brass classic revolver and fired an iron-black bullet at Gardner Martin, who wielded his broadsword of light.

Her strategy was clear—unleash her full strength to stall Gardner Martin and deny him the opportunity to save General Philip!

Franca's decision to use invisibility wasn't about tapping into Assassin tactics to backstab her ex-lover. Drawing on her battle experience, she instinctively chose invisibility for a different purpose—to escape Gardner Martin and General Philip's sight, gaining a brief moment of safety.

During this fleeting period, Franca not only moved with agility but also retrieved the coin bag filled with coins. Wearing the iron-black Ring of Punishment on her left thumb and Beatrice's Necklace around her neck, she completed her ensemble.

Finally, she withdrew the Cannon Gun from her underarm holster, clasping it firmly in her palm.

In her invisible state, Franca armed herself to the teeth, entering her strongest state before the inevitable reveal.

Bang!

As the iron-black bullet sped toward Gardner Martin, Franca's diamond necklace on her chest emitted a faint glow.

Simultaneously, Franca's eyes welled up, and her red lips parted slightly, amplifying the allure of a Demoness of Pleasure.

Gardner Martin's body suddenly heated up, feeling his blood rush to his nether regions.

Scenes of his past entanglement with Franca flooded his mind, captivated by the Demoness's uncanny demeanor amidst iron and blood.

His eyes reddened, breathing grew labored, and movements visibly slowed.

Lust!

From Beatrice's Necklace and the lust of the Mother Tree of Desire pathway, coupled with the charm of a Demoness of Pleasure, it had a synergistic effect greater than the sum of its parts.

Moreover, Gardner Martin wasn't a stranger to such experiences. He had always agreed with the words in Emperor Roselle's Secret Chronicles: "The taste of a Demoness ain't bad." In this situation, how could he control himself after tasting a Demoness?

Clang! The iron-black bullet struck Gardner Martin's chest, causing cracks in his silver armor.

Franca, not surprised that the attack hadn't worked, realized in her haste, she hadn't activated the Heavy Strike effect of the Cannon Gun.

The brass revolver, a mystical item purchased from the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society, wasn't particularly potent or mystical; it had two simple abilities. The first, a normal shot, equivalent to a rifle, and the second, a Heavy Strike, akin to a small cannonball or a sniper rifle. Franca always carried it to compensate for a Demoness's lack of offensive capabilities when she couldn't use a curse. The Cannon Gun's negative effects were minimal—if all six rounds were not fired in a day or maintained every other week, rare situations like chamber explosions or misfires could occur.

Observing Gardner Martin's infatuated gaze behind the visor, Franca hesitated before using her right thumb to pull back the Cannon Gun's hammer, signaling the activation of the Heavy Strike effect.

Bang!

As Franca moved, she pulled the trigger at Gardner Martin, who lunged at her as if seeking a mate.

The iron-black bullet collided with him, accompanied by blazing flames.

Almost simultaneously, Franca sensed an anomaly in the Primordial Demoness figurine casually stuffed into her pocket.

Not only did it turn cold again, like ice, but it also trembled slightly.

Dammit! Why is it you again? Are you done!?! Franca, feeling both angry and cautious, pulled the trigger and threw the palm-sized bone figurine far away.

Simultaneously, on the other side, Jenna's bullet, fired from an ordinary revolver, pierced the back of General Philip's head with black flames. Unsurprisingly, the Deceased shattered like a mirror, his figure outlined at the edge of the Sunrise Gleam created by Gardner Martin.

At that moment, as Franca hurled the Primordial Demoness's bone figurine, General Philip's body froze.

Black flames erupted, silently igniting his Spirit Body. Cold frost swiftly condensed, enveloping him.

Blood seeped from his eyes, nose, mouth, and ears, emitting a series of cracking sounds.

The mirror he carried appeared to have shattered.

He was clearly in a daze, as if he had been cursed.

Without hesitation, Lumian employed Spirit World Traversal once more, emerging from behind General Philip.

Meanwhile, Anthony Reid had stood up, his expression no longer filled with fear but focused hatred.

As Philip was not far from him, on the edge of the clear Sunrise Gleam, he ran towards the general—his mortal enemy.

Philip's figure reflected in his eyes, and he couldn't help but smile.

His pupils turned vertical, tinged with a faint golden hue.

This time, he refrained from employing Frenzy, fearing it might cause General Philip to lose control and transform, giving Gardner Martin an opportunity to kill his team.

He chose Awe, also known as Dragon Might!

General Philip trembled.

Under normal circumstances, he wouldn't have succumbed to such a severe Awe. At most, he would have experienced temporary fear. However, he was in a dire state, influenced by an unknown force, betrayed by an item on him. Consequently, his entire being fell into a blank state.

Observing this, Lumian refrained from using the Spell of Harrumph. His right hand took the shape of a revolver again, aimed at the back of General Philip's head, and fired a crimson fireball that was nearly white from his fingertips.

Philip was jolted awake by a tangible premonition of danger, only to witness his impending demise.

A wave of indignation washed over him.

Despite being stronger, possessing lethal strikes, and an array of mystical abilities, he suffered a relentless beating without a chance to retaliate. He didn't even have an opportunity to fight back before Death knocked on his door.

In his eyes, countless fates interwove into a net, constantly changing, as if mocking him.

This made him feel like a clown.

Bang!

General Philip's head exploded from Lumian's crimson, nearly white fireball. Numerous skull fragments splattered with charred marks, red blood, and milky-white brain matter.

The Deceased's lifeless body thudded to the ground, and an item rolled out of the hidden pocket of the black cloak.

It was a pitch-black figurine, palm-sized and resembling a beautiful woman. Long snake-like hair cascaded to its feet, and it had eyes of various forms at the top.

Wh— Lumian's gaze instinctively shifted to the Primordial Demoness figurine that Franca had thrown out.

Similar to the one on General Philip, one was pure white, while the other was pitch-black.

Suddenly, Lumian grasped why General Philip had Mirror Substitution and why he had appeared directly in front of Jenna, who was invisible.

With the special Primordial Demoness figurine, he naturally converged with Demonesses!

Subsequently, Franca's official Primordial Demoness figurine resonated with the pitch-black one, causing an abnormality that led to General Philip being “cursed” by the item at a critical moment.

The pitch-black Primordial Demoness figurine was likely the item Gardner Martin had smuggled into Trier through “Rat” Christo's smuggling caravan!

Chapter 479 Matching Items

Bang!

The jet-black bullet, ablaze with fiery fury, slammed into Gardner Martin, who was gripped by desire, dead center in his gleaming silver armor once again.

It hit him like a battering ram, sending shockwaves through his frame.

A web of fractures sprawled out from the impact zone, causing Gardner Martin's advance to stagger, forcing him to lean backward.

This abrupt jolt snapped him out of his reverie. He witnessed General Philip, wreathed in black flames and encased in frost, while Lumian materialized behind the Deceased. Lumian's right hand acted as a revolver, launching a crimson fireball straight at the back of Philip's head.

Behind Gardner Martin's mask, his pupils dilated, and a shiver raced down his spine, as if an icy cascade had been dumped over him.

This abrupt awakening effectively quelled his desires. Without hesitation, he dropped to one knee and drove the hefty broadsword into the wilderness.

The broadsword shattered, breaking into myriad fragments of light that swept toward Franca, Lumian, and the others, including the lifeless form of General Philip.

Amidst a resounding crack, Franca, constantly shifting positions, remained enveloped by the Hurricane of Light, her body fracturing like a shattered mirror.

Lumian and Jenna met the same fate. Only Anthony Reid, lacking Mirror Substitution, instinctively lunged to the ground, curling up to shield his vital parts.

The luminous tempest rapidly dissipated before Lumian and his companions outlined themselves on the outskirts of the wilderness, facing the pale-black stone bricks.

They witnessed a brilliant white flaming spear hurtling towards the distant majestic city, covering more than a hundred meters in the blink of an eye.

As soon as the fiery-spear materialized upon impact with the ground, Gardner Martin, draped in silver armor, rose again, directing his focus towards the city veiled in a thin fog.

After several consecutive attempts, Gardner Martin distanced himself from Franca and the others, sprinting towards the dilapidated structures at the city's periphery.

Lumian chose not to pursue him. Instead, he sprinted to the edge of the Sunrise Gleam to check on Anthony Reid.

The Psychiatrist's body bore a multitude of bloody wounds, with the most severe on the left side of his back, revealing a glimpse of his beating heart.

Lying on his side, curled up and bloodied, Anthony Reid forced a smile upon seeing Lumian.

There was no fear of death in that smile—only relief, relaxation, and satisfaction.

The taste of revenge was indeed sweet.

Observing Anthony Reid's lips moving as if he intended to entrust something, Lumian scoffed and remarked, "Do you wish to utter your final words? Do you want us to dispatch your belongings to your home on the West Midseashire Coast?"

As he spoke, Lumian retrieved a silver earring, securing it to his left earlobe.

Squatting down, he pressed his left hand against the gaping wound on Anthony's back.

Abruptly, his palm slid upward, and the gruesome wound shifted to Anthony's shoulder.

In the blink of an eye, the most critical injury on Anthony's body vanished, leaving him as good as new. However, the initially minor wounds on his shoulder deepened, revealing white bones and causing blood to seep out.

This was Lie's Damage Transfer, capable of addressing one wound at a time.

Anthony was taken aback, feeling as if life had been restored to him.

Though the pain persisted, and his body weakened, at least the specter of imminent death had dissipated.

Then, Jenna approached, placing him in a supine position.

With a swift pfft, Jenna thrust an obsidian arrow into Anthony's chest.

The Arrow of the Bloodthirsty promptly absorbed the blood, turning Anthony's pupils red. The invisible flames in the sky seemed a bit blinding, and the scent of blood in the air proved enticing.

Simultaneously, the smaller wounds on his body swiftly healed, and the more severe ones showed significant improvement. In a matter of minutes, they should close up on their own, ceasing to impede his movements.

Anthony Reid, teetering on the edge of death, stood up, bewildered, examining his body with disbelief.

I've nearly recovered? I'm alright just like that? As a Spectator, his emotions visibly fluctuated.

“Not a bad combination,” Franca praised. “As long as you don't perish on the spot and refrain from losing control and transforming into a monster, there's still a chance to save you. At most, you'll become weakened.”

Lie's Damage Transfer, coupled with the formidable self-healing abilities bestowed by the Arrow of the Bloodthirsty, produced such a remarkable effect.

Franca turned her gaze to Lumian, questioning, “I thought you'd intercept Gardner Martin.”

In that critical moment, the others couldn't match Gardner Martin's speed as he fled. Only Lumian, capable of Spirit World Traversal, had the potential to catch up and effectively hinder him.

“Do you think I didn't want to?” Lumian retorted, a note of mockery in his tone.

However, he lacked the ability!

Had he not been affected by Voisin Sanson's Circle Inhabitant during his first “teleportation” today, returning him to his original spot without expending his spirituality, Lumian wouldn't have maintained a stable state. He wouldn't even have been able to use Lie for Damage Transfer. He would have had to rely on Franca or Jenna. How could he possibly have caught up to Gardner Martin?

Franca instantly grasped Lumian's meaning—he had engaged in battles before and after entering this place, and his spirituality was on the verge of depletion.

“Alright.” Franca shifted her attention to the two Primordial Demoness figurines, one black and one white, lying undisturbed on the ground, untouched by the Hurricane of Light. Frowning, she inquired, “Where should I toss these two?”

Them constantly causing abnormalities seemed like a scam!

“Take them with you.” Lumian considered for a moment before smiling. “If it weren't for them, how could we have dispatched General Philip so effortlessly? We might need them to escape in the future. Yes, we can't entrust both to one person. You take one, and Jenna will take the other.”

After a brief pause, Franca responded, “I'll still take the white one.”

As a member of the Demoness Sect, holding the orthodox Primordial Demoness figurine was only natural.

Observing Jenna pick up the pitch-black Primordial Demoness figurine, Franca muttered in confusion, "Why is there such a figurine? According to the Purifiers' dossier and information from other secret organizations, members of the Demoness Sect only carry bone figurines. There's nothing that's so black."

While Franca spoke, she scrutinized the charred Primordial Demoness bone figurine, comparing it with her own.

Soon, she discerned differences in the details.

Aside from the stark white and pitch-black hues, the eyes at the tips of the Primordial Demoness's snake-like hair faced different directions. If one looked left, the other would undoubtedly look right.

"Like a mirror image, mirror... Is this the Primordial Demoness in the mirror?" Franca ventured a guess, amalgamating the abilities and traits of the Demoness pathway with her experience in the peculiar mirror world. "This shouldn't be possible under normal circumstances. It wouldn't be easy for the Iron and Blood Cross Order to find such a figurine..."

She now comprehended the reason behind their encounters with Gardner Martin and General Philip. This was a manifestation of the Law of Beyonder Characteristics Convergence. Except for Anthony, an unwitting Psychiatrist brought in by his companion, everyone present was either a Hunter or a Demoness.

Furthermore, Franca and Anthony had entered through the same method as General Philip. They would inevitably emerge at the edge of this wilderness, teeming with mirror fragments.

Primordial Demoness in the mirror... Lumian found the description ominous.

Without delay, he addressed Franca and the others, "Search General Philip's corpse and help me guard the surroundings. I'll set up a ritual to restore my spirituality."

Jenna expressed surprise. "There's a ritual that can restore spirituality?"

Her gaze naturally swept over General Philip's corpse, realizing it had been split into five or six pieces, each a gruesome mess.

The Beyonder characteristics had yet to emerge at that moment. The boon from the evil god couldn't return to its source, slowly sinking back into the lifeless form.

Lumian entered a dimly lit area with grayish-white stone pillars, found cover, and swiftly set up the altar. Franca could surmise who he was praying to, so she joined him to guard against any unforeseen incidents.

Jenna contemplated for a few seconds before approaching the altar. Retrieving the lucky gold coin, she said to Lumian, "This is the lucky gold coin that the boy gave me. I don't know if it's useful when given to others, but there's no harm in trying."

She delegated the task of searching the corpse to Anthony Reid, who was rapidly recovering.

Franca observed in silence for a moment before affirming, "True."

Lumian didn't hesitate. After all, Will had a close connection to the Tarot Club. Even if the lucky gold coin couldn't be lent to others, it wouldn't bring about any negative effects.

Placing the Loen gold pound on the altar, Lumian conjured a wall of spirituality, ignited all the candles, and took two steps back.

Rather than proceeding with the boon-seeking ritual, he attempted to recite Mr. Fool's honorific name.

"The Fool that doesn't belong to this era, the mysterious ruler above the gray fog; the King of Yellow and Black who wields good luck..."

As Hermes reverberated, the lucky gold coin on the altar illuminated. A thin gray fog emanated from the wall of spirituality, enveloping the wilderness's periphery.

The fog in the distant majestic city appeared to thicken.

Before long, just as Lumian began praying for a boon, a frenzied and terrifying roar echoed from the area where the weather was chaotic and faint giant figures lingered.

Despite the thin gray fog, the four of them felt dizzy. The blood in their bodies raced, and their hearts pounded.

"It's truly useful. It's genuinely lucky..." Lumian gazed at the dazzling golden coin on the altar, sighing sincerely.

Had it not been for the ritual and Mr. Fool's gray fog's protection, the roar could have inflicted severe damage, especially considering Lumian's nearly depleted spirituality. He might have lost control, putting Anthony Reid, still recovering from severe injuries, in jeopardy.

Phew... Lumian exhaled and continued to recite in a deep voice under the watchful eyes of Franca and Jenna, "Power of Inevitability!"

"You are the past, the present, and the future;

"You are the cause, the effect, and the process..."

Chapter 480 Ascetic

Amidst the frenzied and terrifying roars, a hurricane tore through the abnormally chaotic weather, shrouding the scene in smoke, flames, lightning, and hail. It spiraled into the sky, merging with the silent inferno.

Not far from the apocalypse-like hurricane, two figures felt the impact of the roar simultaneously. One's head tilted back slightly, as if punched, while the other's wrinkles quivered, and his eyes grew sharper.

The former was the man who had originally stood behind Olson, vice president of the Iron and Blood Cross Order, Tony Twain. The latter was aged, donning a blue military suit with a sash and medals. His neatly combed back dark-red hair identified him as the mysterious president of the Iron and Blood Cross Order, known as Diest.

Diest shifted his gaze from the hurricane to Tony Twain.

“The chance to become a Conqueror is before us. If I can seize it, I'll find a way to separate the Weather Warlock's Beyonder characteristic and bestow it upon you.”

As Tony Twain observed the violent hurricane, lightning, and torrential rain, his light-blue eyes hinted at mockery.

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“Can we really succeed? A Weather Warlock has already joined. Even if Vermonda Sauron loses control and transforms into a monster, he's still a Sequence 1 monster.”

Tony Twain's words showed no respect for a Sequence 2 Weather Warlock or a Sequence 1 Conqueror, despite not being an Angel yet.

Diest's expression remained unchanged, and his aura surged.

With his military attire, he resembled the commander-in-chief of all armies.

“Elsewhere, we'll surely fail. Even without interference, we'll need to embark on a lengthy hunt to stand a chance against the out-of-control Vermonda Sauron. But here...” Diest spoke in a deep voice, “We can harness that power for a brief period.”

As he finished speaking, the area between his brows turned red, as if something sought to emerge.

Simultaneously, Diest retrieved a coin pouch from his waist, concealed beneath his suit.

Filled with soybeans and a few palm-sized iron soldiers, Diest grabbed them and tossed them forward.

Amidst the howling wind, the iron soldiers sprang to life and expanded. The soybeans swelled rapidly, transforming into giants with blurred faces and yellowish skin, as if soaked in water.

Failing to bring his team here in time, Diest abruptly transformed into a blazing dark-red, nearly purple flame, engulfing the newly created soldiers.

A beam of light shot up, tearing through the sky and homing in on the giant figure within the hurricane.

At the edge of the magnificent city veiled in a thin gray fog, Gardner Martin removed his helmet. His breastplate bore web-like cracks, revealing blood-stained clothes beneath.

With one hand pressed against his head, he staggered forward, intermittently emitting crimson flames bordering on white.

The terrifying roar had clearly taken its toll.

Navigating through the ruins, Gardner Martin quickly approached the thin gray fog. Half-collapsed asymmetrical buildings stood within, seemingly frozen in time, struck by a devastating blow and sunk into the ground.

Abruptly halting, Gardner Martin glanced to the side and asked in a deep voice, “Who is it?”

Amidst the sound of gravel tumbling, Olson, resembling a hungry bear, emerged from behind a collapsed black building, carrying a small brown suitcase.

The Supervisor, sporting a half top hat, yellow vest, and black suit, looked at Gardner Martin and said, "I didn't know who was coming, so I hid for a while. Where's Philip?"

Gardner Martin breathed a sigh of relief and replied, "We encountered Lumian Lee and his team. They killed Philip. I was injured and barely managed to escape."

Olson, with his thick beard, didn't delve into the details of the battle and sized up Gardner Martin. "You're quite beaten up."

Gardner Martin chuckled, saying,

"Fortunately, I had Pride Armor to shield me from most of the damage. Yeah, I blame it mainly on the angelic roar; it affected me to a certain extent. Fortunately, I was relatively far away, so the problem isn't that serious. Look, even the Pride Armor hasn't attacked me, indicating that I haven't weakened."

"That's good. Let's enter Fourth Epoch Trier now," Supervisor Olson nodded with an indifferent expression.

Gardner Martin turned around, clutching the silver helmet with one arm, and walked towards the thin gray fog not far away.

Olson carried a small brown suitcase and trailed behind the Commanding Officer of the Iron and Blood Cross Order.

As the two advanced, Olson's eyes suddenly turned fierce and vicious.

You'd used 'fortunately' twice... You've already taken off the Pride Armor's helmet... Olson muttered silently to himself, his brownish-red eyes reflecting Gardner Martin's staggering figure in the silver armor.

At the edge of the wilderness, scattered with mirror fragments, Franca and Jenna couldn't hear the chants emanating from the wall of spirituality, but they observed the grayish-white stone pillar and two candles of the same color mysteriously softening. Fist-sized candle flames flickered in silver-white and black, while an illusory pewter-black liquid oozed from Lumian's chest, enveloping him.

As Lumian curled up on the ground, occasionally rolling, Franca sighed softly and remarked, "It looks painful..."

This likely marked Ciel's fourth encounter with such an ordeal.

"That's right." Despite standing outside the wall of spirituality, Jenna felt an inexplicable fear, goosebumps forming on her skin.

While she had witnessed Ciel's mental pain and confusion, this was her first time witnessing such intense physical suffering.

Franca spoke sincerely, "If Ciel were to switch to the Affliction potion now, he wouldn't have to worry about not reaching Sequence 4. It's too compatible!"

Sequence 5 of the Assassin pathway was known as Affliction or the Demoness of Affliction.

After another terrifying roar, the silver-black illusory liquid beads on Lumian's body seeped into him. His expression gradually relaxed, and his body ceased its curled-up state.

He lay sprawled beside the collapsed grayish-white stone pillar, reluctant to move for a few seconds.

While his spirituality had recovered and even increased, his body and mind were visibly exhausted. It was akin to the sensation one experienced after completing an exceptionally challenging task in their most focused state.

Lumian, aware of the urgency, forced himself to his feet.

He noticed that the silver-black candle flame had returned to normal, and the surrounding gray fog was gradually dissipating.

His plan to rely on the gray fog's protection against the terrifying roar had failed before implementation.

Mr. Fool's response had a time limit!

Furthermore, he had to consider the interference of the Celestial Worthy of Heaven and Earth for Blessings.

As Lumian swiftly tidied up the altar, he scrutinized his transformation:

The improvement in spirituality was evident with the Ascetic boon. Lumian believed that even after using the Spell of Harrumph a few times, he could complete nearly eight Spirit World Traversals.

Ascetic had also enhanced his endurance, making him more adaptable to extreme weather. Even if he encountered frost, he wouldn't be frozen. Similarly, he found himself better at enduring emotions and desires. While he still felt them, he could endure many things.

This extended to an Ascetic's core ability, Compression. It could be used for the mind and also produced positive effects in the physical and mystic domains.

The former involved emotions and desires, which were mostly tolerated. They didn't completely disappear but were suppressed. At critical points, they needed to be vented or relieved, or psychological problems could arise. The Compression ability could accumulate these emotions and desires and erupt at critical moments for the desired effect. For Lumian, the negative effects of the Contractee's three abilities and the corresponding effects of mystical items on him were more bearable. However, he needed to regularly break an enemy's neck as a way to vent.

The latter aspect referred to spirituality, strength, and ritual steps. Through Compression, Lumian could compress and store spirituality and strength beyond the average person when he had nothing to do, releasing them when needed. This allowed his spirituality to recover once and temporarily enlarge him. His strength, speed, and agility were sufficient to withstand a Sequence 6 Dawn Paladin of the Warrior pathway for a minute or two. Additionally, the accumulation of ritual steps enabled Lumian to use abilities like the Animal Creation Spell and the Exorcism Spell in actual combat.

Furthermore, after becoming an Ascetic, Lumian's previous boons had been enhanced. For instance, the number of contract abilities he could withstand had increased to three, although he didn't want to maximize them. He preferred choosing one or two suitable ones, as too many contracts brought

too many negative effects. Even Ascetics would suffer because of them, as evidenced by negative examples like Guillaume Bénét and Bouvard.

Of course, this wasn't an immediate concern, as summoning creatures from the spirit world was impossible in this location.

Lumian swiftly stashed away the items and dispelled the wall of spirituality. Handing back the fortunate gold coin to Jenna, he spoke in a low, commanding tone, "Let's make our way to Fourth Epoch Trier."

"Huh?" Jenna was bewildered.

Ciel had warned them to steer clear of the giant and the grand city!

Franca looked back with contemplation and said, "Do you suspect that the fog shrouding the city belongs to Mr. Fool? Entering might provide some protection. We won't have to worry about getting taken out by that lunatic's roar or succumbing to the risk of transforming into a monster?"

"Yes, it's dangerous, but there's a chance for us to defend ourselves and await further developments." Lumian inferred that the same fog enshrouded Fourth Epoch Trier, drawing from the fog around the Samaritan Women's Spring and the lingering shadows of significant figures from the Fourth Epoch.

It emanated from Mr. Fool's powers!

Franca wasted no time and nodded decisively. "Okay."

Jenna chose to trust her two companions without delving into questions.

At that moment, Anthony Reid had finished clearing the battlefield and approached with the spoils.