

Inevitability 481

Chapter 481 The Thing in the Suitcase

Anthony Reid clutched the items salvaged from General Philip's lifeless form, wrapping them in a torn cloak. He avoided direct contact, a cautious move as he moved forward.

“Found these...” he began to explain, but Lumian swiftly cut him off.

Clear and rapid, Lumian outlined their plan, “We're heading to the outskirts of the city enveloped by the gray fog. Want to come with us?”

Anthony Reid's eyelids twitched. “Okay.”

He knew going solo could mean a swift demise, especially if the terrifying roar echoed again.

Lumian wasn't in a hurry to inquire about General Philip's belongings. Gripping Jenna and Anthony, he signaled Franca to hold onto his collar.

A dark light emanated from the black mark on his shoulder as the quartet disappeared, seemingly teleporting to the periphery of the majestic yet crumbling city, just before the thin gray fog.

What they saw was where they arrived.

Lumian attempted to step into the gray fog, but the seal on his chest remained dormant.

Franca and the others could traverse it without his guidance.

Resembling a hungry bear, Olson fixed his gaze on Gardner Martin's head, devoid of its helmet. His brownish-red eyes flickered with a sinister light, pinpointing Martin's vulnerability.

In mere seconds, Olson identified Martin's weakest spot.

Even if he couldn't deal a fatal blow, inflicting damage to the party again meant a high chance that the Pride Armor would betray its wearer and kill him!

Silently, Olson reached into his pocket, retrieving a yellow bullet held between his thumb and index finger.

A crimson, nearly white fireball rapidly condensed in his palm, leading to a controlled explosion.

The violent shockwave propelled the bullet towards the back of Gardner Martin's head with a thunderous boom.

Gardner Martin staggered, narrowly avoiding the bullet.

Nearly simultaneously, the surroundings were bathed in the bright and holy Sunrise Gleam.

Black smoke billowed from Olson's body as if a long-dead zombie had been exposed to the sunlight created by the Purifiers.

Instinctively, Olson's eyes closed against the intense light.

Meanwhile, Gardner Martin, no longer feeble, donned his helmet with a cold expression and sharp eyes.

He ignited, transforming into a blazing white spear of flames, piercing Supervisor Olson's forehead with a whoosh.

Despite Olson's formidable resistance to scorching flames, his skull suffered charring from the impact. As the flames dissipated, Gardner Martin's figure detached from the burning spear. Clenching his silver-armored fist, he swung it at Olson's head from midair.

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Olson's neck snapped, and his head flew up, dragging along a bloody spine.

Gardner Martin's skull-crushing punch missed, and he landed on the ground once again.

However, a heavy and sharp broadsword of light materialized in his other hand at some point, ready for the next phase of the battle.

Gardner Martin thrust the broadsword into the blackened soil, unleashing a terrifying storm. Countless light fragments filled the air, creating chaos in the vicinity.

The Pride Armor swiftly condensed the Sword of Dawn again, the Hurricane of Light forming with a much shorter interval than an ordinary Sequence 6 Dawn Paladin. Only a minute or two had passed since Gardner Martin last wielded this formidable power.

Olson, reduced to just his head with a brownish-red beard, showed focus in his eyes and attempted to merge with a burning-white spear for a hasty retreat.

However, the storm arrived, its light engulfing him completely.

As the Hurricane of Light subsided, Olson's body displayed severe damage, riddled with cracks, some piercing through his chest and tearing internal organs. His severed head, carried by a bloody spine, bore the marks of destruction—eyes and nose obliterated, skull cracked, and blackened brain exposed.

Gardner Martin, poised and composed, conjured ten to twenty crimson fireballs.

They darted toward Olson's nearly unconscious head, triggering a resounding explosion that shattered the head into fragments and liquid, splattering on the ground.

With a chuckle, Gardner Martin raised his visor, surveying Olson's headless corpse and the scattered skull. He remarked, "I've always found you a little odd. This was a good opportunity to test you. I didn't expect you to really attack me. That's good too. Not only have I eliminated a hidden danger, but I've also counteracted the traitorous curse of the Pride Armor."

Deliberately appearing fine while exposing some problems through the details was meant to bait Olson—simple acts of vulnerability could easily raise the other party's vigilance and suspicion.

With a sigh, Gardner approached the battered suitcase that had fallen to the ground and lifted it, on the verge of shattering.

He had long been curious about its contents, as Olson had always evaded the question. Now, Gardner could finally open it himself.

Gardner Martin unlatched the suitcase and opened it in front of him.

Inside was a head.

The features were unmistakable—deep facial features, brownish-red eyes, slightly disheveled black hair, a few silver strands at the temples, and well-defined facial features. The head which wasn't considered thin was stained with blood.

It was Gardner Martin!

It was Gardner Martin's own head!

Once Lumian and his companions traversed the outermost gray fog, the transition from morning to evening seemed to unfold before them. Darkness enveloped their vision, concealing the black asymmetrical buildings and houses that appeared as if splattered with blood. Everything silently melded into the obscurity.

As they advanced, the looming, half-collapsed palace drew nearer. The city bore the brunt of colossal damage, as if a giant had delivered a devastating blow, unleashing shockwaves that wreaked havoc on the surroundings.

Details eluded Lumian's scrutiny. The lack of sufficient light and the considerable distance obscured the exact nature of the scene. Various houses obstructed their view, and only the excessively tall palace and surrounding structures, despite their partial collapse, allowed them a glimpse of the peripheral city.

“Let's find a nearby hiding spot,” Franca suggested, her gaze scanning the area. She had no intention of venturing deeper into Fourth Epoch Trier.

The quartet found themselves on a narrow street, where the houses on both sides were so close that occupants could almost shake hands by extending their arms.

The structures, resembling victims of a violent earthquake, teetered but refused to collapse, adorned with ghastly cracks.

Jenna's attention fixated on a relatively intact house. Iron-black in color, it featured an arched window on the left and a square on the right. Dark-red graffiti adorned one side, while the other remained clean. Not a single weed grew between the rocks.

Apart from the two obvious pots, the house exhibited various asymmetrical details, with centipede-like cracks mainly concentrated on the lower left side.

“Should we go there?” Jenna inquired.

Lumian shook his head.

“The more intact, the higher the likelihood of abnormalities. The current state of Fourth Epoch Trier's citizens is unknown.

“Let's find a completely collapsed building to hide behind. At least, everything inside should be buried.”

“Agreed,” Franca concurred with Lumian's decision.

In Fourth Epoch Trier, she couldn't fully perform Magic Mirror Divination.

Lumian and his team swiftly reached the center of the dimly lit street. In a setting that could plunge into darkness at any given moment, they strategically maneuvered around the ruins of a dark-red building, seeking cover.

It wasn't until now that Anthony Reid seized an opportunity to extract the Arrow of the Bloodthirsty from his chest, returning it to Jenna.

With the dark-stained black cloak spread on the ground, he showcased his findings.

There were three items in total:

The first, a blackened ulna punctuated by dark-red holes, resembling a rough bone flute that had been kept in storage for ages.

The second, a small wooden box painted in dark hues. Compact enough to fit into a concealed pocket, it featured large holes on both sides veiled by swaying, leather-like "curtains."

Lastly, a collection of gold, silver, and copper coins.

Anthony Reid gestured toward the "bone flute" and explained, "This formed from the convergence of light spots on Philip's ulna. It seems something formless has settled on it."

Conspirer or Reaper Beyonder characteristic combined with his ulna and the power of the Deceased boon? Lumian nodded indiscernibly.

Philip hadn't had a chance to retaliate before, leaving him uncertain about the general's Sequence—a Sequence 6 Conspirer or a Sequence 5 Reaper. What was clear, however, was the general's affiliation with the Hunter pathway. This deduction was based on the creation of numerous crimson Fire Ravens, almost white in hue. Moreover, the general wasn't just a Sequence 7.

If it were the latter, Lumian would have been pleased to obtain the main ingredient for his advancement. The issue lay in the mixture of the power with an evil god's boon, rendering it unsuitable for direct use in potion concoction.

"What settled on it is the corruption of an evil god. It was a wise choice not to touch it directly," Lumian informed Anthony.

Within the underground seal, the power of an evil god's boon couldn't return to its source.

"This was found on Philip's body..." Anthony pointed at the dark wooden box. Before he could finish speaking, another frenzied and violent roar echoed from afar.

This time, the four of them, having entered the gray fog, only experienced a slight dizziness and remained unaffected.

Chapter 482 Bodies Chasing Heads

Franca shook off the dizziness induced by the terrifying roar and sighed from the bottom of her heart.

"As expected, the gray fog here provides protection."

Without it, facing a roar that could harm their Spirit Body and affect their minds would result in losing control, turning into monsters, or immediate death.

“Praise The Fool!” Lumian openly expressed his faith.

He then reminded her in an icy tone, “But the hidden dangers here might be more terrifying than the previous roar.”

Franca fell silent for a few seconds before speaking in an encouraging tone, “Hidden dangers are preferable to those that have already surfaced. Let's avoid triggering them. If nothing else occurs, we'll stay in this corner and wait for help!”

While Jenna and Anthony Reid harbored doubts about the strategy of passivity, they hesitated to venture deep into Fourth Epoch Trier and reluctantly accepted the plan that wasn't really a plan.

In the eerie silence, Anthony was the first to regain composure. He pointed at the dark wooden box and stated, “I'm not sure of its purpose. A simple, temporary touch doesn't seem to have any obvious negative effects.”

As for the coins, their significance was apparent. A quick glance and rough calculation revealed a total of 312 verl d'or and 26 coppet.

Franca leaned against a collapsed pillar in the shadows, her eyes fixed on the mysterious dark wooden box. “What the hell is this thing?”

It was obviously no ordinary container; its appearance suggested it held some kind of mysterious power.

Lumian and Anthony turned their attention to the Demoness of Pleasure simultaneously.

Lumian chuckled, “I should be the one asking you that.”

Franca exclaimed, “There was nothing I could do. I couldn't spare time for spirit channeling, and this place isn't connected to the real spirit world. I can't perform Magic Mirror Divination. To understand the abilities, effects, state, and potential drawbacks of these two items, I'll have to experiment with them myself repeatedly.

“Of course, if we encounter an Artisan, many of our problems might be solved.”

She gestured towards Jenna, saying, “Just like the black Primordial Demoness figurine, it undoubtedly has other functions. For instance, it allows the holder to create Mirror Substitution. As for mine, apart from providing a certain anti-divination and early warning effect, it can only be used as a supplicant during rituals.

“They're both figurines, differing only in color and orientation. Why such a significant disparity?”

Franca avoided mentioning why she didn't employ various methods to gather information about the black Primordial Demoness figurine. The unspoken understanding among the group was clear—in their current situation, ensuring their safety took precedence over risking injury or adverse effects to test their spoils of war. Any mishap could lead to dire consequences, potentially even death in the experiment.

As a heavy silence settled among Jenna and the others, Franca sighed inwardly.

The black figurine clearly is problematic, and its mysterious origin is intriguing. It explains why the Demoness Sect wants me to investigate what Gardner had smuggled in through the underground tunnels...

If I hand it over, will the Demoness Sect reward me with the Affliction potion and pledge assistance for my ritual, or will they choose to silence me?

Lumian stroked his chin, addressing Anthony Reid, "In that case, keep the verl d'or. We'll distribute the remaining spoils of war when we return to the surface."

Anthony inquired further, "Should we wrap it in a cloak and place it on the ground before taking it when we leave?"

Lumian smiled and gestured at the charred bone flute,

"Otherwise? You can also carry it with you. This way, we might witness the abilities of a Deceased. Philip died in a hurry and didn't have time to show us.

"Of course, judging from his condition at the time of death, the holder of the item will most likely be the recipient of those abilities in the form of a curse."

Anthony, unfazed by the mockery, pulled up the blood-stained and tattered black cloak, wrapping it around the bone flute and the small wooden box once more.

Lumian, with a thoughtful expression, poked his head out and looked at the abnormally narrow street.

"If we encounter an enemy we find challenging to handle later, we can consider throwing these two items to him. It might have a miraculous effect. General Philip will be very pleased to know that he would still be of use after death."

It might bring about a curse of fate!

Despite the tense atmosphere, Lumian's constant mockery of General Philip brought a slight amusement to Jenna.

"Dammit, General Philip is already dead. There's no need to harp on about him."

Before Lumian could respond to Jenna, two tragic screams pierced the air.

The cries emanated from the same location, filled with undisguised fear.

Soon after, two figures rushed into the narrow street, as if pursuing an unidentified flying object hovering in the air.

Franca, alongside Lumian, peered out of the shadows, her expression freezing at the sight.

The two figures, a man and a woman, were decapitated, their necks mangled, devoid of any signs of bones.

Chasing them were two heads, displaying pure fear and dragging bloody, tail-like spines behind them.

One head belonged to a man with puffed-up cheeks resembling a squirrel. He chewed on long, thick black hair that emerged from his dark brown eyes, nostrils, and ears. Similar hair grew from the headless body chasing him, denser and more exaggerated, resembling seaweed.

The other head belonged to a beautiful woman with black hair and brown eyes. She flew forward frantically, coughing and shaking out resplendent starlight. Gravel in the surroundings, sent flying by the pursuit, swayed as if in slow motion.

Suddenly, the two heads and bodies, about to climb over a collapsed building and exit the narrow street, froze.

The heads shook in confusion, attempting to dispel a discomfort. The headless corpses raised their hands, clutching their left chests.

In mere seconds, the two heads, with bloody spines trailing behind them, plummeted into the collapsed black house, their bodies crashing onto the stacked rocks.

A heavy silence fell upon Lumian and the others.

After a few seconds, Lumian scoffed, "See, this is what happens when you venture deep into Fourth Epoch Trier."

"Do you suspect they're residents of the Hostel?" Jenna inquired thoughtfully.

Lumian replied with a smirk, "Otherwise? "Where else could you find such fresh heads and bodies in an ancient ruin that's been buried for a millennium or two?"

This brought back memories of Supervisor Olson. He had been in this state when he first appeared.

Now, Lumian was almost certain that Olson was a true monster, with a head and body that could be separated.

Franca also recalled Gardner Martin's servants. She withdrew her gaze and pondered for a moment before stating,

"Why do bodiless heads still cough, as if they're sick...? What happened to them at the end seems like a cerebral infarction. The two headless bodies show signs of cardiac arrest.

"Is this the work of the Sick Church's evil god's bestowed, or is there another murderer?"

"Right, a Sequence 5 of the Demoness pathway is called Affliction. It can spread various illnesses, and I can enter this place with the Primordial Demoness figurine and the ancient silver mirror..

"This place clearly has a lot to do with the Demoness pathway. Could the high-level power leaking out cause monsters to fall ill and die?"

"Not bad. You still have some intelligence at critical moments," Lumian praised mockingly.

Jenna, on the other hand, rejoiced.

“Fortunately, we didn't venture too deep. Otherwise, who knows when we'd fall ill and die.”

Lumian smiled at her.

“Why do you think we're not currently surrounded by disease?”

“B-but we didn't cough...” Jenna's voice trailed off as she glanced at the hidden pocket of her clothes.

Inside was the pitch-black Primordial Demoness figurine.

Franca also peered into her pocket, as if she could discern the bone-carved Primordial Demoness figurine through the fabric.

Anthony turned to Lumian and sought confirmation,

“Are you suggesting that the Fourth Epoch's Trier is plagued with illnesses, and we're unharmed because we're carrying the two figurines?”

Lumian spread his hands and said,

“I believe this explanation makes more sense.”

Beyond the gray fog, at the edge of the Fourth Epoch's Trier ruins.

In the small brown suitcase, Gardner Martin's blood-stained face suddenly opened, revealing Gardner Martin clad in silver armor, reflected in its eyes.

It opened its mouth and expelled a blazing white fireball.

The distance between them was so close that Gardner Martin couldn't dodge at all. All he could do was lean back, attempting to avoid the target's initial attack.

Boom! Gardner Martin was sent flying by the massive explosion.

The spiderweb-like crack on the chest of the silver armor shattered, tearing through the skin and flesh below.

This strike was akin to hitting Gardner Martin's vital points. Had it not been for the Pride Armor, which absorbed most of the damage, he would have perished on the spot.

However, this meant that the Pride Armor lost its protection over the chest for a period.

Gardner Martin's bloodied head flew up, dragging along a bloody spine.

On the other side, Olson's headless corpse stood up once more.

Gardner Martin's head aimed for the empty neck stump and inserted the ghastly white spine.

Amidst a cracking sound, this “Gardner Martin,” seemingly from hell, twisted his neck and smiled sinisterly at Gardner Martin, who had already changed positions and condensed a large number of crimson Fire Ravens that were nearly white.

“Olson is long dead. I've been controlling his head and body.

“In the future, I'll replace you.”

In the wilderness, the ground trembled violently, and blazing cracks slithered into the distance like fiery serpents.

The figures of Magician and Justice appeared.

Chapter 483 Hidden History

Dressed in a white shirt with a knot and a beige dress, Magician fixed her gaze upon the menacing hurricane that bridged the gap between sky and earth. Her eyes glittered, as if concealing the vast cosmos.

“Vermonda Sauron is indeed a Sequence 1 Conqueror. It's no wonder He could influence generations of the Sauron family after losing control and going underground. It's no wonder the Sauron family, once a royal lineage, swiftly declined,” Magician mused, sighing.

Justice, inquisitive, asked, “I wonder how the former leader of the Secret Order, Zaratul, and Emperor Roselle played a role in Vermonda Sauron losing control and entering the Fourth Epoch Trier. The Sauron branch, wielding Grade 0 Sealed Artifacts, obstinately believes that they harmed Vermonda, causing the Conqueror to lose control. The former even left a prophecy to mislead generations of Sauron family members.”

Magician chuckled and replied, “Based on the information Lumian gathered and my research into the seal, the issue deep within Red Swan Castle's underground maze doesn't seem like something Zaratul or Emperor Roselle could create. Only a Weather Warlock and a Conqueror can resonate abnormally with Fourth Epoch Trier day after day, creating dangerous changes in corresponding places. Zaratul and Emperor Roselle likely exploited the problems that Red Swan Castle and Vermonda Sauron already had.”

While she spoke, the Tarot Club's Major Arcana card holder shifted her gaze away from the hurricane sweeping through the world and focused on Fourth Epoch Trier, veiled in a thin gray fog.

The starlight in her eyes remained, as if she sought something to pinpoint her next target. She didn't abruptly halt and engage in conversation at a crucial moment.

Justice nodded in agreement and remarked, “If it were me, I wouldn't venture further into Trier after becoming an Angel to minimize the abnormal influence the underground might have on me. Vermonda Sauron disregarded hidden dangers and stayed in Red Swan Castle for an extended period. He must have had a strong desire for something in Fourth Epoch Trier.”

“Didn't the Sauron family construct the White Maple Palace outside Trier? Previously, Vermonda's royal family resided there and rarely returned to Trier.” Magician brought up the fact that the Sauron family was aware of the issue before adding, “Zaratul likely played a significant role in Vermonda Sauron's situation. As you know, He is an Archangel of the Seer pathway. Without His 'assistance,' it wouldn't have been easy for Vermonda Sauron—even as a Conqueror—to create a leak in the seal. He entered

Fourth Epoch Trier after losing control. Back then, the seal's effects weren't as potent as they were a few years ago. There was no need for modifications.”

Justice pondered for a moment and said, “What I'm more curious about is who designed the Hostel ritual. Their use of mysticism similarities and loopholes resembles that of high-level Seer, Apprentice, or Marauder Beyonders. Or perhaps they have had long interactions with these high-level Beyonders and were adept at learning.”

“Perhaps the corresponding pathway of the Deceased excels in this as well. Perhaps it's secretly influenced by that Celestial Worthy, or perhaps that entity wants to use the temporary opening of the seal to do something. As you know, the Iron and Blood Cross Order used to believe in Him. It's too easy for Him to mislead us,” Magician mused, uncertain of the right answer.

Starlight flickered in her eyes; she found it challenging to observe and determine the situation in the thin gray fog.

As Magician scrutinized Fourth Epoch Trier, she informed Justice, “The level of the catacombs' seal corresponds to this location.

“At its heart lies the Samaritan Women's Spring, where Blood Emperor Alista Tudor met His end. The razed imperial palace and its surroundings harbor diverse dangers. The lingering divine power is unimpressive and consumable. Sigh, every time I bring up something of this sort, it feels like I should adopt a more vulgar vocabulary. Only then can I truly capture my sentiments about the Blood Emperor's lunacy.

“Hence, you won't unearth anything significant from here. Only upon approaching will you discern that Mr. Fool's gray fog has grown denser, thicker, and more palpable.

“The catacombs' fourth and third levels correspond to Fourth Epoch Trier, excluding that specific area. Corruption and divine power still linger abundantly. Navigating certain areas demands adherence to specific rules; otherwise, even Angels may meet Their demise.

“The two levels above the catacombs correlate with the wilderness beyond the gray fog. Humans can traverse them to a certain extent, but with Vermonda Sauron lingering, the danger rivals that of the Fourth Epoch Trier...”

Just as Magician concluded her words, a frenzied and terrifying roar echoed from the area where the weather had dramatically shifted.

The formless flames that illuminated the surroundings and shrouded the entire “sky” seemed to be influenced, coalescing into a massive vortex.

Within the vortex, shapeless and translucent flames descended from above, striking the wilderness like a colossal sword that pierced through heaven and earth.

Amidst this chaos, the ground quaked even more violently. Fiery crevices extended further towards Fourth Epoch Trier, concealed within the gray fog.

Magician remained unperturbed as she observed the splendid yet dilapidated city for a while.

Then, she said to Justice, “Let's enter.”

Justice tersely acknowledged, offering no objections.

Both of them tacitly avoided mentioning Vermonda Sauron, an Archangel who had lost control—a Conqueror. They had no intention of joining the battle or seizing the Beyonder characteristic.

For them, the Tarot Club's primary goal in this matter was to prevent the evil gods' bestowed from approaching the innermost seal, ensuring they couldn't leak the danger within which would affect Trier aboveground and the entire world.

Furthermore, they sought the lost Minor Arcana card holders to guide them out.

As for the Conqueror Beyonder characteristic, symbolizing an Archangel and Sequence 1, as long as it didn't fall into the hands of heretics, obtaining it wasn't a particularly grave issue for anyone. Magician didn't mind observing and, if the opportunity arose, pilfering the gains. However, she wasn't a high-level Beyonder of the Marauder pathway capable of dividing herself and participating in every battlefield.

Despite achieving a similar effect by moving back and forth, she had to respect Mr. Fool's gray fog and the core seal of Fourth Epoch Trier. Corresponding restrictions were undoubtedly in place.

Starlight blossomed, and Magician and Justice vanished. The thin gray fog enshrouding Fourth Epoch Trier undulated.

As soon as Gardner Martin's head—nestled over Olson's headless corpse—finished speaking, a multitude of blazing white fireballs materialized around him, hurtling towards Gardner Martin, who had suffered a chest wound.

In the midst of the rumbling explosion, Gardner Martin's figure in the silver armor suddenly vanished.

After the shockwave subsided, he reappeared in a corner of the ruins.

Then, he witnessed the other “him” merge with the blazing white flaming spear, which burrowed into the thin gray fog and disappeared into the randomly scattered buildings of Fourth Epoch Trier.

Gardner Martin's pupils constricted, and he was about to give chase when a violent and furious roar echoed from afar.

His entire body froze. Blood vessels beneath the visor on his face appeared, dark red as if flowing with flames.

Instinctively, Gardner Martin turned and prepared to sprint towards the distant apocalypse-like hurricane.

The space between his eyebrows twitched, and a faint red dot appeared.

Gardner Martin finally regained control of himself. He took a deep breath and returned to normal.

He gazed in the direction the other “him” had fled and muttered in a self-deprecating tone, “Were those harsh words and all-out attacks meant to make it easier for him to escape? As expected of me. Do you realize that failing to assassinate me means staying here means I’ll inevitably kill you?”

As Gardner Martin muttered to himself, he produced a canister made of dark glass, its liquid a green hue reminiscent of grass.

He unscrewed the cap and downed half the canister. The wound on his chest began to heal at a visible rate.

It was a healing agent concocted by a Madame of the Nightstalkers, obtained by Gardner Martin through Philip.

Philip, who had united numerous evil god cults, had no shortage of similar items, but under the Hurricane of Light, the fragile canisters shattered.

After stowing away the remaining half canister of the agent, Gardner Martin, clad in silver-white full-body armor, ventured into the thin gray fog and Fourth Epoch Trier.

In the cover of a narrow street, behind a collapsed building, Franca hissed in agreement with Lumian’s conjecture.

“That’s right. This is a true relic from a divine war, and it’s even more dangerous. It’s entirely possible that the entire city is riddled with ailments.”

She suspected that the closer she got to the place where Blood Emperor Alista Tudor had met his end, the more peculiar and horrifying the ailments became. Some seemed to have sprouted from the decaying corpses of deities. Ignoring Low-Sequence Beyonders whose bodies didn’t fundamentally differ from ordinary humans, even Saints and Angels would likely succumb to the “disease” and perish.

Franca paused for a moment before suggesting to Jenna, “Why don’t you give the black figurine to Anthony for safekeeping? It might be dangerous for you to hold it, and he can use that item to create his own Mirror Substitution, effectively increasing his chances of survival.”

Franca couldn’t shake the feeling that it wasn’t a wise decision for a female Demoness like Jenna to possess a Primordial Demoness figurine, whether it was the genuine article or the mirrored version.

Without waiting for Jenna’s response, Lumian spoke in a deep voice, “It’s better if Jenna holds it. She has the lucky gold coin.”

“That’s true...” Just as Franca finished speaking, she suddenly heard a chime not far away.

It resembled the bell of a bicycle, yet it was clearer and rang out for a longer duration.

Chapter 484 Mockery

Franca wasn’t surprised at all, even though she wondered why so many things were happening in this damn place.

This was Fourth Epoch Trier. Even if it wasn’t a land of a fallen god, it wouldn’t lack abnormalities!

Lumian and the others cautiously emerged from their concealment, peering from different vantage points toward the source of the chimes.

The location wasn't distant, yet the fog in that direction seemed unusually dense. The structures loomed faintly, as though just a fragment of history had materialized.

Within the fog's depths, a contraption reminiscent of a steam locomotive glided by without a fuss. It sported only two carriages, lacking a smokestack. Peculiar frames extended from the top, linking it to something suspended in midair.

Ding ding ding. The train ventured into a zone of even thicker fog, disappearing from view.

Although Franca and her companions couldn't discern the details clearly, an unexplained dread seized them, akin to standing on the precipice or treading on blades piercing their skin.

Before they could contemplate the ramifications of the fog's metamorphosis and the arrival of these peculiar objects, their surroundings plunged into a profound darkness. Dusk gave way, and night loomed.

A dense fog cloaked the area.

Lumian, sensing an unsettling disturbance, yearned to evade it, but the abnormal fog, tainted with a dark hue, obstructed any attempt to "teleport" to an unaffected area. Beyond the fog, the wilderness they came from eluded his senses.

The cold fog permeated their skin, prompting involuntary shivers from Franca and Jenna.

Almost simultaneously, the narrow street came alive with the flickering of candle flames and oil lamps. Laughter, cries, and voices erupted, transforming the once-silent surroundings.

Fourth Epoch Trier burst into vibrant life, resonating with clamor and the pulsations of existence.

Anthony, without conscious thought, surveyed the diverse houses and narrow streets, catching sight of an asymmetrical, pitch-black building. Candlesticks dangled from above, casting light upon the figure standing at the window.

The figure donned a black bonnet, with one side sunken and the other protruding. Dark clothes adorned him, with buttons haphazardly fastened, and a smooth wound diagonally sliced his body from shoulder to waist.

Evidently caused by a sharp broadsword.

In that moment, the man's diagonally cleaved body resembled a child's stacked building blocks, not properly assembled.

He nonchalantly nibbled at a meat pie, chewed morsels falling from the wound to the ground, yet he remained oblivious.

Additional figures emerged in other habitable houses.

Some appeared like melted candles that had solidified once more, their flesh viscous and indistinct. Others had pale-white skin, and greasy white feathers sprouted from their pores, oozing yellowish pus. Some had tiny holes in their bodies, with black insects flying in and out. There were those

reduced to white skeletons, with only a mismatched human-skinned mask covering their faces. Some had degenerated into black shadows, as if burned...

On the narrow street, a yellow, blue, and red sphere, about half the height of an adult human, rolled forward. An inverted clown, dressed in exaggerated clothes, stood atop it.

The clown's ears were unlike those of a human, dog-like and slightly pointed. Dark gray hair covered his red-yellow-painted face.

These are the long-dead citizens of Fourth Epoch Trier? Lumian's eyelids twitched.

He, Franca, and the others also observed the bloodstained faces and cold expressions of these figures.

"Very similar, very similar to those Mirror People..." Franca muttered to herself before exclaiming in horror, "Could the gray fog's transformation have transported us to the Fourth Epoch Trier in the mirror? The citizens of Fourth Epoch Trier in reality are dead, but the ones in the mirror are still alive?"

Before she could finish, Lumian and Anthony's gazes turned toward her and Jenna.

"Could it be that it's the problem with those two things again?" Franca's scalp tingled as she said, "Did they cause us to be devoured by the mirror's Fourth Epoch Trier after the gray fog transformed?"

"That's not it. I believe it's a universal abnormality. Apart from a few special individuals who enter this place, they all arrive in the mirror ruins after being enveloped by the expanding gray fog." Lumian observed the narrow street brimming with vitality, pondering for a moment. "The most likely possibility is that the two figurines triggered Fourth Epoch Trier, causing changes like the gray fog's expansion."

Jenna fell silent for a moment before frowning.

"But we've been here for a while. Why did something only happen now? We didn't do anything just now..."

"That's right!" Franca suddenly realized. "Those Hostel residents must have triggered something while wandering around after their entry!"

As soon as Franca finished speaking, a hoarse and terrified shout echoed nearby.

"Help!"

"Save me!"

Lumian and his companions turned their attention toward the voice and witnessed a man in a black formal suit, his hair neatly combed like a prominent figure's secretary, sprinting down the narrow street.

His face was marred by abscesses, oozing mucus. Occasionally, he turned his head 180 degrees, his eyes filled with fear as if a formless and terrifying entity pursued him.

“Save me!”

Amidst his cries, the man's body suddenly froze, and he involuntarily retreated. His retreat accelerated until he lifted off.

“Ah!”

Amidst intense screams, he plunged into the dense gray fog and the shadowy buildings.

In the next moment, the voice abruptly ceased, and silence enveloped that area.

Lumian and the others' hearts pounded with a strong sense of danger.

Despite the man in the black suit not being an ordinary person, suspected to be the bestowed of an evil god from the Order of All Extinction or the Sick Church, and having been corrupted by this place to a certain extent, allowing him to turn his head 180o, Lumian, Anthony, and their companions still felt the terror lurking in the depths of the gray fog.

It was as if they could already envision themselves being “dragged” into the gray fog and vanishing.

However, at that moment, they had no idea what to do or how to hide. Dense black gray fog surrounded the suspected mirror ruins, and unknown dangers loomed in the shadows, quietly approaching.

At that moment, Termiboros's majestic voice resonated in Lumian's ears:

“Keep running until you reach that pillar. Don't stop on the way. Don't turn back. Don't teleport. Don't pull your companions.”

Isn't... isn't that the direction where the monster was “devoured”? If we take the initiative to approach, wouldn't we be sending ourselves as food to its doorstep? Lumian grappled with uncertainty, unsure if Termiboros had sensed real danger and planned to intervene or if He was exploiting the opportunity to advance His own agenda.

“You can choose not to believe it,” Termiboros's deep voice added.

Despite his suspicions, Lumian's gaze remained fixed on the spot where the evil god bestowed's figure had been “devoured.”

Deep within the gray fog, amidst looming, collapsed, and towering buildings, a hazy black pillar stretched into the sky.

Suddenly, Lumian recalled something.

At the entrance of the fourth level of the catacombs—Krismona Night Pillar.

As for Krismona, she was a high-ranking Demoness who had perished during the War of the Four Emperors in Fourth Epoch Trier!

She was even a child of God, a true child of the Primordial Demoness... This place is suspected to be the mirror's Fourth Epoch Trier... Lumian surveyed the surroundings and saw that the situation elsewhere was similar. He gritted his teeth and said, “Let's move forward! To the black pillar!”

The sense of danger intensified, pushing Lumian to make a decisive gamble.

Move forward? Franca, Jenna, and Anthony were brimming with questions about Lumian's choice.

Everyone had witnessed the chilling fate of the man in the formal suit!

Lumian stood tall and declared in a commanding voice, "Jenna, carry the spoils of war. Don't stop, don't turn around, and don't pull any of our companions!"

Upon finishing his sentence, he darted out of his hiding spot.

Given the specificity of Lumian's instructions, Franca cast a glance at him and chose to trust his judgment.

Jenna tightened her grip on the lucky gold coin, hoisted the cloak containing the spoils of war, and followed suit. Anthony, having exacted his revenge, harbored no regrets or obsessions. Lumian had proven his correctness multiple times, so he didn't question him and trailed closely.

Thud! Thud! Thud! The quartet sprinted down the narrow street, passing by the inverted clown, who rolled forward on the ball at a deliberate pace. They plunged into the depths of the gray fog, heading towards the black pillar.

In a corner of Fourth Epoch Trier, in front of a black iron-like house adorned with a red pattern, a wilderness overgrown with weeds had been condensed to the size of an ordinary square.

Within a dark-red open carriage in the wilderness, Lady Moon, draped in a loose white robe and a light-colored veil, queried Madame Pualis, who stood beside her, "What's wrong?"

Madame Pualis, dressed in black with her head covered by her right hand, replied, "I can hear my child crying again..."

Lady Moon nodded gently and offered reassurance, "That's unavoidable. Rest here and catch up when you've recovered."

"Are you sure you can handle it alone?" Madame Pualis's facial muscles twitched and distorted intermittently.

Lady Moon smiled and responded, "My child left me a gift. Don't worry."

She didn't consider Madame Night to be of much help in this matter. Madame Night could enter because she needed to stay at the Sacred Heart Cloister to draw attention and couldn't remain in the Hostel.

"Alright," Madame Pualis said regretfully.

After Lady Moon's carriage and the wilderness departed, Madame Night's expression quickly returned to normal.

Lady Moon's carriage, pulled by two Demon-like creatures, advanced for a while before the gray fog thickened and expanded.

Her eyes narrowed as a blood-stained umbilical cord materialized in her hand.

The umbilical cord emitted a brilliant golden sunlight, warding off all corrosion and influence.

Thus, Lady Moon successfully reached the periphery of the land of a fallen god. The gray fog here stood as dense as a wall.

Attempting to approach, she found herself blocked, akin to an ordinary person encountering an impenetrable barrier.

Lady Moon felt a compelling force but couldn't proceed any further.

She whispered in surprise and confusion, "How could this be..."

As she pondered to herself, Lady Moon surveyed her surroundings.

Suddenly, her gaze froze.

On the surface of a nearby half-collapsed palace-like structure, a flamboyant red color seized the wall, outlined in a bloody state: "Didn't anyone tell you that there's another seal here?"

Chapter 485 Night Pillar

The intensifying gray fog at the core that spread to every corner of Fourth Epoch Trier didn't faze Gardner Martin, wrapped in sleek silver-white full-body armor. Instead of alarm, delight surged within him. Since the invasion of the power from Building 13 on Avenue du Marché, and being able to hear the great voice, such scenes had frequented his dreams. It felt like returning home, the door wide open for him.

Without hesitation, Gardner Martin sprinted toward the heart of Fourth Epoch Trier, heading for the land of the fallen god.

Through a street so narrow that the residents in the houses on both sides could almost reach out and shake hands, Lumian and his companions sprinted forward.

After only a dozen steps, Lumian sensed an intangible force emanating from the pitch-black gray fog. It was like the countless arms of a terrifying entity, gently and methodically caressing every living being to determine its prey.

Lumian's scalp tingled. Even with his clothes providing cover, goosebumps erupted where the formless entity touched him.

Instinctively, he wanted to resist, but then he remembered Termiboros's words.

"Don't stop. Don't turn back. Don't teleport. Don't pull your companions!"

While this didn't explicitly mention resisting, defending, or attacking, Lumian felt it wise to observe and wait for developments.

Suppressing the urge to incinerate the formless entities, he compelled himself to move forward.

Jenna, by his side, and Franca and Anthony behind him, closely monitored Lumian. If he didn't act, neither did they. If he did, they would quickly follow suit.

Observing Lumian refraining from confronting the formless entity in the dim gray fog, they braced themselves, enduring the intense and danger-filled caresses.

In the midst of this, Franca found the formless object somewhat familiar.

Recalling the suspicion that this place was the mirror's Fourth Epoch Trier, closely linked to the Demoness pathway, she quickly had an answer.

It bore a striking resemblance to a Demoness of Pleasure's spider silk!

Could it be left behind by a high-level Demoness? Franca imagined a scene: a colossal pitch-black, half-human spider, nestled silently in the depths of the gray fog, extending spider silk that seemed to possess a life of its own, attempting to locate and capture its prey.

After covering more than ten steps in a sprint, Lumian was pleasantly surprised to notice the formless entity slowly retracting. It no longer actively caressed him, but given their dense presence, occasional brushes or touches were inevitable.

This change appeared to be a response to his proactive approach towards the source of the formless entities.

These formless entities seemed to single out those attempting to escape!

Upon breaking free from the narrow street and delving into the thick gray fog, Lumian suddenly felt his hair stand on end, a chilling sensation running down his spine.

His intuition warned of immense danger ahead, a threat capable of obliterating them all. The consequences of getting closer were beyond imagination.

Franca and the others involuntarily slowed down. The horror felt palpable, like a loaded revolver pressed against their foreheads, poised to fire at any moment.

Lumian clenched his teeth and pressed on.

Having chosen to trust Termiboros's advice, he needed to endure until there was evidence to the contrary. Otherwise, he might as well do something else from the beginning!

He didn't halt, and Jenna and the others didn't dare to either. They resembled fools aware of an impending cliff, understanding their insignificance, yet choosing to rush forward, like an idiot.

At that moment, Lumian caught sight from the corner of his eye of black flames erupting over Jenna's body. Pain etched her face, fear mirrored in her eyes.

Crack! Jenna shattered like a mirror, only to reappear, still engulfed in black flames and frost.

Her eyes pleaded with Lumian.

Instinctively, Lumian raised his left hand, as if to aid Jenna. However, a brief moment of hesitation swept over him, and he withdrew his hand, fixing his gaze ahead.

Don't pull companions!

Despair, surprise, and resentment filled Jenna's eyes instantly.

She coughed and came to a standstill.

Swiftly ensnared by the formless entities, she was dragged deeper into the gray fog.

Franca, witnessing this, had an immediate change in expression, ready to offer assistance when Lumian's instructions flashed through her mind.

She hesitated.

In that moment, Jenna's expression transformed into one of pure hatred, blood seeping from the pores on her face. A shrill scream escaped her lips, akin to a curse echoing towards everyone.

Seeing this, Lumian and the others experienced a strange sense of relief.

This Jenna seemed more like a Mirror Person!

Amidst the shrill scream, Jenna vanished into the depths of the gray fog, her voice abruptly silenced.

Almost simultaneously, Lumian caught Jenna in his peripheral vision, sprinting beside him with an anxious and nervous expression.

As expected! Lumian roughly comprehended why Termiboros had cautioned against pulling companions.

In this realm, a companion could seamlessly switch with their mirror counterpart at any moment. Assisting the "Mirror Person" risked harm to their true companion, leading to complete assimilation into this place, becoming "food" for the entity at the source of the formless objects.

Dammit! Couldn't you be more explicit? These reasons aren't particularly intricate. You insist on us experiencing them ourselves and overcoming them! Cursing Termiboros inwardly, Lumian pressed on with even more determination.

In the subsequent encounters, similar challenges arose multiple times. Yet, armed with experience, they refrained from resisting or attempting escape. They resisted the impulse to aid their companions.

Lumian and the others, focused on their path, ran straight using the black pillar as a guide. Occasionally, they bypassed obstacles.

Finally, the black pillar loomed not far ahead.

Simultaneously, Lumian, Anthony, and the rest were astonished to find that the imminent danger, on the verge of colliding with them, had mysteriously vanished.

No, it hadn't disappeared. It was now behind Lumian and the group—distant!

Running toward danger results in moving away from it? Just like the pale-black stone brick area in the wilderness, the direction here is twisted and chaotic? Amid Lumian's surprise, he didn't glance back, nor did he pause to celebrate. He persisted, sprinting toward the black pillar.

Had he not set a resolute example, Franca and Jenna might have turned around. Nonetheless, they pressed forward, a sense of relief mingling with lingering fear.

After covering dozens of meters, the quartet reached the square where the black pillar stood.

The ground was paved with pale-black stone bricks, and numerous grayish-white stone pillars lay in ruins, only a few remnants remaining.

Compared to the black pillars, these "surviving" grayish-white stone pillars were as inconspicuous as ants.

The colossal black pillar surpassed even the Krismona Night Pillar Lumian had witnessed on the third level of the catacombs. It stretched into the sky, seeming to burn with formless flames, its destination shrouded in mystery.

The scene brought to Lumian's mind the pale-black stone bricks in the wilderness outside and the numerous grayish-white stone pillars in the vicinity, but nothing akin to the black pillar.

Had the Night Pillar in the wilderness collapsed and been destroyed? Did that event lead to the old bones crawling out, causing the corruption in Building 13 on Avenue du Marché? Was it then mended by constructing the catacombs and relocating countless corpses? Lumian ventured a guess based on these thoughts.

Franca and Jenna surveyed the square ahead, observing that the area surrounding the black pillar had sunk into the ground. Below, there seemed to be white magma flowing, and faint black tentacles lurked.

Though there were no explicit warnings of danger, Lumian and the others sensed that this might be even more dangerous than the entity they had previously encountered.

Next to the black pillar stood a 1.78-meter-tall snowman. Its frosty face, cracked to form eyes, nose, and mouth, lacked ears.

As Lumian's gaze nonchalantly swept across the snowman, it abruptly froze.

He noticed a dark stain on the snowman's right eye, as if it wore a monocle.

Amon? Lumian startled, a desire to flee taking hold.

At that moment, Termiboros's majestic voice echoed in his ears.

“It's dead.”

Dead... Lumian breathed a sigh of relief.

It made sense. Amon, a nobleman of the Fourth Epoch's Tudor Empire, wouldn't be exempt from the casualties of the divine war. It was plausible that dozens, even hundreds of avatars perished back then. Retrieving them might not have been feasible in the circumstances.

For some reason, Lumian detected a trace of joy in Termiboros's concise words.

Observing the snowman, Anthony suddenly felt his forehead heat up, and his breath turned hot. His Spirit Body rapidly weakened.

“I'm infected,” he calmly informed his companions.

Ailment... Lumian glanced at the black pillar again.

Could this be the true form of the Krismona Night Pillar?

Even the figurine of the Primordial Demoness can't stem the corruption of ailments in this place?

Franca's heart skipped a beat as she instructed Jenna, “Take out that figurine.”

Simultaneously, she reached into her pocket and pulled out the Primordial Demoness figurine crafted from bone.

After Jenna handed her the black one, Franca motioned for Anthony to come closer and observed his expression.

“How do you feel now?”

“It seems better. I'm... I'm getting better.” Anthony scrutinized his physical condition earnestly.

Franca smiled.

“I knew it. How could Jenna and I be fine, but you're sick?”

“Looks like we have to maintain a certain distance from the figurines.”

As soon as she finished speaking, blazing white Fire Ravens soared out from behind the black pillar, hurtling toward them.

Then, a figure emerged. It was Gardner Martin, attired in a black formal suit and yellow vest, an unusual sight.

His gaze fixed on the black figurine in Jenna's hand and the bone statue in Franca's, revealing a longing expression.

Chapter 486 The Mirror People's Conspiracy

As the blazing-white Fire Ravens erupted from behind the black pillar, Lumian's reflexes kicked in.

While Franca, engrossed in deciphering the cause of Anthony's ailment, Lumian seemingly engaged in the discussion. Yet, beneath the facade, he—a Hunter—maintained a vigilant stance, keenly aware of his surroundings.

In this dangerous and ominous setting, he couldn't afford to focus solely on conversation.

Lumian thrust his palms towards the oncoming blazing-white Fire Ravens. In a swift motion, a colossal crimson fireball materialized, hastily intercepting the impending assault.

However, before it could reach its target, the unstable structure caused it to detonate.

Amidst the explosive chaos, a shockwave, laced with flames, surged forward and sideways, engulfing nearly all the blazing-white Fire Ravens like a torrent.

Confronting the fiery wave head-on, the Fire Ravens staggered, losing stability in the storm. They prematurely blossomed, transforming into a dazzling display of fireworks.

The Fire Ravens circling from the side were also affected by the explosive waves, deviating from their intended trajectories or being partially extinguished.

Hunters, particularly those at higher Sequences like Pyromaniac and Conspirer, proved unparalleled in defending against the swarm attacks of Fire Ravens.

Thanks to this interference, Franca and Jenna, both Assassins, along with the Psychiatrist, Anthony Reid, effortlessly dodged the tracking-capable, blazing-white Fire Ravens. They observed as these dangerous projectiles landed on the ground, setting off fiery eruptions.

In the blink of an eye, Franca vanished, and Jenna swiftly moved toward the nearest grayish-white stone pillar. She scattered fluorescent powder and chanted the Invisibility incantation in Hermes.

Anthony, seemingly back in the fray, rolled and sprinted, encircling another relatively intact grayish-white stone pillar in an attempt to find cover.

Lumian maintained his position, hands poised to push forward. His golden-black hair swirled in the ordinary “gust of wind” that followed the massive fireball's explosion.

Looking at Gardner Martin, unusually tall and face marked with bloodstains, Lumian taunted, “Is this your way of greeting? Sending a swarm of Fire Ravens to welcome us? Hey, what's with the change in appearance and the missing armor? Are you the mirror's Gardner Martin?”

Gardner Martin, donned in a black formal suit and yellow vest, ceased his attack. Instead, he paused and sneered, “Sooner or later, I'll become the real Gardner Martin.”

Observing the situation, Lumian didn't rush to “teleport” behind Gardner Martin. He chuckled and remarked, “So, you're admitting to being a counterfeit?”

His aim was to provoke and incite the other party, unraveling the motives of these Mirror People.

Surely, their purpose wasn't merely to replace genuine forms and return to the real world for a serene life.

It had to be one of the objectives, but not the sole or primary one. The actions of a Mirror Person were too intricate for such a straightforward motive.

Mirror Gardner Martin scanned Lumian's surroundings, as if seeking the invisible Franca and Jenna.

In response to Lumian's mockery, he sneered and stated, “Counterfeit? We, the counterfeits, might be the only ones to secure victory and survive.

“Look at the Fourth Epoch Trier, destroyed and reduced to ruins. Yet, it persists within the mirror. All its citizens remain alive.”

You call that living? Lumian Lumian refrained from interrupting the Mirror Gardner's resentful narrative.

The formidable Beyonder with a peculiar form chuckled.

“Counterfeit? Countless members of the Iron and Blood Cross Order you usually encounter are already on our side. They've emerged from the mirror, spawned since the unexpected seal incident decades ago and the ensuing power leak. We've been covertly engaging in similar activities.

“Otherwise, how would Gardner Martin, Tony Twain, and Diest have known about Vermonda Sauron's underground entrance into the seal? How would they have recognized it as a Sequence 1 Conqueror Beyonder characteristic? How could they have been so focused on exploring the underground and inadvertently influenced?”

“...” Lumian was taken aback.

So, this involves the plans of your Mirror People?

Damn it, how many factions are entangled in this, and how many conspiracies are woven together?

While Gardner's words in the mirror shed light on the murky situation, making many details more plausible, Lumian still found it absurd.

Aren't there too many factions and conspiracies? And behind these conspiracies, even more conspiracies, as intricate as spiderwebs!

Mirror Gardner's expression returned to normal as he smiled and said,

“Ever wonder how the Iron and Blood Cross Order discovered the black figurine? How did they realize they could exploit the uniqueness of this mirror world to bypass the seal?”

“Do you dare to keep carrying that figurine? It holds no practical value for you. Why not hand it over to me, and I'll let you leave this mirror world?”

“Don't worry; you're not Gardner Martin. I can't replace you. I harbor no insurmountable malice towards you.”

So, were the Fire Ravens from earlier merely a greeting? Lumian laughed and inquired, “Essentially, that figurine holds great value for you? What do you people intend to do with it?”

Lumian suspected that the Iron and Blood Cross Order's discovery or acquisition of the black Primordial Demoness figurine was orchestrated by these Mirror People. Their plan was undoubtedly intricate.

Mirror Gardner's lips curled as he replied, “Did you think I'd tell you?”

“Whom do you people serve?” Lumian interjected.

As the Mirror Gardner's mouth opened, his expression suddenly darkened, and his eyes brimmed with hatred.

“That's all the answers!”

Observing the Mirror Gardner's sudden shift, Lumian had a profound realization that these Mirror People could maintain normalcy most of the time and seamlessly replace the originals. However, when certain matters arose, they couldn't suppress their monstrous side.

Mirror Gardner seemed poised to convince Lumian and the others to surrender the black Primordial Demoness figurine when a figure materialized behind him.

Franca, lacking an Assassin suit, revealed a Hidden Blade from her left wrist. Enveloped in black flames, she thrust it into Mirror Gardner's back, causing the blood-stained figure to shatter like a mirror.

He reappeared on the other side of the black pillar, on the fringe of the collapsed area, wearing a sinister smile. He declared, “You're stalling for time and completing preparations. Me too!”

As he finished speaking, a man emerged from the debris of a crumbled grayish-white stone pillar outside the collapsed area, dripping with magma.

His face bore bloodstains too, and his short flaxen-colored hair, along with slightly thick brown eyebrows, framed aqublue eyes and thin lips. Despite his unremarkable appearance, he uncannily resembled Franca.

Witnessing this figure, a phrase flashed through Franca's mind: “It's over...”

It was her past self, her former identity as a man!

Ever since Franca began suspecting that this area represented the mirror's Fourth Epoch Trier, she harbored concerns that her past self would surface, exposing his true identity to Jenna. Now, her fears materialized.

It's over. Social death... Franca's mind raced as a woman emerged from behind another intact grayish-white stone pillar.

Adorned in a white shirt, a black vest, and dark pants, her pure black hair cascading over her shoulders, she exuded an imposing beauty. Despite her deep and delicate facial features, her blue eyes betrayed a sense of mockery.

Uh, t-this is eerily similar to Ciel... The mirror version of him is a woman? Franca swiftly scanned her surroundings, concealing herself again.

Behind different grayish-white stone pillars, two more figures emerged. One donned mercenary attire, with handsomely styled flaxen-colored hair, reminiscent of Jenna. The other wore military-green tops and bottoms, exuding a mature charm with a slightly plump figure. Beautiful with eyes as deep as an ancient forest pond.

Dammit! A male version of Jenna and a female version of Anthony! Anthony looks even more handsome and charming! This is different from the mirror world outside! Franca felt puzzled yet relieved.

This could provide a plausible explanation for "his" former appearance to resurface!

Lumian, equally perplexed by his mirror counterpart having a different gender, and the others weren't experiencing the same thing as Franca. Even if the mirror reflected their past selves, it shouldn't manifest like this.

If this was a fusion of a Demoness's mirror world, the stacking of feminization, and one's past, Jenna should be a woman, no matter what!

As Lumian's thoughts raced, he considered the Hunter pathway's ability to transform women into men, which was adjacent to the Demoness pathway.

Could it be that this mirror world is influenced by the Blood Emperor's corpse or residual divine power? Is it akin to Mr. Fool and the Celestial Worthy of Heaven and Earth for Blessings—a power controlling these two pathways leaked, forming a unique mirror world that causes an overall reversal? Lumian didn't delve too deeply into it, as Mirror Gardner and his four helpers attacked.

The "Mirror Person" in a black formal suit and yellow vest didn't conceal his hatred, excitement, and desire.

In the wilderness, the entire ground seemed to sink two to three meters.

Diest's massive iron soldiers and yellowish-skinned giant entourage stood at the edge of the hurricane. Occasionally, one of them would self-destruct, reducing to fragments.

Despite the wary standoff between the president of the Iron and Blood Cross Order and Snarner Einhorn, They directed Their attention to the mildly intelligent monster that appeared to have lost control and was more challenging to deal with.

In the intense battle, They managed to restrain or knock Vermonda Sauron to the ground two or three times, but They themselves were also affected, in a dire state that hindered Them from seizing the opportunity.

In the current moment, They found themselves temporarily disabled.

Suddenly, a surge of knowledge materialized into a beautiful woman wearing a brown captain's coat, with long chestnut hair and eyes resembling the blue sea.

Snarner, Diest, and the others' hearts tightened, fearing that the newcomer would take the initiative and ultimately claim the Conqueror Beyond characteristic.

They all recognized the woman:

The eldest daughter of the deceased Emperor Roselle, Bernadette Gustav!

She, too, was an Angel!

Holding a pale-golden lamp, Bernadette observed the Angels' battle without direct involvement. Transforming into a torrent of knowledge once again, she surged towards the gray fog-shrouded Fourth Epoch Trier.

It was as if She had casually glanced at them while passing by.

“...” Snarner and Diest were initially taken aback by Her actions, but They swiftly regained Their composure and resumed their battle.

Chapter 487 Self-Confrontation

In Fourth Epoch Trier, shrouded in a dense gray fog, Voisin Sanson, with thick blond locks, a well-kept beard, and deep-set features, yielded to the whims of destiny. He threaded through the chaotic streets, drawing nearer to the faintly discernible grand palace.

Abruptly, the stone slab beneath his feet shattered, and with swift precision, a skeletal hand shot up, seizing his ankle.

At the same instant, a knight adorned in jet-black armor charged on horseback. Wielding a broadsword ablaze in ghostly white flames, he slashed diagonally at Voisin Sanson.

Voisin Sanson's form swiftly morphed into an ethereal state, resilient against the onslaught of the pitch-black knight. However, with the passage of time, it gradually faded until it dissipated entirely.

His true self materialized almost 20 meters distant, fixating on the adversary.

Beneath the black visor of the knight, two dark-red flames flickered like candlelight. A grotesque wound, with pale-white intestines protruding, adorned its chest and abdomen. Perched on a desiccated white horse resembling a skeletal corpse,

the knight presided over a vast square wilderness. Within this expanse, myriad figures roamed. Some draped in white linen, their faces pallid and vacant. Others reduced to mere skeletons, while some concealed their visages behind masks of white paper.

On the fringes of the wilderness, a dark-red cradle-shaped carriage advanced, drawn by two abyssal, Demon-like creatures boasting goat horns.

Seated within the carriage was the regal Madame Pualis. Adorned with a flower crown and a green dress, her long brown hair was elegantly tied high. Bright brown eyes gazed forth as she held a small bowl crafted from green jade in one hand and an oak branch entwined with mistletoe in the other.

“What do you want?” Voisin Sanson inquired with a calm, resonant voice.

Madame Pualis responded, her smile unwavering, “Revenge, naturally.”

Her eyes, once warm, gradually turned cold, but the grin on her face endured.

“Revenge...” Voisin Sanson echoed the word, a note of confusion in his voice. After a brief pause, he furrowed his brow and questioned, “For Aurore?”

In that moment, the undead and several Death Knights scattered across the wilderness withheld their attacks on Voisin Sanson, as if anticipating the emotional release sought by the Madame they served.

Seated within the carriage, Madame Pualis offered a self-deprecating smile.

“For a Villain, one-sided love is destined to be fleeting. Passion inevitably wanes quickly. Yet, she met her end during that brief period, becoming a thorn lodged deep in my heart, unextractable. The mere thought of it is painful, fueling my anger and resentment.

“And all of this was caused by you!

“I desired to strike when we crossed paths earlier, but the circumstances weren't conducive. Lady Moon had yet to make her entrance, and I couldn't afford to delay the Great Mother's affairs for a personal vendetta. But now, in this quiet moment...”

Voisin Sanson narrowed his eyes. “After receiving the Great Mother's boon, shouldn't these delicate and easily shattered emotions be eradicated? Aren't you worried about undermining the grand objectives of the great entities?”

Madame Pualis chuckled and replied, “There are more fitting and potent individuals for that task. Like Lady Moon. As for me...”

Her expression softened, revealing a trace of wistfulness.

“In the past, I put my faith in the Great Mother to attain strength and break free from the constraints of the antiquated Churches. I didn't have to concern myself with moral judgments or public opinion. No need to fear being attacked by some past victim at any moment, free to do as I pleased. Now, what I desire is vengeance!”

As Madame Pualis concluded her words, a pair of ethereal wings unfolded behind her, adorned with brown feathers of human size.

“Ah!”

A sharply discordant and anguished scream escaped her lips.

The remaining glass in the nearby structures shattered. Voisin Sanson's mind reverberated, as if he could sense his Spirit Body wailing.

In the rundown square, suspected to be the whereabouts of Krismona Night Pillar, Lumian zeroed in on his feminine “mirror self.”

Only he comprehended the extent of the trouble he posed!

He might not be the most formidable presence among the gathering, but his unique skills and array of items could swiftly tip the scales in his favor. It was imperative to neutralize him in advance!

As for the mirror version of Gardner Martin, it was suspected that he possessed Mirror Substitution—proving challenging to dispatch swiftly. Lumian's strategy was to eliminate the auxiliary threats first before zeroing in on him.

When the moment arrived, the combined effects of Psychiatrist's Frenzy, Flog's strikes, and the arousal triggered by Beatrice's Necklace would exploit the psychological vulnerabilities of the Mirror People. Their abundance of negative emotions and the potent desire to achieve and supplant made them susceptible.

A dark mark on Lumian's shoulder illuminated, and his form abruptly vanished, reappearing behind the heroic-looking female Lumian, similarly attired but with black hair.

Almost simultaneously, the blue eyes of the female Lumian gleamed with a mocking glint.

Then, she vanished.

Her figure materialized behind Anthony Reid, mostly concealed by the grayish-white stone pillar.

Spirit World Traversal!

She knew the technique as well!

Dammit! Lumian cursed inwardly. The dark mark on his right shoulder emitted another shadowy glow.

He had to hurry to his aid.

While he had considered the possibility of his mirror self possessing teleportation abilities, he had anticipated that the other party would target him, prioritizing his elimination—the most significant threat. At worst, they might exchange positions. However, he hadn't expected the female Lumian to focus on Anthony Reid.

In that critical moment, Lumian pieced together the rationale.

Primarily, the Mirror Person harbored an intense resentment toward the original counterpart, driven by a desire to supplant them. Given their profound psychological issues, these could be effectively countered by Psychiatrist's Frenzy and similar abilities. Secondly, Anthony Reid lacked proficiency in evasion and lacked diverse substitutes. His defense wasn't substantially superior to that of an ordinary person, rendering him susceptible to swift elimination, thereby reducing their team's strength.

As Lumian engaged in discourse with the Mirror Gardner Martin, Anthony Reid remained concealed behind a nearby grayish-white stone pillar. He observed his surroundings and assessed the enemy's mental state, strategizing his actions for the impending battle.

He had noticed the appearance of his feminine version, as well as the Mirror Gardner, male Jenna, and male Franca to either hide in the shadows or vanish. The complexity of the situation intensified, and he instinctively sensed the impending challenge posed by these formidable adversaries.

As the figure of the female Lumian vanished, Anthony Reid, familiar with Lumian's Spirit World Traversal, quickly discerned the monster's intentions and thought process.

She was employing “teleportation,” with him as her target. Her primary focus was dealing with the Psychiatrist!

As these realizations raced through his mind, Anthony didn't attempt to evade to either side.

Given the proximity and his limited physical abilities, escaping the danger zone before female Lumian unleashed her subsequent onslaught was an impossibility.

Instead, he opted for an offensive approach, intending to disrupt any forthcoming storm of attacks with his own strikes!

Anthony forcibly twisted his body, his eyes widening in silent determination, a faint golden hue tinting his gaze.

Then, he confronted the captivating and seemingly welcoming figure of female Lumian.

The other party harrumphed.

Spell of Harrumph!

Two beams of white light shot out from female Lumian's nostrils, striking Anthony.

As the white beams reflected in Anthony's eyes, he made no attempt to dodge or evade. Instead, he invoked Frenzy.

With a thud, he crumpled to the ground, unconscious.

Female Lumian's facial muscles contorted, and dark-red blood vessels emerged beneath her skin, resembling tiny fire serpents coming to life.

Her blue eyes radiated violence and madness, while crimson flames bordering on white emanated from her body.

Lumian materialized beside her and the unconscious Anthony. Choosing not to employ the Spell of Harrumph, he clenched his right hand, enveloped in almost blazing-white flames, and delivered a punch to his “mirror self's” head.

With a cracking sound, female Lumian's body shattered like a mirror.

She, too, possessed Mirror Substitution!

Upon witnessing this, Lumian cursed inwardly once more.

Dogsh*t!

Despite anticipating that these Mirror People were closely related to mirrors and might have multiple Mirror Substitutions, thus opting for a flaming punch instead of the Spell of Harrumph to conserve spirituality, the confirmation left him frustrated and angered.

Only by facing it personally did he realize how repulsive abilities like Mirror Substitution and Paper Figurine Substitutes were!

Now, there were a total of five enemies with Mirror Substitution. Four of them had even replicated their team's abilities. How could they possibly prevail in such a situation?

In that moment, the flames dissipated from Lumian's fiery fist, precisely as expected, landing on Anthony Reid.

The scalding pain abruptly snapped the Psychiatrist out of his stupor. Reacting instinctively, he rolled to smother the flames.

Suddenly, Mirror Gardner Martin's cold, smiling voice echoed from an unseen location.

“How does it feel? Are my aides proving stronger than you expected?”

“Unfortunately, they hail from profound mirror images, and their genders have been reversed. They can't replace you and return to the real world.

“What do you say? Surrender the figurine in exchange for my friendship and an opportunity to depart this place? It's of no use to you.”

If you're so powerful, why don't you just kill us and take the figurine? Are you wary of something? For example, Termiboros's escape? Or are you deliberately using such words to weaken our resistance and ensure your own safety to the greatest extent? Or are you actually not strong and are stalling for time for some development? A series of guesses raced through Lumian's mind.

Meanwhile, Anthony Reid, having extinguished the flames, rose to his feet and coughed.

Lumian's throat itched as he heard that.

Soon, Franca and Jenna emerged from invisibility amid uncontrollable coughing, having intended to encircle the female Anthony.

The voice of the Mirror Gardner resonated, accompanied by evident laughter.

“I neglected to mention that the Fire Raven I initially employed carries an Affliction disease. Igniting and detonating them only aids the spread of the disease.

“Those two figurines can only suppress non-conscious diseases, but this—this is under my control!”

Chapter 488 Mutual Provocation

Fire Raven fused with an Affliction disease? Is that even possible? Will I pull off something similar when I switch to the Hunter pathway? Is this the merging of different abilities through pathway switching? It's more unique and bizarre? As Franca coughed, surprise, solemnity, and a touch of anticipation painted her expression.

Even though she was compelled to break her invisibility, Franca found herself in close quarters with the female Anthony. Her left hand rose, directing the Ring of Punishment, snug around her thumb, at the Mirror Person.

Yet, Franca refrained from employing Psychic Piercing. It was a calculated move to confound the target and any hidden foes.

Having observed Lumian's skirmish, Franca suspected that female Anthony also possessed Mirror Substitution. Psychic Piercing wouldn't yield the desired effect.

In that case, why not afflict the opponent with a negative state that wouldn't trigger Mirror Substitution?

Beatrice's Necklace, dangling from Franca's chest, reflected the engulfing flames, stirring female Anthony's ambitions to life.

Franca had long discerned that these Mirror People harbored resentment and animosity toward their authentic selves. Their burning desire to prove themselves was their weakness.

The longing for success served as their greatest vulnerability.

As two coughs reached female Anthony's ears, she, being a Psychiatrist, mirrored the choice made by her male counterpart.

Unable to evade the ensuing assaults, she swiveled halfway around, locking eyes with Franca and Jenna, who had already materialized.

Her pupils turned vertical and shifted to a pale-golden hue.

Awe!

Unlike her male counterpart, female Anthony opted for Awe, considering the presence of two assailants. This ability had the potential to influence both targets.

The aura of a dragon—the pinnacle of the food chain—swiftly descended. Franca and Jenna couldn't help but tremble in fear.

One of them found themselves immobilized, while the other sought refuge behind the nearest grayish-white stone pillar.

Before female Anthony could unleash Awe, Jenna, still coughing, seized the moment. She flung a half-blood-stained cloak, causing the bone flute and wooden box to tumble toward the target's feet.

With her other hand, Jenna pulled the trigger of her revolver, propelling a yellow bullet engulfed in black flames towards female Anthony.

However, in that critical moment, Awe took effect. Jenna's right hand quivered, causing the bullet to veer off course.

Amidst the gunfire, the shadowed Mirror Gardner narrowly evaded the bullet's trajectory.

Swiftly moving, he leaped to the ground, dodging the projectile, and rolled into another shadow, vanishing from sight.

Unharmful, female Anthony's eyes seemed to blaze with flames. She abandoned the idea of casting Frenzy on Franca, who succumbed to the effects of Awe, redirecting her focus to the coughing and moving male version of herself.

Thud! Thud! Thud! She charged forward, determined to prove herself by defeating the male Anthony.

At that moment, figures materialized behind the frozen Franca and the fleeing Jenna. They were male Franca and male Jenna, who had previously concealed themselves with their abilities.

The former aimed his hidden blade at Franca's back and struck with all his might. The latter fixed a glare at Jenna's back and pulled the trigger.

With two cracking sounds, Franca and Jenna's bodies shattered like mirrors, allowing them to escape the effects of Awe. However, their throats remained irritated. They had no choice but to endure the discomfort and occasionally cough as they faced off against male Franca and Jenna.

Lumian's throat itched, and his head, accustomed to enduring high temperatures, still radiated warmth.

As an Ascetic, this level of illness couldn't challenge his endurance. He glanced at female Lumian, not far away, and crimson flames enveloped him, transforming into a fireball that shot forward.

Female Lumian, her face still marked by blood vessels, sneered and vanished from her spot once more.

Spirit World Traversal again!

Her figure reappeared behind the rapidly moving Anthony, as if she wouldn't stop until she had vanquished the Psychiatrist.

Just then, the fireball that had just shot out dissipated prematurely, morphing into a stream of light.

In the stream of light, Lumian's figure flashed as he "teleported" to Anthony's side.

He had been feigning an attack, anticipating female Lumian's use of Spirit World Traversal. He seized the opportunity to closely follow and block her!

To achieve this, Lumian not only destabilized the fireball's structure in advance but also utilized Lie's ability to strengthen his control over flames.

Appearing beside Anthony as swiftly as female Lumian, he promptly raised his iron-black boxing gloves and unleashed a flurry of chain punches!

Simultaneously, Lumian conjured the desire he longed to witness in his mind.

The desire to replace a real person!

This desire proved easier to trigger, and its detonation even better!

Having already adorned the Flog boxing gloves, Lumian aspired to exploit this state, potentially immune to Mirror Substitution, to impact the target and temporarily incapacitate his "mirror self" in combat.

With a resounding bang, Lumian's left and right punches met the resistance of female Lumian's raised hand. However, she lacked boxing gloves, and her forearm bore several bleeding punctures from Flog's short thorns.

Her eyes brimmed with escalating resentment and malice, as though she yearned for Lumian's demise in the very next second.

She had entirely forsaken her pursuit of Anthony Reid.

Bam! Bam! Bam! Lumian unleashed a barrage of punches, incessantly thwarting his mirror self's attempts to employ other abilities.

He persisted in taunting his counterpart.

“Hey, no Flog boxing gloves? Are you so feeble that you can't even mirror a mystical item below the demigod level?”

On the one hand, Lumian sought an emotional release. On the other, he aimed to use Provocation to incense his female self, heightening the likelihood of the Flog boxing gloves triggering the other's desires and emotions.

Female Lumian didn't hide her anger. Blocking Lumian's punches, she taunted with Provocation, “Imbecile! If you had detected Aurore's anomaly earlier, the issue might have been resolved.

“Imbecile! If it were me, I would've undoubtedly handled it better than you!”

Lumian's mind buzzed. Even as an Ascetic, he found himself affected by Provocation.

This frustration and guilt had long been buried deep in his heart, one of the root causes of all his pain.

His eyes turned bloodshot, a blend of embarrassment, anger, and a compelling urge to self-destruct surged from the depths of his being.

His attacks intensified as he sought to infuse the thought into his right hand. He wanted to witness the outcome if he unleashed the Blood Emperor's aura here in the mirror's Fourth Epoch Trier.

When the time came, everyone present—Voisin Sanson and the other gods bestowed from different regions—would meet their demise together!

Just then, Lumian's thoughts abruptly cleared. His emotions and impulses felt as though caressed by a gentle breeze. The melodious melody his sister Aurore used to hum seemed to echo in his ears, swiftly calming him.

“Placate!”

Psychiatrist Anthony Reid's Placate.

Seizing the opportunity while Lumian relentlessly pounded female Lumian with punches, Anthony distanced himself. As he eluded the pursuit of his female self, he circled back to Lumian's vicinity. Sensing his companion's volatile mood, he promptly cast Placate.

Affected by Beatrice's Necklace, female Anthony only had eyes for her true self, indifferent to the fate of female Lumian.

Suppressing the urge to self-destruct, Lumian witnessed female Lumian teetering on the verge of collapse under his relentless onslaught, her expression contorted. Franca and Jenna's coughing intensified, hindering the use of their abilities. Their male counterparts seized the moment, forcing them to employ Mirror Substitution once again.

Franca was still okay, but Jenna likely had only one Mirror Substitution remaining.

Observing this, Lumian, his forehead ablaze, felt a mix of concern, nervousness, and confusion.

Where was Mirror Gardner?

In such a chaotic scenario, any attack—whether directed at Franca, Jenna, himself, or Anthony—would prove highly effective. He might even succeed in eliminating them one by one. After all, he was a Reaper.

Yet, Mirror Gardner refrained from attacking. Only the echoing, mocking laughter signaled his continued presence. He persisted in persuading Lumian and the others to surrender the black figurine and cease resisting.

“Hmph!”

Seizing the opportunity when Lumian's assault momentarily slowed, female Lumian, pushed to her limits, invoked the Spell of Harrumph.

Two beams of white light struck Lumian's body. His vision darkened, and he experienced the same sensation as his previous adversaries.

Crack!

A mirror shattered on Franca's body, and Lumian materialized beside her.

As Lumian's thoughts returned, a flurry of ideas raced through his mind.

After spreading the disease with the sick ravens, Mirror Gardner refrained from employing any other offensive abilities. Instead, he chose to hide in the shadows or conceal himself...

Wait, it didn't begin with the disease spread by the sick ravens. It began with the emergence of male Franca and the other Mirror People...

Why didn't he attack?

Considering my mirror self's lack of the Flog boxing gloves, she probably doesn't possess the Blood Emperor's aura, Mr. Fool's seal, or Termiboros... The Flog boxing gloves were crafted from the branch of the Tree of Shadow...

The mirror world, despite its apparent danger and terror, shouldn't be incapable of mirroring the Flog boxing gloves...

Suddenly, Lumian had an epiphany.

These four Mirror People weren't naturally formed in the mirror's Fourth Epoch Trier. Mirror Gardner Martin had utilized his unique connection to this place to create them!

It was akin to an ability!

Mirror Gardner's decision not to attack stemmed from his concerted effort to sustain the four Mirror People. He couldn't engage in direct assault; his only recourse was to conceal himself and use words to interfere with the enemy, disrupting their combat will!

As these realizations coursed through his mind, Lumian couldn't help but smile.

Dodging male Franca's attack and anticipating the teleportation of female Lumian, he retrieved the Eye of Truth obtained from Bouvard. Lumian then adorned the peculiar monocle, seemingly fashioned from flesh and blood.

It had the ability to pierce through illusions, perceive reality, and discern the light of spirituality!

Chapter 489 Greed

Despite the severe corruption of the Eye of Truth, its ability to hear the voices of a hidden entity at any moment, and the risk of encountering uncontrollable negative effects, Lumian trusted that Fourth Epoch Trier, with its potent seal isolating external influences, provided a safeguard. Even the boons of evil gods couldn't trace back to their source, making it unlikely for him to hear the Hidden Sage's ravings.

In this realm, there should be no adverse effects when using the Eye of Truth, especially within the mirror's Fourth Epoch Trier.

However, Lumian acknowledged the potential presence of a fallen Angel from the Mystery Pryer pathway or remnants of corresponding divine power. Even with the Eye of Truth, there was a chance of hearing voices he shouldn't. Consequently, Lumian didn't plan to use it extensively. He intended to locate Mirror Gardner Martin and remove the mystical item when the opportunity presented itself.

Through the lens affixed to his eye, Lumian discerned nearly invisible spider silk swaying around Franca, subtly influencing male Jenna and the other Mirror People.

Similarly, male Franca had created a plethora of spider silks, utterly unaffected by the constraints of the term "Witch."

Lumian also took note of the fine snake-like black hair covering the area. They manifested and disappeared, delicately caressing every living being they touched. Their origin seemed to be the black pillar extending into the sky.

Concurrently, Lumian's left eye reflected Mirror Gardner Martin.

Concealed beside a grayish-white stone pillar, he seemed invisible.

Without hesitation, Lumian activated the black mark on his right shoulder, the fifth time since becoming an Ascetic.

With the Eye of Truth in place, he instantaneously vanished, reappearing behind Mirror Gardner.

The corners of Lumian's mouth curled up as he swung his right fist at his exposed foe, who had just realized his concealment had been shattered and had no time to react.

His hands were encased in iron-black boxing gloves adorned with multiple short thorns.

Flog!

In the midst of Mirror Gardner's attempt to lunge forward and transform into a burning-white spear, flying to the opposite side to distance himself, Lumian landed a punch behind his ear.

In a haste, Mirror Gardner could only duck, abruptly contorting as if he were boneless, attempting to somersault away.

Bang!

Lumian's right fist connected with Mirror Gardner's right shoulder.

The impact distorted the other's shoulder, causing his body to stagger, nearly losing balance.

Mirror Gardner's combat prowess proved formidable. Despite tumbling to the ground, he seized the opportunity to pivot.

He was unfazed by the potential of the white beams or being shot in the head; he still possessed Mirror Substitution!

Confronting Lumian, who lunged at him with blood still dripping from his iron-black boxing gloves, Mirror Gardner smiled, his eyes reflecting blatant greed.

This time, Lumian opted to trigger Greed!

In an instant, Mirror Gardner ignited with blazing-white flames, morphing into a spear charging at Lumian.

At this range, he doubted that Lumian could evade the impending attack.

Having committed to close combat, he had to bear the consequences—rendered unable to fully utilize Spirit World Traversal!

Lumian didn't attempt to dodge, nor did he plan to. He swiftly adjusted his posture, watching as the blazing-white spear collided with his right chest.

His defense against flames was robust. The blazing-white spear took nearly two seconds to burn through his skin and flesh.

Yet, Lumian maintained a smile on his face. The pain only contorted his countenance, a testament to the resilience of an Ascetic.

Anthony Reid's Placate had indeed restored Lumian's composure, but the psychological issues brought to light lingered for the time being.

With two resounding bangs, Lumian seized the opportunity to deliver a left and right punch to the burning-white spear.

He exploited every chance to kindle Mirror Gardner's desires and emotions.

Ultimately, the blazing-white spear pierced Lumian's right chest, propelling him more than ten meters through the air.

Lumian's smile retained a touch of frenzy. Adorned with a silver earring, he withdrew his right palm, pressed against the grievous wound on his chest, and slid downward.

The injury swiftly spread to his abdomen, and almost-white crimson flames erupted from Lumian's palm, consuming his mangled flesh.

He willingly accepted increased risk in the future to mitigate the impact of his injuries.

With that, his figure melded into the void.

Just as Mirror Gardner emerged from the dissipating blazing-white flaming spear, Lumian materialized behind him.

Bang! Bang!

Lumian swung his fists again, targeting Mirror Gardner's arms, denying him a chance to catch his breath.

He opted not to strike vital points, fearing that excessive damage might trigger Mirror Substitution.

As Mirror Gardner transformed into a blazing-white spear to assail Lumian, female Lumian, intending to “teleport” over to assist, stood stunned, as if temporarily losing autonomy.

Likewise, both male Franca and male Jenna exhibited similar reactions, as if their resemblance to real people had momentarily waned.

Franca and Jenna, in dire straits, seized the opportunity to catch their breath.

Although they didn't immediately comprehend the reason, they keenly sensed that Mirror Gardner held the key to the problem.

Lumian's assault on the leader had brought about such a change!

Franca, relying on her experience, swiftly instructed Jenna, “Give me that... Cough! Arrow!”

She needed the potent self-healing abilities of the Arrow of the Bloodthirsty to withstand the infectious disease and recuperate to a relatively healthy state within a specific timeframe. Franca aimed to delay female Lumian and the other Mirror People, creating an optimal environment for Lumian to confront Mirror Gardner solo.

Her only hope rested on Lumian catalyzing positive changes before the infection and illness exacerbated, outpacing the effectiveness of her self-healing abilities.

Jenna had intended to use the Arrow of the Bloodthirsty herself. Despite having used it twice already—with another use risking a collapse of her body—she was willing to disregard the consequences in the current dire situation.

However, upon hearing Franca's request, she hesitated momentarily before tossing the obsidian arrow to Franca.

From Jenna's perspective, Franca, a Sequence 6 Demoness of Pleasure armed with numerous mystical items, possessed significantly more strength than herself. Thus, Franca's temporary recovery held greater benefit for the ongoing battle.

Franca caught the Arrow of the Bloodthirsty and plunged it into her chest.

Observing that female Lumian and the other Mirror People had regained their composure, becoming lively once again,

Franca's lake-blue eyes silently transformed to a fiery red. The rubber band securing her ponytail snapped as if corroded, allowing her flaxen-colored hair to billow in the air, enhancing her enchanting allure.

Her increasingly frequent coughs momentarily subsided, and the invisible “spider silk” surrounding her ceased its gradual, silent encroachment on male Franca, male Jenna, and female Lumian, no longer tightening and ensnaring them layer by layer.

Like mirror images, Franca and Jenna felt their bodies grow heavy, their limbs constricted.

From the outset, male Franca had been covertly using spider silk. Only when there was no way to further ensnare them layer by layer in secret did he reveal it.

In an instant, Franca and the others were immobilized. Female Lumian, who had just “teleported” over, was the least affected by the spider silk and was skilled in using flames. She swiftly activated Spirit World Traversal in a crimson light, heading towards Lumian and Mirror Gardner's battlefield. Taking advantage of the momentary pause in female Anthony's actions, Anthony could finally counterattack.

Enduring the terrifying cough, dizziness, and fever, he raised the revolver purchased from the black market and pulled the trigger at the Mirror Person, clearly more charming than him.

At that moment, no one interrupted their “internecine attacks.”

Amidst the gunshots, female Anthony shattered into numerous fragments.

Upon reappearing nearby, she didn't immediately rush to rescue Mirror Gardner. Instead, she continued pursuing Anthony amidst her soaring desire for achievement.

Amidst the sounds of flesh colliding, Lumian landed multiple punches on Mirror Gardner, sending waves of pain through the powerful Beyonder's head and stoking his anger.

His greed made him reluctant to abandon the other four Mirror People and the advantage his side enjoyed on other battlefields. However, if he didn't give up, he wouldn't be able to focus on dealing with Lumian. He found himself restricted in every way and faced a disadvantaged situation.

This was why Lumian had chosen to trigger his Greed!

Bang!

Lumian tightened his fists, delivering a powerful blow to Mirror Gardner.

Mirror Gardner crashed to the ground, instinctively summoning a swarm of crimson, almost white fireballs for protection.

This caught female Lumian off guard as she had just “teleported” over.

Unfazed by the nearly-white crimson fireballs, Lumian swiftly “teleported” toward Mirror Gardner.

The safest spot was, of course, where the caster stood!

Amidst the explosive chaos, Lumian gritted his teeth against the searing pain in his back and landed another punch on Mirror Gardner's face.

The short thorns on the iron-black boxing gloves pierced through skin and flesh.

Suddenly, Mirror Gardner Martin's gaze froze, blood streaming from his eyes, nose, and other wounds.

The intense greed within him erupted, not killing or knocking him out but weakening and disorienting him.

In this dazed state, whether it was female Lumian, male Franca, male Jenna, or female Anthony, they all froze in place. Their bodies rapidly faded, growing more translucent until they vanished.

Witnessing the scene, Lumian straightened up, removing the Flog boxing gloves. He tossed them to Franca and Jenna, ensuring each had one.

Franca noticed the residual blood and grasped Lumian's intent immediately.

Dipping her hand into the blood, she retrieved a mirror, ready to cast a curse.

Lumian had three reasons for opting for the Flog boxing gloves:

Firstly, the ability to stir desires wouldn't trigger Mirror Substitution. Secondly, as a mystical item, it could attract the attention of dangerous entities, causing unpredictable changes that might lead to opportunities amid the chaos.

Thirdly, it provided a chance to “collect” a curse's medium—the target's blood!

Even if his triggered greed couldn't be controlled, leading to Mirror Gardner's Mirror Substitution, Lumian planned to seize the moment when the other Mirror People were temporarily affected. He would throw the Flog boxing gloves to Franca and Jenna, aiding them in intercepting the attacks.

Repeatedly cursing with the possession of the blood, Lumian aimed to challenge how many times Mirror Substitution could be used and find an opportunity to sever the connection.

Flames erupted around Lumian as he transformed into a fireball, distancing himself from Mirror Gardner.

Just as he was about to remove the Eye of Truth, a peculiar sound caught his attention.

Chapter 490 Sounds

The strange sounds Lumian heard echoed from a far-off realm, an elusive destination beyond his grasp.

His heart tightened as he quickly removed the Eye of Truth, but the sounds remained.

Bam! Bam! Bam! The sounds reverberated as if two massive rocks collided. Lumian witnessed sparks flying, and dried leaves and branches catching fire. In the midst of the flames lay scattered bones. The cave, shrouded in darkness with an unknown depth, echoed with distant howls resembling wolves.

Thud! Thud! Thud! A leather drum's beats and ancient musical instruments resonated, creating a solemn, holy, and magnificent atmosphere for Lumian. The scene in his mind shifted to a vast wilderness with a towering altar. A figure, his face veiled with beaded coverings, a splendid headdress, and a flowing black robe, ascended to the highest point. Around him, people with demon-painted faces danced frenziedly to the drumbeat. Suddenly, the sky darkened, and a face appeared from the ominous clouds. The ritualist, with beads sliding aside, revealed a terrified expression.

A distant, haunting voice pierced the clouds, resonating through the desolate land. Lumian felt a profound shake in his mind and body. Before him stretched vast highlands, with withered trees, sparse grass, and yellow soil and rocks exposed. Gullies crisscrossed like wrinkles on an old man's face, separating silent towns. A massive river surged, majestic yet tainted with turbid yellow.

Ding. Dang. Ding. Dang. The sound, like pearls on a porcelain plate, was crisp and gentle, emanating from a peculiar wooden pavilion. The surrounding buildings burned fiercely, and shouts echoed from the river. Amidst the pleasant melody, the pavilion collapsed in flames, yet the performer continued unabated.

In the midst of the gentle singing, a woman in a peculiar dress stood on the platform, captivatingly expressing herself. Below her, people sat at various tables, savoring drinks under dim lights. Gunshots, like firecrackers, echoed outside what seemed to be a bar's dance floor, as citizens collapsed on the street. Fierce soldiers rushed in, stabbing the struggling ones with bayonets attached to their guns. Distant buildings burned, and flames soared into the sky.

These voices and images surged into Lumian's mind like a torrent, causing his eyes to redden. His head felt unusually swollen, as if it were on the brink of exploding, and his thoughts became a chaotic jumble.

Franca and Jenna, engrossed in their battle against Mirror Gardner Martin, remained oblivious to Lumian's unsettling state.

Franca took the lead, pressing the black flames against the mirror stained with the target's blood. She successfully saw the enemy—weakened by the eruption of desire. He succumbed to the engulfing black flames, inflicting damage to his Spirit Body.

Crack!

Mirror Gardner shattered, and his figure materialized nearby, his dazed eyes now alert.

Seizing the opportunity, Jenna, moving with remarkable speed, adjusted her makeup mirror stained with Mirror Gardner's blood. Pressing the black flames in her hand against it, s

Mirror Gardner was once again ignited by the Demoness's black flames and subjected to another fatal curse.

He shattered anew, reappearing beside the black pillar.

His right hand reached into his pocket, as if he wanted to take out a mirror and use nails, hair, blood, and other media to sever the connection between the source of the curse and himself.

However, Franca, who was also moving at high speed, leaned back and raised the mirror in her hand. It made contact with her other hand, holding the Flog boxing glove ablaze with black flames.

The flames erupted within the mirror, thwarting Mirror Gardner's attempt at curse-evading mirror magic.

The duo, Franca and Jenna, continued their intricate dance—one advancing, one retreating, one cursing, and the other awaiting their turn. It was a mesmerizing duet, a choreography of combat.

After enduring six curses, Mirror Gardner froze in front of a grayish-white stone pillar, not shattering like before.

In the silence of the black flames, he rapidly weakened, teetering on the brink of unconsciousness.

Seeing this, Franca discarded the Flog boxing gloves, opting for her Cannon Gun. She drew the weapon, pulled back the hammer, and took aim at the target.

Bang!

The iron-black bullet tore through Mirror Gardner's skull, shattering it into fragments.

His nearly headless body swayed briefly before collapsing to the ground.

As the corpse faded away, it left behind a peculiar mirror fragment, its surface nearly lightless as if coated with black paint.

Meanwhile, Anthony Reid, ever proficient at observation, detected Lumian's abnormal state. Racing towards him, the Psychiatrist attempted to placate him. However, Lumian remained unresponsive, his face contorting further, blood vessels on his forehead bulging ominously.

“There's a situation here!” Anthony, noting Mirror Gardner's demise from the corner of his eye, swiftly informed Franca and Jenna. He hoped that the two Demonesses could find a way to address Lumian's unsettling condition.

However, an instant later, the pitch-black mirror fragment emitted a faint light.

The surroundings plunged into instant darkness, transmuting into a bizarre transparency, as if the entire world had transformed into a mirrored container.

Within the dark and shadowy confines of this mirror container, an unseen force seethed with rage, materializing the air and exerting pressure from every direction.

Though Franca, Jenna, and Anthony witnessed no visible or audible phenomena, an overwhelming fear gripped them. Their bodies felt as if plunged into an icy cavern, freezing instantaneously.

A faint sigh, distinctly feminine, resonated suddenly.

Nearby, the black pillar radiated a dim light. The tiny snake-like black hairs concealed in the void retracted, coalescing into a massive black-haired sphere, forming a protective barrier around the square.

Franca and the others experienced an immediate sense of tranquility. Fear released its grip on their bodies and minds, allowing them to move freely.

Meanwhile, Lumian's consciousness wrestled with an onslaught of voices and scenes, his rationality gradually eroding.

Suddenly, he heard a voice.

It was a male sigh.

Then, he saw a face and a figure—a man seated cross-legged in a serene room, adorned with a headdress and a blue robe.

Though handsome, the man's eyes betrayed profound sorrow and pain, lending him a withered appearance.

His gaze fixed on Lumian, comprehending the scenes unfolding, and he picked up a brown rod adorned with numerous white silk strands at one end, resting beside him.

As the sigh persisted, the myriad sounds and images Lumian perceived vanished, replaced by overlapping shrill cries akin to curses.

While Lumian couldn't comprehend the language, the phrase echoed in his mind, infused with the purest knowledge, enabling him to grasp its meaning.

The voices converged into a torrent, laden with resentment and hatred.

“Celestial Master!”

At the base of the Deep Valley Quarry, the once busy hall now stood in partial ruins. The tumultuous activity had taken its toll, leaving many members of the Machinery Hivemind injured. Conscious of the need to avoid hindering their comrades' battles, these individuals strategically retreated.

Claude, the mechanical giant, abruptly halted his movements, his colossal ears resonating with overlapping roars.

Amidst the roars, a sigh descended from above, casting an eerie atmosphere upon the indistinct wilderness.

In that wild expanse, numerous ethereal figures lingered, occasionally gazing at the sky and emitting haunting screams.

Observing this mysterious transformation, Archbishop Horamick refrained from seizing the opportunity to attack Claude directly. Instead, he swiftly withdrew from the crumbling hall, leading the remaining members of the Machinery Hivemind away from the illusory wilderness.

The cybernetic eyes of the mechanical giant, with one resembling a ruby and the other an emerald, suddenly dimmed.

It appeared as if intelligence had deserted him. Slowly turning around, Claude stepped into the surreal “wilderness,” seemingly intent on joining the lingering figures.

Midway through, the mechanical giant turned to regard Archbishop Horamick and his companions, gears spinning loudly.

An indescribable smile graced the face comprising multiple metallic components.

In the next instant, the mechanical giant retracted his gaze, resuming his forward journey.

His figure gradually took on an illusionary quality, merging with the mysterious wilderness until both vanished into the unknown.

In the depths of the Fourth Epoch Trier, adjacent to the wall-like grayish-white fog, Magician and Justice materialized, their intense gazes fixed upon Lady Moon. She had lost her veil, revealing a vacant expression.

The bestowed of the Great Mother, the lady who had nurtured a deity, stood in front of the gray fog, her shadow tainted by char.

Magician and Justice were surprised to see this.

Almost simultaneously, the wall-like grayish-white fog expanded, pulsating like a beating heart.

Almost simultaneously, an imposing aura, one that seemed to look down upon all existence, permeated the surroundings. It quelled the earlier sigh that had echoed through the air.

The grayish-white fog in the vicinity heightened its intensity, spreading in all directions once more, thickening the gray fog throughout the entirety of Fourth Epoch Trier.

“Him?”

“So it's Him?”

Justice and Magician exchanged silent whispers. Unaffected by the adverse consequences targeting others, they persisted in their actions.

The dazed Lady Moon immediately found herself shrouded in resplendent starlight.

In the wilderness, Snarner Einhorn and Diest, the President of the Iron and Blood Cross Order, continued their struggle to restrain Vermonda Sauron—a Calamity Giant, an Angel who had lost control. Their efforts, however, were met with fierce counterattacks, forcing Them into a gradual retreat, unable to capitalize on the situation.

Amidst the chaos, the gray fog shrouding the ruins of Fourth Epoch Trier stirred violently, as if the very city had awakened.

The turbulent fog swiftly coalesced into a spear-like form, a weapon capable of shattering mountain peaks. It hurtled towards the captive Vermonda Sauron.

In an instant, the spear, crafted from the gray fog, erupted into violent flames, taking on a violet hue. It exuded an aura of supremacy, as if it aimed to conquer all in its path.

Witnessing this surreal phenomenon, whether it was Snarner Einhorn, Diest, Vermonda Sauron, or their allies, it was as though they beheld a city enshrouded in fog. A sense of awe overwhelmed their bodies and minds, dissuading any inclination to resist.

The majestic purple flaming spear traversed a significant distance, impaling Vermonda Sauron—the Calamity Giant yet to regain mobility. His chest rent open, the colossal being was pinned to the wilderness.

As the purple flames dissipated, a figure stood up from a genuflecting position.

Clad in blood-stained black armor, adorned with long red hair, the youth exuded a handsome yet haunting presence. Rotting wounds marred both sides of his face, and a vivid red mark resembling a banner flag adorned his forehead.