

Inevitability 491

Chapter 491 Unexpected “Helper”

The gray fog encircling Fourth Epoch Trier extended into the wilderness, as if intercepting and obstructing an unseen force.

In the midst of the tempest, Snarner, Diest, and the other formidable beings felt a high and formidable aura. An instinctive urge to bow in submission washed over them. It was as if the Blood Emperor Alista Tudor, who had met His end deep in Fourth Epoch Trier, had returned from the abyss. However, He wasn't as unhinged or violent as before. Instead, a veiled sense of danger and calamity lingered.

Fighting the impulse to surrender while stepping back, Their eyes fixated on the figure of a young man clad in blood-stained black armor, adorned with long red hair and a conspicuous red mark between his brows.

Their nerves tensed as a name echoed in their minds:

Medici!

Red Angel Medici!

He was a king from ancient times. As early as the Fourth Epoch, or even during the catastrophic demise of the Third Epoch, he held the title of King of Angels.

Kings of Angels were Archangels beyond Sequence 1, yet They hadn't attained the level of a Sequence 0 true god. Through the consumption of multiple Sequence 1 potions or the possession of the key to deity status, However, having something missing prevented Them from taking that crucial step.

The Red Angel was among the eight Kings of Angels who had once served the Ancient Sun God. Though He met his end at the hands of Alista Tudor during the Fourth Epoch, leading to the latter's ascent as Blood Emperor, the King of Angels hadn't completely perished. Transformed into an evil spirit in a hidden sanctuary, He survived and reemerged a few years ago, resuming His activities.

As Angels of the Hunter pathway, Snarner and Diest grew increasingly apprehensive about the situation. They suspected that Medici might have already acquired a Conqueror Beyonder characteristic, ascending once again to a Sequence 1 Archangel.

While devising a plan to obtain Vermonda Sauron's Conqueror Beyonder characteristic, Snarner and Diest remained cautious of the possible involvement of the ancient king. When Albus Medici disclosed his name, Their vigilance heightened, and They kept a constant watch on him. Only when the operation was unexpectedly hastened, and the Red Angel showed no signs of breaching the seal, nor did Albus Medici display any abnormal behavior, did they finally ease up.

But just at that critical juncture, Red Angel Medici appeared!

With a terror-inducing aura that subjugated everything, He soared majestically from the depths of Fourth Epoch Trier. Seizing the opportunity, he dealt a severe blow to Vermonda Sauron with a single strike.

Medici's disdainful gaze swept across Snarner and Diest as He casually tossed an item to the struggling Calamity Giant, Vermonda Sauron.

It was a blood-stained umbilical cord.

The moment the umbilical cord left Medici's hand, it burst into flames, emitting a golden light resembling a miniature sun.

Above surface Trier, the sun, engulfed by hurricanes, lightning, and torrential rain, suddenly emitted a blinding light, tearing through the calamitous scene.

A chubby baby, seemingly crafted from pure sunlight, soared out of the tear, transforming into a golden sun hurtling towards Red Swan Castle in Quartier Érase.

The scorching sun tore through the sky, liquefying the spires, walls, and floor of the ancient castle. It plunged into the depths of the underground maze and into the bronze coffin.

Wherever it passed, darkness dissipated, and the withered hearts turned to ashes. Elros Einhorn, stationed outside the underground palace, instinctively shut her eyes, her body trembling uncontrollably.

High in the sky, The Hanged Man didn't pursue the self-destructing sun. Instead, he hovered above the storm, his gaze fixed on Red Swan Castle, which bore a massive wound. It remained unknown what he contemplated.

Danitz, leading his team in Quartier Érase's battle against the mutated soldiers and the monstrous Carbonari army, couldn't help but curse under the intense sunlight.

The people around him and the mutants shared a similar reaction.

In the outer seal of Fourth Epoch Trier, an invisible flame burning silently in the sky formed a massive vortex, tainted with a golden hue.

The sun descended from the vortex, illuminating the entire wilderness and Fourth Epoch Trier as if it were daytime.

It caught up to the burning umbilical cord and enveloped the severely injured Archangel, Vermonda Sauron.

Sunlight erupted, and darkness vanished. The Calamity Giant, formed by a Conqueror's loss of control, emitted a tragic cry and swiftly dissipated, undergoing profound purification.

The infant that had transformed into a sun ceased to exist. Only the remnants of its power burned fiercely, emitting light and warmth.

Snarner, Diest, and the other powerhouses turned sideways, steeling themselves to withstand the impact of the sunlight.

In the brilliantly lit Fourth Epoch Trier,

Voisin Sanson and Madame Pualis, entangled in intense combat, simultaneously closed their eyes, as if unaccustomed to the direct sunlight.

Upon reopening their eyes, they found themselves separated, no longer able to see each other. One stood in a square adorned with stone pillars, while the other perched on a collapsed black building.

“Wh...” The two bestowed, who had already tasted the power of godhood, were momentarily taken aback before realizing that Fourth Epoch Trier had undergone a transformation due to the impact of the golden sunlight, leading to a shift in direction and spatial disarray.

Gardner Martin, donned in a full-body silver armor, could already discern the dense grayish-white fog ahead, resembling an impenetrable wall. A surge of joy coursed through him.

What he desired, what he sought, was within reach.

Suddenly, sunlight pierced through, illuminating the nocturnal environment.

Instinctively, Gardner Martin shut his eyes and decelerated.

Then, a cracking sound reverberated.

It emanated from his neck.

In surprise, Gardner Martin lowered his head, acclimating to the sunlight.

Accompanied by an intense and peculiar pain, he witnessed the widening gap between his head and chest. Blood spurted from the stump of his neck, staining the area crimson.

He also beheld his white, bloody spine.

How could this be... This thought flashed through Gardner Martin's mind, a mix of shock and fear.

He had always believed himself to be the favored one, the special one. Hence, under the watchful eyes of the great will deep within Fourth Epoch Trier, even upon entering 13 Avenue du Marché, he assumed he would only suffer minor corruption. He could wield a certain power from Fourth Epoch Trier to a limited extent without transforming into a terrifying monster like Olson, whose head and body had been severed.

Yet now, his head had detached from his body, dragging along his spine. Just as he was on the verge of approaching the great will!

Lady Moon, adorned with brown wings and bird-like claws, crumpled amidst cascading silver lightning.

Initially, she descended into madness, morphing into a bewildered monster. This marked the onset of the Plague Storm from the Spectator pathway, succeeded by Magician's nine attacks from nine directions.

As sunlight bathed the scene, Magician instinctively closed her eyes. With a sweep of her right hand, the void contorted, shaping into a sealed dark sphere that encased her, Justice, and the swiftly fading Lady Moon. Together, they withstood the ensuing anomalies as a unified entity.

Within the sphere woven from thick black hair, Jenna, Franca, and Anthony felt the tumultuous storm and various catastrophes outside, causing the ground to quake and the sphere to sway.

In an instant, time slowed, and the snake-like black hair composing the dark sphere swiftly split open, revealing a beam of sunlight above.

In the sunlight, Jenna and Franca seemed to discern an ethereal female voice.

“Reconcile with your mirror self...”

With these words, the snake-like black hair disintegrated entirely, no longer coalescing into a sphere. It retreated into the void.

Franca and the others found themselves surrounded by a layer of dark glass, silently shattering and falling under the sunlight.

The lights and figures in the nearby buildings vanished, and Jenna and the others returned to the dead silence reminiscent of when they first entered the ruins.

After adjusting to the sunlight, Anthony immediately looked at Lumian and noticed that the blood vessels on his companion's face had faded. His contorted expression gradually eased.

“Are you alright?” Anthony inquired, employing Placate.

Upon hearing the roars, Lumian's mind was filled by the man's sighs in the dark room. The overwhelming knowledge that gripped him in corruption had subsided. He no longer felt like his head was about to burst or lose his rationality.

He quickly returned to normal, no longer hearing the sigh or seeing the withered man in strange attire.

“I survived,” Lumian replied to Anthony's question.

Simultaneously, he thought, Is that the Celestial Master the Armored Shadow mentioned?

Using the Eye of Truth here is even more dangerous than the outside world.

Franca gathered the items, picked up Flog and other belongings, and threw out the Arrow of the Bloodthirsty.

“What happened to you just now?”

“The aftereffects of using the Eye of Truth.” Lumian took the Arrow of the Bloodthirsty and stabbed it into his chest. Surveying the area, he said, “Let's quickly collect our items and relocate.”

Previously, he had used Flog, hoping to attract the attention of dangerous entities, thereby creating chaos to find an opportunity. Now that Mirror Gardner had been dealt with, it was crucial to move to avoid new threats.

Jenna, with no time to ponder the meaning of reconciling with her mirror self, placed the bone flute, wooden box, and other items in the blood-stained cloak. Following Lumian, Franca, and Anthony, she sprinted in a random direction around the black pillar.

Beneath the blistering sunlight, the purple flames constituting Vermonda Sauron's flesh and blood flickered out one by one. The anguished faces representing the diverse Sauron family members disappeared sequentially.

The Red Angel's form abruptly expanded, resembling a diminutive mountain peak.

Brandishing a broadsword condensed from purple flames, He advanced with a step and swung it at the dying Vermonda Sauron.

Having regained their composure, Snarner, Diest, and the other formidable beings were not inclined to yield. They acted in unison, intervening to impede Him.

Chapter 492 Pride

Red Angel Medici stood unfazed amidst the onslaught from Snarner, Diest, and the other formidable adversaries. His focus unwavering, He channeled His conquering will to subdue Vermonda Sauron, wielding a broadsword ablaze with purple flames, ready to cleave through the menacing foe.

Seizing the opportune moment, with the uncontrollable Calamity Giant at its weakest, Medici aimed to deliver the final, fatal blow!

Suddenly, a radiant light burst forth before the eyes of Snarner, Diest, and the rest. It was pure sunlight, banishing the darkness and cleansing the surroundings of filth and the stench of blood. The two Angels, now in their Mythical Creature forms, appeared as if exposed to the brilliance of the sun at close range.

From within the luminous glow emerged a holy and beautiful woman, draped in a white robe adorned with golden threads—Trier's guardian angel, Saint Viève!

She shielded the Red Angel from the relentless attacks of the other powerhouses.

Simultaneously, Medici, clad in blood-stained black armor, descended like a mountain. Plunging the purple broadsword into Vermonda Sauron's skull, which showed signs of melting under the intense sunlight, Medici marked the decisive moment in the battle.

Boom!

The implosion absorbed the surrounding flames, hurricanes, lightning, hail, and sunlight into the Calamity Giant's colossal form. The once tumultuous wilderness now stood cleansed, except for the remnants of invisible flames in the sky and a vast golden vortex.

Boom!

Reaching its limit, the implosion rapidly expanded, unleashing a barrage of projectiles. A violent hurricane tore through Vermonda Sauron's charred skeleton, casting darkness upon the once brightly illuminated landscape.

A torrential downpour accompanied by countless bolts of lightning and thunderclaps ensued, marking the demise of an Angel—a Conqueror.

Snarner, Diest, and the other powerhouses, breaking through Saint Viève's obstruction, witnessed the scene unfold. Vermonda Sauron's body disintegrated, and Red Angel Medici, now in the form of a Mythical Creature, brandished His purple-flamed broadsword. He turned disdainfully, mocking those who dared challenge Him.

Snarner Einhorn narrowed His eyes, evaluating the situation. Swiftly transforming into a blaze, He ascended into the air, disappearing into the colossal vortex of formless flames.

Realizing that even with the support of the Iron and Blood Cross Order, victory against Red Angel and Saint Viève was unattainable, He chose to retreat.

The former was undoubtedly a Sequence 1 Conqueror. Moreover, in this unique setting, He appeared capable of tapping into the formidable power hidden within the Fourth Epoch Trier to some extent!

In that situation, He'd fall back and escape if needed; otherwise, He could meet His end right here!

Snarner dashed into the massive vortex in midair, while Diest morphed into a beam of light and shot into the sky. He raced out of the wilderness with Tony Twain, chasing after the Einhorn family's Weather Warlock.

As Angels of the Hunter pathway, Their judgments and choices were strikingly similar.

Red Angel Medici, observing Their departure, chuckled and muttered to Himself, "The heroic escape of your descendant is reminiscent of yours many years ago."

His attention then turned to Saint Viève with a smile.

"Now, we can proceed to the final part of the plan and eliminate the bestowed of the Outer Deities."

Saint Viève nodded in agreement, emitting a blazing light as She flew towards Fourth Epoch Trier, enveloped in a shroud of gray fog.

In the depths of Fourth Epoch Trier, alongside a wall-like grayish-white fog, Bernadette Gustav, the eldest daughter of Emperor Roselle, fixated Her gaze on a seal adorned with countless mysterious symbols.

In Her palm, a faint golden figure materialized once more through the viscous light emanating from a golden lamp that resembled a miniature lamp.

It said to Bernadette, "Take another step forward and find a monster to 'replace' your wish using the method I told you. I can use Under-the-table Transaction to help you obtain something from here to counterbalance the corruption affecting your father."

Bernadette remained steadfast, not advancing. Calmly, she responded, "I entered this place to analyze the seal and understand how the various corruptions have intricately balanced themselves through years of mergers and confrontations. That sigh was merely an unexpected bonus."

"Time is of the essence. If you don't act more assertively, once the Mother Goddess of Depravity breaches the barrier, your father will truly transform into a monster," warned the distorted, blurry, pale-golden figure.

Undeterred, Bernadette continued absorbing knowledge related to the seal, her focus unwavering.

The pale-golden figure fell silent and retreated into the peculiar lamp without making further persuasion.

Gardner Martin's head, donned with a silver-white helmet, soared into the air, carrying his blood-soaked spine with it.

Glancing down, he witnessed a broadsword of light materializing in his hand.

He—no, his body could use the Pride Armor's Hurricane of Light again!

However, this time, the target appeared to be him—specifically, his head!

Is this the traitorous curse? My own body turning against my head... Why another betrayal? Could it be linked to constant wearing of the Pride Armor? Gardner Martin's pupils dilated, fear gripping his heart.

In a desperate attempt to mitigate the impending impact of the Hurricane of Light, he condensed numerous crimson, almost white fireballs. The explosions around him aimed to lessen the force of the onslaught. Simultaneously, he sank his consciousness into his glabella, seeking a connection with the great will, praying for its protective intervention.

Beside the shattered corpse of Vermonda Sauron, Red Angel Medici extended His right hand, observing as a beam of light, reminiscent of iron and blood, emanated from the Conqueror's body. It landed on the damaged skull cradled in His palm.

In that moment, Gardner Martin's desperate shout and plea reached Him.

Red Angel chuckled dismissively, paying no heed to the pawn that had served its purpose and was now deemed expendable.

Gardner Martin had not submitted to the great will from the depths of Fourth Epoch Trier but to Red Angel Himself!

Over the past few years, Red Angel Medici had lurked in the shadows, orchestrating a scheme to obtain the Sauron family's lost Sequence 1 Conqueror Beyonder characteristic. Leveraging His uniqueness and level, He assisted numerous members of the Iron and Blood Cross Order in maintaining their lucidity and rationality in the face of corruption at 13 Avenue du Marché. They did not transform into monsters but were only slightly affected.

Using His uniqueness, Medici disguised Himself as a great will from the depths of Fourth Epoch Trier, He manipulated the Iron and Blood Cross Order members to grasp the underground situation and pinpoint Vermonda Sauron's exact location.

During this process, He uncovered the issue with the Mirror People but refrained from interference, pushing the plan forward. His intention was to involve Trier's evil god bestowed and utilize them to divert the attention of other factions while extracting corresponding special value and uncovering hidden problems.

As the plan unfolded, Philip informed Gardner Martin about Lumian Lee, who had undoubtedly prayed to the great will.

Seizing this opportunity, Red Angel Medici refined the plan, bestowing Gardner Martin with a divine vision. This allowed him to acquire significant mysticism knowledge and "conceive" the Hostel ritual.

The ritual, designed to create minimal disturbance and increase the chances of success, aimed to "fool" Trier's most formidable evil god bestowed into Fourth Epoch Trier. The ultimate goal: capture them all and purify them in one fell swoop!

Observing the Beyonder characteristic rapidly condense in His hand, Red Angel Medici raised His gaze to the gradually shrinking golden vortex.

The smile on His face, adorned with decaying wounds, deepened.

Whether it was the Hostel plan or the original strategy involving the special mirror world, both required the cooperation of a faction and the assistance of a true god.

Enter the Eternal Blazing Sun!

Indeed, how can the sun, intolerant of darkness, filth, and humbleness, genuinely collaborate with the Mother, the symbol of depravity and evil?

Having ascended to godhood and abandoned His original Lord in the past, He had chosen this path precisely because He refused to submit to another deity. Why would He now bow to the Mother Goddess of Depravity, an Outer Deity, a different entity altogether?

His needs and acknowledgments were reserved for a collaborator. And I willingly embraced this role. Even if I were to become a Great Old One in the future, I vowed to honor this agreement and stand together in defense as a collaborator.

With the Ruler of War's divine spot vacant and Cheek in dire straits, I emerged as the most likely candidate to ascend to true godhood and attain the status of a Great Old One in a short span.

The Sun didn't repent or return to the original Lord's side, nor did He submit to the Mother Goddess of Depravity who reigned above the gods. Instead, He chose the path of enduring pressure and facing the worst possible outcome to support a new Great Old One.

This decision may have seemed nearly the worst, yet He embraced it wholeheartedly.

Because He is the proud Sun.

Through the golden vortex, the Red Angel's gaze surveyed the gradually calming storm above Trier, noting a significant decrease in the frequency of lightning.

His smile grew even more smug.

As expected, Tyrant and the old dragon have grasped the entirety of the situation. They are no longer seizing the opportunity to confront the Sun, rendering the entity that had inherited most of the original Lord's legacy effectively useless.

They, too, yearn for the emergence of a new Great Old One.

Red Angel Medici directed His gaze to His palm, where an iron-black object, resembling a blood-stained crown, was on the verge of taking shape.

Recollections of past events and the betrayal He had only comprehended a few years ago flooded His mind. It all stemmed from His unwavering loyalty to that Lord of 2,401 years.

His choice was unforgiving. He chose to collaborate with the Eternal Blazing Sun.

This was because He was also a proud King of Angels, once the most loyal Red Angel.

As the Sequence 1 Conqueror Beyonder characteristic fully condensed, Medici chuckled and declared, "The curse of your useless descendants can end now."

He pressed the blood-stained iron crown, formed by the broken skull in His hand, between His eyebrows and devoured it without concocting a potion.

Vermonda Sauron's blood and shattered corpse, scattered across the wilderness, seemed to come alive, pouring into the Red Angel's body like a torrent.

Chapter 493 Crimson Hell

Sprinting through the silent, desolate, and dilapidated Fourth Epoch Trier, Lumian's abdominal injuries came under control, thanks to his potent self-healing abilities. It seemed they wouldn't worsen any time soon.

Beneath the sunlight, the direction in which Lumian, Franca, and the others were heading appeared to be in complete disarray. They traversed narrow, partially destroyed streets only to encounter magnificent red buildings, and attempts to reach landmarks led them further away, regardless of the directions they took.

Fortunately, the four of them remained relatively close, avoiding the perils of getting “lost” or separated from the group.

As Lumian contemplated finding a place to hide, a large number of violent fragments of light materialized in front of them.

It was evident that the power emanating from the Fourth Epoch Trier had been transferred from a distance.

Lumian and the others were no strangers to this terrifying storm of light. They had encountered it once in the wilderness, courtesy of Gardner Martin's silver-white full-body armor.

Gardner Martin? Lumian halted in time, wisely refraining from rushing into the weakened but still perilous storm of light.

Franca's expression became complicated, uncertain whether this encounter was luck or misfortune.

As the light subsided, she witnessed Gardner Martin's head, a long, blood-stained spine trailing behind. His armor was incomplete, his face covered in charred and hideous wounds. The helmet had caved in, revealing his grayish-white brain faintly. His eyes appeared empty, unfocused, and filled with dizziness, as if he had experienced an exaggerated shock from the intense impact.

Gardner Martin's adversary stood as his silver-white armor-clad body, lacking a head. The neck stump was drenched in blood.

Raising his hands, he condensed a massive axe made of light.

Though incapable of unleashing the Hurricane of Light, it proved sufficient for ordinary combat.

Franca gazed at the familiar yet unfamiliar tragic face and exhaled. She took out a mirror and reflected it.

In that moment, Gardner Martin's thoughts returned to normal. Aside from his headless body, he saw Franca's beautiful lake-colored eyes, appearing calm.

Franca placed her right hand, engulfed in black flames, on the mirror reflecting Gardner Martin's head and whispered, “I'll liberate you.”

Gardner Martin, still reeling from the immense blow to his body, found himself instantly enveloped by black flames, his spirituality igniting from within.

Struggling to scream, he discovered his voice stifled. Desiring aid from the great will and attempting to utilize his uniqueness to summon Fourth Epoch Trier's bestowed power, he encountered only silence.

With a whoosh, the headless Gardner Martin wielded the radiant axe, striking the head's face. The missing visor shattered, and the axe cleaved into the skull.

Lumian, having taken a few steps to the side, raised his right hand, unleashing a crimson fireball, almost white, like a cannonball aimed at Gardner Martin's sunken skull.

The fireball landed on the crack, exploding and tearing apart the unprotected grayish-white brain.

Under the relentless assault from his body, lover, and subordinate, Gardner Martin's head and eyes bulged, filled with hatred and pain.

With a snap, the head detached from the helmet, falling to the ground in a half-broken state, devoid of vitality or movement.

As the silver helmet landed, Gardner Martin, still clad in armor, spun around, raising the glowing axe and charging at Lumian and the others.

Observing the unfolding scene, Lumian subtly arched his body and advanced confidently.

With each step, his stature appeared to expand, and by the time he stood near the headless Gardner Martin, his clothes and pants strained against his growing form.

The power of an Ascetic!

During his time at the edge of Fourth Epoch Trier, Lumian had strategically "Compressed" some of his strength. Now, he was unleashing it.

Although the accumulated strength wasn't overwhelming, it had visibly transformed him. Coupled with the enhanced speed, agility, and physique granted by the Arrow of the Bloodthirsty, Lumian was confident in withstanding the impending attack from the silver armor-clad Gardner Martin.

Just as the collision became imminent, Lumian deftly sidestepped, allowing the axe of light to cleave through the air. He swiftly punched the headless Gardner's wrist.

With a resounding bang, the headless Gardner discarded the radiant axe, clenched his metal-gloved fist, and delivered a forceful strike against Lumian.

Lumian's body swayed slightly, while the headless Gardner stood like an unwavering mountain peak.

Retracting his left fist, Lumian released it, swinging it in the air to alleviate the pain as he prepared to strike with his right fist.

At that moment, Franca, having vanished while Lumian approached the headless Gardner, reappeared behind the enemy clad in silver armor.

Raising the iron-black ring on her left thumb, her eyes illuminated like lightning.

Unsure if the headless body could still be affected by Psychic Piercing, Franca believed it should be possible. As long as there was a spirit, Psychic Piercing could exert its influence.

In an instant, the headless Gardner froze. The exposed skin and flesh on his neck and chest twitched.

Jenna, who had been slower due to reciting incantations and using materials, arrived as well. Revealing herself at a distance from the headless Gardner, she caused black flames to condense and fly out, landing on the enemy's bloody neck, unprotected by the silver armor. This ignited the spirit in a state of pain.

Thud! Thud! Thud! Anthony Reid sprinted past Jenna, closing the gap between him and the headless Gardner.

Then, his pupils turned vertical, a faint golden hue coloring them.

Frenzy!

Suddenly, flames erupted from the headless body in the silver armor, scorching its flesh.

Upon witnessing this, Lumian leaned back, kicking the ground with his right foot to “fly” away from the headless Gardner. Simultaneously, he condensed crimson fireballs, nearly white, around him.

The fireballs whizzed through the unprotected neck and into the body, detonating from the inside out with a resounding rumble. The silver armor trembled violently as the headless body was reduced to charred flesh and blood, “painting” the inner layer of the armor.

Boom!

Lumian, propelled backward by the explosion's waves, landed on the ground.

Simultaneously, the silver-armored mountain collapsed to the ground.

Just as Lumian rose and prepared to commend Franca and the others for their coordinated effort, he suddenly sensed the sky transforming into a deep shade of blood-red.

Rain drops began to descend from above.

However, it wasn't rain. It was flames—blazing-white flames.

Within this fiery deluge, droplets of blood accompanied the falling fire.

Franca swiftly rolled towards a nearby building, utilizing its extended roof as cover from the scorching-white fire rain. Lumian, Jenna, and Anthony followed suit.

White-hot flames and drops of bright red blood fell at an increasingly rapid pace, painting the surroundings in hues of red and setting buildings ablaze.

The burning structures melded into a sea of flames.

Contemplating whether to activate the Blood Emperor's aura for potential solutions to the unfolding horror, Lumian's eyes caught sight of Madam Magician, clad in a knot shirt and beige dress.

A sigh of relief escaped him.

Resplendent starlight illuminated the scene, and they vanished from the street, taking with them the Pride Armor, Gardner Martin's corpse, and various items scattered on the ground, all converging into the diminishing golden vortex in the sky.

Blazing-white flames, mixed with blood, cascaded down, but they passed through Bernadette Gustav's form, unable to ignite Her.

It was as if the Angel existed beyond their reach.

Her focus remained on the dense gray fog and the diverse corruptions within the city. After a moment, Her body transformed into transparency, eventually disintegrating into a pile of bubbles that mirrored the flames.

As the bubbles dispersed, so did Bernadette, departing from Fourth Epoch Trier.

Two elegant women with captivating eyes approached the wall-like grayish-white fog, only to realize that the sky above was tainted with blood, and dense white flames, resembling raindrops, descended.

Just as they considered seeking shelter, a golden sun suddenly reflected in their eyes.

In the blink of an eye, they were entirely purified.

Elsewhere in Fourth Epoch Trier, the Hostel residents who had ventured within were already undergoing abnormalities. Some perished, transformed into monsters, others were engulfed in incandescent white flames, and a few caught sight of the sun.

Madame Pualis discovered a relatively intact asymmetrical house amidst the chaos.

Observing distant sunlight and blazing-white flames setting nearby buildings ablaze, she hesitated to seek refuge within the door due to the deep, terrifying darkness within.

Suddenly, her head throbbed violently, and she heard an almost illusory cry of a baby.

It was the cry of her child, a fragment of memory echoing nearby.

Driven by the mystical sensation, Madame Pulias ventured into the infinite darkness beyond the door.

Amidst the incandescent white flames that descended, Voisin Sanson, positioned in the collapsed square, was set ablaze. However, he promptly reverted to his original state.

Soon after, he witnessed his impending purification by the sun.

In that moment, his peripheral vision captured a figure emerging from behind a grayish-white stone pillar at the square's edge.

It was a diaphanous, indistinct lizard-like creature.

The creature's cold eyes silently observed him.

In Fourth Epoch Trier, numerous buildings were engulfed by incandescent white flames, their facades now tainted red by rainwater transformed from blood and charred black by the inferno.

Red Angel Medici, donned in blood-stained black armor, emerged from the wilderness into the resplendent city, now permeated with the air of destruction.

He navigated through the charred and collapsed houses, moving amidst falling white flames and beneath blood-like raindrops, a visible smile gracing His face.

The two decaying wounds on His face, exposing the bones beneath, had already started to heal, leaving behind marks resembling a mouth.

Splash.

Flames and blood cascaded from the sky, casting a fiery glow upon Fourth Epoch Trier and shrouding the ruins, transforming it into a crimson hell.

After 2,081 years, Medici had once again ascended to the title of King of Angels.

Chapter 494 “Stolen” Information

The looming dark clouds over Trier had vanished, replaced by the glow of the crimson moonlight that bathed every nook and cranny of the city, casting reflections in the calf-deep puddles below.

On the rooftop of an unknown building, Lumian and Franca materialized at the edge. Before them, Magician hovered in the void, accompanied by a stack of items. Jenna and Anthony, encased in what seemed like dark glass, fixated their gazes elsewhere.

Without prompting from Lumian, Magician let out a weary sigh and divulged, “Medici has ascended once again to King of Angels. Once hailed as the most formidable Conspirer, He has returned.”

“The Red Angel who once served the Ancient Sun God and met His demise at the hands of the Blood Emperor, Medici?” Lumian's reaction was a mix of surprise and inevitability.

How could the Angel of the Hunter pathway not be entangled in the affairs of the Sauron family's secrets and Fourth Epoch Trier?

The existence of Albus Medici was irrefutable proof!

Lumian, previously under the impression that the clandestine nature of the Hostel ritual and its premature commencement had prevented the Red Angel from exacting influence, now realized Medici was apparently the ultimate victor.

Madam Magician, in a relatively composed manner, chuckled and remarked, “No need for the latter half of that statement. It makes it sound like you're provoking Him, especially with the Blood Emperor's aura mark still imprinted on your right hand.”

Franca, having heard Lumian's mention of the Medici family, inquired out of curiosity, “What did the Red Angel do?”

As she spoke, her eyes flitted towards Jenna and Anthony, only to realize they were oblivious to the conversation with Madam Magician, as if trapped in another dimension.

Behind Franca, the water that had pooled on the rooftop began its gradual retreat, the drain's sloshing sounds echoing.

Magician sighed.

“When the Einhorn family's Angel, the powerhouses of the Iron and Blood Cross Order, and the Sealed Artifacts, along with the unique powers of the Fourth Epoch

Trier, were on the brink of killing the out-of-control Vermonda Sauron, He seized the moment to terminate the entire battle and acquire the Sequence 1 Beyonder characteristic.

“The blood-colored sky and the fiery rain you witnessed were the aftermath of His return as a King of Angels in Fourth Epoch Trier.”

That explains it... Lumian, recalling the situation, gained a firsthand understanding of the dread and power wielded by a King of Angels.

At that moment, his feet were bare, lacking shoes and socks—the consequence of being transported to the painted world while asleep. The painted footwear he later wore was evidently short-lived.

Pondering the recent events, he inquired, “Was that roaring giant the out-of-control Vermonda Sauron?”

No wonder the roar had nearly rendered them unconscious. Thankfully, Mr. Fool's gray fog had provided protection.

“That's correct. Vermonda Sauron's loss of control and descent into the sealed underground marked the beginning of the Sauron family's downfall. While many details remain shrouded in mystery, the overall picture is becoming clearer.”

Angel of the Einhorn family... Lumian connected the dots, realizing that one of Elros Einhorn and the Iron and Blood Cross Order's primary objectives was to break the seal, hunt the out-of-control Vermonda Sauron, and obtain the Sequence 1 Beyonder characteristic. Lumian nodded thoughtfully and asked with uncertainty, “Did these powerhouses enter Fourth Epoch Trier through the Hostel ritual?”

“Most of them accessed it through the underground leakage of Salle de Bal Brise triggered by the Hostel ritual. The representative from the Einhorn family entered through the leakage deep within the underground palace of Red Swan Castle, but it's essentially a result of the chain reaction caused by the Hostel ritual. As for how the Red Angel entered, that remains unknown to me.” Magician's expression turned serious. “However, there's reason to believe that the Hostel ritual was orchestrated by the Red Angel. He manipulated the Iron and Blood Cross Order and Gardner Martin. Truly befitting the entity that once guided and watched over Amon.”

Lumian felt a surge of enlightenment, finding that many previously confusing details now made more sense.

Franca's emotions were a mix of complexity.

Madam Magician, glancing at them, offered consolation, “Regardless of the circumstances, our actions accelerated the Hostel ritual, mitigating the damage this plan inflicted on Trier. In the entire market district, only a handful of night duty personnel from places like Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman and Rist Docks bore the brunt of the disaster. Some soldiers lost their lives in other areas. Overall, the impact was mainly financial. Our efforts were not in vain.”

She smiled self-deprecatingly and gazed up at the sky.

“The only unexpected thing was that They chose to cooperate.”

They... Lumian and Franca thought inwardly.

Eager to uncover who the Red Angel collaborated with, they realized that Madam Magician had no intention of revealing that information.

The lady's eyes traveled over the silver-white full-body armor, Gardner Martin's remains, and the items Jenna had discarded during the battle. She smiled and offered, “I'll assist you in handling the corresponding corruption and throw in specific usage information as a bonus for this mission.

“By the way, I recommend you temporarily overlook the corruption on the bone flute. It can produce peculiar effects. With Gardner Martin's Beyonder characteristics, you don't necessarily need Philip's. Plus, your unique attributes can effectively counteract the negative effects of the bone flute.”

The last sentence was directed at Lumian.

Observing Lumian's nod, Magician continued, “This wooden box serves as an under-the-table transaction. It's not meant for combat, but it can resolve many issues that violence can't under specific circumstances. I'll jot down the details and have the messenger send them over.

“The mirror fragments left behind by Mirror Gardner are closely tied to the special mirror world in Fourth Epoch Trier. My intuition suggests it might be linked to the current state of the Primordial Demoness.

“As for this armor, it's quite special. Wearing it will lead to some fortuitous encounters. Heh heh, ever thought of transforming into a beautiful woman or a handsome lad four to five meters tall?”

After playfully providing basic information about the various items, Magician nodded slightly and added, “Once I'm done, I'll send them back along with the information, and you'll receive an official reward.

“Seven of Wands, it's time for you to leave Trier for a while. The Iron and Blood Cross Order's mission has concluded. Your only task is to inform that mister. I'm confident he'll comprehend and accept it.”

Recalling his involvement in two consecutive catastrophes in Trier, Lumian concisely acknowledged and stated, “I share the same sentiment. I intend to track down the remaining April Fool's members.”

Magician shifted her attention to Franca.

“Your next steps will hinge on the Demoness Sect's reaction. Remember to report to your Major Arcana card holder when the time comes.”

After Franca acknowledged, Magician glanced at Anthony and Jenna.

“When the aftershocks settle, inquire if they'd like to draw a Minor Arcana card and join the Tarot Club. If they decline, don't push it. I'll ensure they keep it a secret.”

Franca asked cheerfully, “Will they become Minor Arcana card holders under you?”

Magician smiled.

“Not necessarily. It's a matter of fate.”

Addressing Lumian, she advised, “No need to rush your departure. You can lay low for a few days. Head back to Auberge du Coq Doré for now. I sense a fortuitous encounter of fate awaits you there.”

Fortuitous encounter of fate? Lumian was puzzled, but it was evident that Madam Magician had no intention of providing specifics. Perhaps she had glimpsed something but not the full details.

In the next moment, Madam Magician and the objects around her dissolved into starlight and disappeared.

“How surreal...” Franca remarked genuinely.

Turning to Lumian with a pensive expression, she mused, “Do you think Madam Magician might be the Angel of Stars from the Church's Bible?”

“No way...” Lumian instinctively responded before sinking into contemplation.

Rue Anarchie, Auberge du Coq Doré.

As Lumian ascended to the second floor, he noticed a figure crouched outside his door.

It was a chubby, earnest-looking seven- or eight-year-old boy, toting a dark-red school bag.

Ludwig? Baron Brignais's monstrous adopted son? Lumian furrowed his brows and approached.

“What's the matter?”

Ludwig, with his yellow hair and brown eyes, stood up and implored, “Can you help me leave Trier? I don't want to stay in the Church of Knowledge any longer. I don't want to be under Brignais's control. I don't want to deal with homework or tests. I can reward you!”

“Reward?” Lumian arched an eyebrow.

Could this be the fortuitous encounter of fate Madam Magician mentioned?

Ludwig vigorously nodded.

“Yes.”

Without hesitation, he unzipped the dark-red hard school bag, revealing a stack of papers.

“I stole this from the Church of Knowledge. No, I brought it here.”

Lumian extended his hand, accepting the papers, and quickly scanned the front page.

“Number: 01.”

“Name: Deity's Fallen Banner, Salinger's Blood Banner.”

“Danger Grade: 0. Extremely Dangerous. It's of the highest importance and of the highest confidentiality. It is not to be inquired, disseminated, described, or spied.”

Information on Grade 0 Sealed Artifacts? And it's 0-01! Lumian's forehead and eyelids twitched simultaneously.

He was aware that the Churches had sealed numerous mystical items with significant harmful and negative effects, categorized into four grades. “3” was the lowest, and “0” was the highest. A “1” often indicated a threat to Saints and the potential for a catastrophic event. The implications of “0” were evident.

Lumian's gaze shot up to Ludwig, realizing that the boy's face betrayed nothing out of the ordinary, only pleading.

He lowered his head, swiftly absorbing the rest of the content.

“Security Clearance: Only messengers of God.”

“Sealed Method: Place it in an underground mausoleum with a large number of soldier mannequins. Construct a cemetery with more than a million corpses above it, supplemented by a real city with a population of more than 100,000. The exact execution and ritual arrangements are...”

“Description: This is a charred banner. The flagpole is iron-black metal, and there are a large number of dangerous blood spots on the banner.

“...Beyonders with strength surpassing Sequence 5 are forbidden from approaching. Warning, Beyonders with strength surpassing Sequence 5 are forbidden from approaching!

“...The experimentalist responsible for changing the soldier mannequins must be blindfolded and carry a lantern... If the lantern is extinguished, the experimentalist will vanish. Everyone who knows him will believe that he's long dead... If he's not blindfolded, the one who leaves the mausoleum will be a monster resembling him...

“...The City of Exiles, Morora, on the surface often encounters extreme weather, including but not limited to hurricanes, torrential rain, earthquakes, and volcanic eruptions...

“...There were originally no volcanoes around Morora...

“...The inhabitants of Morora are unusually belligerent. There are numerous duels with fatal casualties every day, and protests and riots occur more than six times a year...

“...The residents of Morora have no intention of leaving this city. At any moment...”

“...According to ancient texts, it has witnessed the demise of at least two true gods...”

Dammit, can I even read this? The more Lumian read, the more alarmed he became.

He looked at Ludwig in bewilderment and questioned once more, "Did you really steal it?"

Could information of this gravity be stolen so easily?

Ludwig, looking like a child, wanted to retort, but he nodded sincerely.

"Yes."

Frowning at the boy, Lumian fell into a profound silence.

(End of Volume—Conspirer)

Chapter 495 Distribution

Oh, merciful Father, I implore your mercy for the transgressions I've made.

In Apartment 601, 3 Rue des Blouses Blanches.

Lumian, Franca, Jenna, and Anthony fell silent as they stared at the gleaming full-body silver armor before them.

Before delving into the details, they had already sensed the power emanating from the Sealed Artifact. The brief yet potent Hurricane of Light it unleashed was a deadly force. Even Gardner Martin, a Sequence 5 Reaper, was willing to trade other mystical items for its might. However, upon scrutinizing the information provided, their initial enthusiasm waned, and they instinctively distanced themselves from the armor named Pride.

Within the Sealed Artifact information was a stark warning in red ink:

"The curse of betrayal originates from a deity's intense aversion and hatred before their demise. Even Angels can't fully escape its grasp, only mitigating the negative effects to a certain extent. The sole solution is to shatter the armor and restore it to a pure Beyonder characteristic. However, this means losing its uniqueness. For instance, the ability to use Hurricane of Light again in just two minutes without delay. Moreover, those Beyonders who advance by consuming a potion derived from that Beyonder characteristic will endure reasonable but not-too-severe betrayal for an extended period."

Recalling Gardner Martin's tragic end, Franca, initially skeptical, now felt an unexplained fear. The betrayal curse seemed more formidable than she had imagined.

Lumian observed the hesitancy in Franca, Anthony, and Jenna, realizing none were eager to claim the particular spoils of war.

With a smile, he declared, "I'll go first."

Pointing at Gardner Martin's remains on the coffee table, he stated, "I choose Reaper."

The Beyonder characteristic had fused into a finger, creating an unusually sharp, bone-blade emitting an icy glint. The holder needed to be cautious to avoid accidental injury.

Immediately afterward, Lumian shifted his gaze to the charred bone flute originating from General Philip.

“I'll trade the Hypnotist Beyonders characteristics and the Decency brooch for this. You guys wouldn't be able to handle it anyway.”

Per Madam Magician's intel, while the bone flute held significant power and uniqueness, it carried the risk of bringing misfortune in the form of injuries, death, and other grisly calamities. Only Lumian possessed the resilience to withstand these negative effects and mitigate them without succumbing to excessive misfortune.

In truth, if General Philip's grudges before his demise hadn't been so potent, and if the curse of misfortune stemming from the Deceased pathway's boon hadn't been so exaggerated, Lumian might have struggled more to endure it. After all, enduring perpetual misfortune wasn't anyone's wish. Even if it wasn't lethal, it would still lead to considerable trouble.

Experiencing excessive bad luck was akin to tempting the fate intertwined with Termiboros, a fate deeply connected to Lumian. The potency of the bone flute wasn't sufficient to affect an Angel.

As per Madam Magician's detailed description, Lumian, naming the bone flute the Symphony of Hatred, discovered it possessed three abilities:

“With a simple blow, it emits a sharp, ear-piercing sound. This not only damages the Spirit Body, inducing dizziness, nausea, and convulsions in the target, but it can also directly impact Beyonders with weaker physiques—those equivalent to ordinary adults. They might suffer temporary blindness, paralysis, or internal organ damage.

“It appears that a symphony resonating from the depths of the river of fate inflicts a weakness on the enemy's mind. Those with unstable minds may experience symptoms akin to madness. Those with psychological issues might have latent problems triggered. There's even a chance that excessive desires could cause them to explode on the spot. Individuals with illnesses or old injuries will inevitably face severe consequences. Those less fortunate may find themselves extremely unlucky. Of course, the player needs some knowledge about musical instruments to play the bone flute effectively; otherwise, they'll only create noise, similar to the effect of a simple blow.

“While this bone flute is brittle and can't be used for blocking, wherever it stabs is equivalent to hitting a vital point. If it strikes a true vital point, the enemy will either be killed in a single blow or face the fate of social death for an extended period.”

Franca observed as Lumian placed the colorless colloid with numerous bubbles and the Decency brooch, crafted into a Scotch Broom, on the coffee table. She nodded imperceptibly.

“That seems like a fair trade.”

Observing the lack of objections from Anthony and Jenna, Lumian produced a deep-black cloth bag resembling a coin pouch. He carefully placed the Reaper Beyonder characteristic and the Symphony of Hatred bone flute inside.

This was one of Madam Magician's true rewards for him: Traveler's Bag.

Crafted personally by Magician, it was a Beyonder item devoid of characteristics. At first glance, it seemed to hold only up to two hundred coins, but it concealed another dimension within, equivalent to the entire Apartment 601. It could accommodate a vast array of items, including the Pride Armor.

Magician had also placed a specific seal inside the item. While within the bag, Beyonder characteristics didn't require regular relocation, and the negative effects of mystical items would significantly diminish.

The Traveler's Bag needed resealing and reinforcement every six months; otherwise, it would lose its mystical abilities and become ordinary. In such circumstances, if the items inside weren't retrieved promptly, they would be lost to the spirit world and nearly impossible to recover.

Similarly, Franca received a Traveler's Bag as her reward.

After claiming his share, Lumian turned his attention to Anthony Reid, indicating for the Psychiatrist to make his selection.

Anthony smiled wryly. "I contributed the least. I'll take this Hypnotist main ingredient. I feel that my psychological problems have been alleviated. I can contemplate advancing."

In his interactions with Lumian, Franca, and the others, he often heard words and sentences infused with mystic knowledge. Though he refrained from direct inquiries, over time, he vaguely grasped various patterns and the essence of things he wouldn't have considered before. It was as if a new world had unfolded before him.

"No problem," Franca replied, not insisting on Anthony choosing another item. She turned to Jenna and said, "I want the mirror fragment left behind by the fake Martin."

Madam Magician referred to this item as the "Mirror World Fragment." It served as a crucial clue for Franca's subsequent investigation into the state of the Primordial Demoness, and it possessed a unique quality: Using it to reflect a target allowed the user to create a corresponding "Mirror Person." However, they couldn't replicate entities with godhood, and the mirroring effect could only be maintained for a maximum of five minutes.

The fragment produced two types of Mirror People. The first was a shallow mirror image, replicable in ten seconds. The second was a deep conversion that took a minute to complete. The former retained the original body's state, as long as the body hadn't undergone a gender change—similar to those Franca and Lumian had encountered before. However, these Mirror People were relatively weak, equivalent to the original body at a certain past stage and lacked abilities like Mirror Substitution. The latter was a nearly perfect replica, akin to the ones recently encountered, possessing special traits.

Of course, for a Demoness of Pleasure, this wasn't practical. If she could already capture the other party's figure with a mirror, why not directly cast a curse instead of creating a Mirror Person?

Lumian interjected, “You can take another one, Franca. No need to be modest. Your contributions in these battles are second only to mine.”

“What do you mean second only to you?” Franca scoffed, pushing the Decency brooch in her direction.

The only remaining spoils of war were the small dark-painted wooden box, each side adorned with a membrane curtain, and the Pride Armor. Jenna swiftly made her choice and selected the Authority Holder's Under-the-table Transaction.

According to Lumian, her lucky gold coin no longer carried any additional luck. Its usefulness was now limited to specific situations. Recognizing this, she didn't believe she could resist the betrayal curse of the Pride Armor. Jenna understood the importance of not being overly prideful and blindly relying on luck, taking Gardner Martin's fate as a sobering lesson.

The usage of Authority Holder's Under-the-table Transaction involved grasping valuable items with one's hand, inserting them into the dark wooden box through the side “curtain,” handing it to the outstretched palm-like object, and stating one's requirements. This process simplified complex matters and eased difficult transactions.

However, one needed to have a clear, achievable target—no vague requests were allowed. For example, directly stating a desire for a specific Beyonder characteristic or mystical item was useless. Users had to find the corresponding Beyonder characteristic or mystical item, fail to reach a deal, and then make their request. This approach involved changing the seller's mind, with a high chance of securing a steep discount.

The “Under-the-table Transaction” had various applications, even allowing two individuals with deep grudges to reconcile by shaking hands inside the box—though the individual shaking hands wasn't actually the other party.

Authority Holder's Under-the-table Transaction was an active remnant of boon powers, and without Beyonder characteristics, it could only be used nine more times. The downside was that each use increased the likelihood of encountering evil creatures like Demons in future transactions.

As Jenna stowed away the Authority Holder's Under-the-table Transaction, Franca smiled and said, “I wish to use the Decency brooch to exchange for the black Primordial Demoness figurine, or would you prefer to zero your debt as an exchange?”

Following Madam Judgment's suggestion, Franca intended to use this unique figurine to gauge the Demoness Sect's reaction and potentially exchange it for their rewards.

“T-this is everyone's spoils of war,” Jenna responded in confusion.

Franca grinned and explained, “No, it's yours. Back then, only you with the lucky gold coin could hold it, so it's rightfully yours. To put it simply, this is a gain from 'luck.’”

Jenna glanced at Lumian and Anthony, finding their nods of agreement. She muttered, “Dammit, you're making me feel embarrassed... I want the Decency brooch. Only by personally paying off a debt does it become meaningful.”

As she spoke, Jenna handed the black Primordial Demoness figurine to Franca and stowed away the Decency brooch, carved into a Scotch Broom.

Finally, the group directed their attention to the silver-white Pride Armor, and a contemplative silence ensued once again.

After a lengthy pause, Franca exclaimed, “Ciel, keep it. Treat it as a communal item that anyone can use. Only the both of us can carry it conveniently now. Besides, you're about to head to Port Santa in Feynapotter's Gaia Province. You can't borrow my Mirror Substitution anymore. This armor will be very useful in critical moments.”

Lumian had already made the decision to investigate the sea prayer ritual in Port Santa, Feynapotter Kingdom's Gaia Province, and search for traces of the April Fool's key members—Bard and Ultraman.

Chapter 496 Sin

Lumian commented nonchalantly towards Franca's suggestion, “That works too. In the future, if anyone wants to use this armor, I'll 'teleport' it to you. What's this called? It's called Ciel Postal Service. It'll be delivered immediately!”

After joking, he approached the Pride Armor standing beside the coffee table and began stuffing its silver-white glove into the opening of the Traveler's Bag.

With this motion, the towering full-body armor shrank into the small black cloth bag.

As long as one part of an item could enter a Traveler's Bag, it could pass through the opening regardless of its size, as long as it didn't exceed the space within. Typically, flesh and blood infused with vitality couldn't be stored in a Traveler's Bag.

Considering these factors, Lumian's initial thought upon obtaining the Beyonder item and its “explanation manual” was that it could be used to conceal a corpse.

“How magical...” Jenna watched the scene unfold with envy.

Despite attending numerous mysticism gatherings, she had never encountered such an item. The closest thing she knew was the world inside a painting.

Lumian concealed his Traveler's Bag beneath his clothes, a smile playing on his lips. Addressing Anthony and Jenna, he remarked, “After this incident, you ought to know Franca and I are backed by a secret organization. It's not the Iron and Blood Cross Order or the Demoness Sect. So, what do you say? Interested in joining? If not, I'll need you to sign a confidentiality agreement or swear a binding oath of secrecy.”

Having heard Lumian and Franca discuss the secret organization and knowing that they genuinely believed in Mr. Fool, Jenna was familiar with the tarot card code name. Having received The Fool's response, her decision was swift.

“I'm in.”

Anthony Reid pondered in silence for a moment before inquiring, “Does your organization follow some hidden entity?”

“It's an orthodox god,” Lumian responded, addressing Anthony's unspoken concerns. “If you doubt me, I can show you the cathedral.”

Observing Lumian's expression, Anthony confirmed the sincerity.

The Psychiatrist let out a bitter laugh and admitted, “Then I don't have an issue. My past experiences and this incident have taught me that I'm still too feeble to prevent such a catastrophe. Even if it stands right beside me, I can only watch as myself and those around me plummet into the abyss.”

For Anthony, joining a secret organization seemed like a pragmatic choice to strengthen himself—especially one that followed an orthodox god.

As a believer of the God of Steam and Machinery, Anthony had carefully considered it. He realized that the Church's scriptures lacked any mention of animosity between orthodox gods, unlike the Eternal Blazing Sun Church, which perpetually preached hatred towards the Lord of Storms and the God of Knowledge and Wisdom.

In other words, his faith wouldn't hinder Anthony from joining such a secret organization.

Without waiting for Lumian and Franca's response, Anthony grinned self-deprecatingly and admitted, “I originally planned to head back to the West Midseashire Coast, live in the countryside, but now I'm worried I can't escape the looming catastrophe. Just like those in the market district, who'd willingly dance on the edge of life and death amidst repeated abnormalities? Yet, their wills and desires are futile.

“From what I've seen, catastrophes are becoming more frequent.”

Lumian mocked his companion.

“You've turned into a nag after your mental illness got sorted.”

He continued, “We'll hash out the details once you confirm your Major Arcana card and get your mission assignment.”

Jenna pursed her lips, a dark expression crossing her face.

“I actually kinda like living in the market district...”

It seemed like she needed to leave this place.

A soft chuckle escaped Lumian's lips.

“This is, in fact, protection for the market district. Hunters and Demonesses always bring catastrophe.”

Always bring catastrophe, even if they don't do anything? Jenna's eyes narrowed as she sank into deep thought.

“F*ck off! You're the only one like this!” Franca cursed, a mix of irritation and amusement.

In the past few months, most catastrophes in the market district had orbited around Ciel. What did it have to do with Jenna and me?

Wouldn't that prove that 007 was right?

After discussing other matters, Lumian and Franca stepped out of 3 Rue des Blouses Blanches into the morning sun. One headed for Psychic's headquarters on Rue Scheer in Avenue du Boulevard, while the other made her way to Trocadéro.

Lumian opted for a four-wheeled, two-seater rental carriage instead of the usual public carriage.

Outside the carriage window, street vendors hawked Whiskey Sour, meatloaf, freshwater fish, onion bread, spicy sauce, soybean paste, and various other items. Passersby either paused to make a purchase or briskly moved on. Some were clad as clerks, others in an array of differently colored workers' uniforms.

After the riot of the previous night and the apocalyptic downpour, this place was once again alive with activity.

For Lumian, it was reminiscent of the market district of the past, but now, he was a wanted criminal again—in his identity as Ciel Dubois, a member of the Iron and Blood Cross Order and a leader of the Savoie Mob.

Salle de Bal Brise and the other establishments had undoubtedly been seized by the police headquarters. The Iron and Blood Cross Order's grip on the market district had almost been eradicated.

Lumian found it regrettable as it meant losing a stable source of income.

However, after taking Ludwig in the previous night and informing Madam Magician about the information, he intentionally returned to Salle de Bal Brise before the chaos settled. He secured 30,000 verl d'or from the safe, bringing his total to 75,000 verl d'or and 1,000 gold.

Lumian's mind wandered as he observed the passersby and listened to the vendors' pitches.

After “reporting” the previous night's matters to Mr. K and obtaining the Aurora Order Oracle's approval, he planned to leave Trier for the Feynapotter Kingdom.

Before embarking on his journey, he had three priorities:

Firstly, he needed to locate Lugano Toscano, who had lost his job again, and inquire if he was willing to accompany him to the Feynapotter Kingdom's Port Santa. This Sequence 8 Doctor, often journeying to the Feynapotter Kingdom, was fluent in highlander. Lumian, knowing only Intisian and ancient Feysac, risked communication challenges without him—having to resort to body language.

Secondly, he awaited Jenna and Anthony's Major Arcana card missions to see if they could collaborate and assist each other.

Thirdly, he planned to use the messenger-related spirit world creature information that came with the Reaper formula from Madam Magician to attempt gaining a messenger. This would make future communication with Franca and others more convenient. Additionally, he had to perform a ritual to acquire one or two more contractual abilities.

On Avenue du Boulevard, at 19 Rue Scheer, beneath the luxurious beige house, Lumian met Mr. K once again in the basement.

The Oracle, his face concealed in hooded shadows, occupied a red armchair, his profound gaze fixed on Lumian.

“Last night, I entered Fourth Epoch's Trier,” Lumian got straight to the point, hoping to capture Mr. K's attention.

Mr. K's hooded head nodded. “I know. Tell me the whole story.”

You know? Lumian was surprised. He recounted capturing Bouvard Pont-Péro during his revenge, and the subsequent events of how he, Franca, and company defeated Mirror Gardner, using the special mirror world to escape Fourth Epoch Trier.

Throughout the entire narrative, he shared only his experiences, avoiding any mention of Jenna and the others' encounters or his speculations. For instance, he omitted details like the fortunate gold coin or Jenna's prayer to Mr. Fool, stating only that he had inexplicably entered the world in the painting.

Similarly, he left out many specifics.

Mr. K listened attentively without interrupting Lumian's account.

After Lumian mentioned the elimination of the Iron and Blood Cross Order's market division and his exposed identity, Mr. K stood up and spoke in a hoarse voice, “No problem. Feel free to seek my assistance at any time.”

Without awaiting Lumian's response, the Aurora Order Oracle turned around, knelt, and prostrated himself on the ground.

Mr. K's face pressed tightly against the floor tiles as he muttered to himself, his thoughts incomprehensible.

Lumian waited in silence, refraining from interrupting Mr. K. The shadows around him deepened, as if unseen eyes were fixed on him, sending shivers down his spine.

Yet, he remained unfazed. It seemed normal for individuals from the Aurora Order to suddenly exhibit erratic behavior.

After an indeterminate period, Mr. K coughed violently, and blood spurted from the ground.

He looked up and spoke in a deep, frenzied voice, “Oh, merciful Father, I implore your mercy for my transgressions.”

After repeating this three times, Mr. K's face pressed against the ground again, emitting sounds of chewing and devouring.

After performing these peculiar actions, he stood up and tapped four times—top, down, left, right—on his chest.

“What happened? Why the repentance?” Lumian asked curiously.

Mr. K rasped, “Our Aurora Order failed to react in time to last night's catastrophe. Failing to cooperate with you in destroying the ritual was my dereliction of duty.”

“It's not your responsibility,” Lumian replied, his lips twitching.

The Tarot Club's actions had primarily propelled the Hostel's plan forward. It was already commendable for the Aurora Order to swiftly discern what had occurred. There was no need for Mr. K to repent and shoulder the blame for the lapse.

Mr. K shook his head. "No matter the reason, failure to act is a sin."

Do you have to be so responsible... You're just a secret organization, not fanatical believers of the Eternal Blazing Sun... Lumian muttered silently.

As if sensing Lumian's thoughts, Mr. K spread his arms wide and spoke with abnormal fanaticism, "Because our Aurora Order is born to bear all sin."

I think you're being too extreme... Lumian struggled to control his expression.

Chapter 497 The Fragment's Origins

Mr. K didn't impose any specific requests for Lumian's journey to Feynapotter. He merely reiterated that Lumian could utilize the finger anytime he faced challenges. As long as he wasn't in a unique environment, the Aurora Order Oracle could sense it through the blood connection and offer prompt assistance.

Sensing it over quite a long distance. As expected of being a part of your body... I wonder if Demonesses can complete a curse after obtaining this finger... Lumian bade farewell to Mr. K, his thoughts drifting, and exited the opulent beige house at 19 Rue Scheer.

In Trocadéro Town, at the entrance of the manor surrounded by grapevines, Franca caught sight of Browns Sauron, her long orange-red hair cascading down like a waterfall.

The Demoness smirked mockingly and said, "I heard your lover is dead?"

"Did you just drink the Provoker potion?" Franca retorted without backing down.

"Could it be that members of the Sauron family carry a Provoker trait from birth?"

Without waiting for Browns's response, Franca walked past her, chuckling.

"Yes, Gardner Martin is indeed dead. I killed him myself."

Browns's pupils dilated as she turned her head in surprise to gaze upon Franca's side profile. She saw that the new Demoness had a faint smile on her face, but her eyes were deep and dark—a mix of pleasure and pain, solemn and ruthless.

Franca considered adding, "I was even present to hear your ancestor's scream while being killed," but that would expose her grasp of extensive secret intel and mysticism knowledge that she ought not to have at her level. It would arouse the Demoness Sect's suspicion, so she abandoned the idea. As she advanced, she smiled and said, "Then, I found the item Gardner Martin and his collaborators smuggled into Trier through the catacombs."

"You've found it. What is it?" Browns hadn't expected Franca to complete this mission, a mix of surprise and a tinge of jealousy crossing her features.

Franca didn't hide anything. This was her purpose in coming to Demoness of Black Clarice.

She produced the pitch-black figurine with its hair facing the opposite direction of the orthodox version and waved it in front of Browns.

Browns's expression froze, as if she had seen something terrifying.

“W-why? How is it appearing here...?” The Demoness of Pleasure's voice trailed off, her tone filled with unconcealable shock.

Franca seized the opportunity to ask, “You know what it is?”

Browns snapped out of her daze, her eyes flickering as she said, “My teacher will tell you.”

Franca didn't press further and changed the subject with a smile.

“Why does your teacher call herself the Demoness of Black? Wouldn't any ordinary person consider a Demoness a derogatory term?”

“Everyone has different aesthetic standards. Some like to call themselves Saintesses, while others find Demonesses cool. They have a unique and unorthodox flair.”

Browns appeared more inclined to the latter.

Franca pondered seriously, Men retain their youthful spirit even in death. Is there such excessive self-awareness? Even if they were once men... She realized that if someone called her a Demoness of XX, she would probably feel a strange sense of smugness despite her embarrassment. However, if it were Saintess, she would definitely have goosebumps—her toes cringing so bad that they could dig a hole and bury herself in it.

Before long, Franca encountered the Demoness of Black at the circular pavilion amidst the grapevines and numerous vines.

Clarice's dark gray eyes, tinged with melancholy, swept across Franca's face and the black Primordial Demoness figurine in her hand.

Her gaze lingered on the latter for a few seconds before she said, “Did you obtain this from the Iron and Blood Cross Order?”

“Yes, I did.” Franca took the initiative to recount the previous night's encounter.

She recounted from the moment she failed to tail the Carbonari member until how she and Anthony Reid mysteriously entered the sealed Fourth Epoch Trier under the influence of the Primordial Demoness figurine and the ancient silver mirror despite clearly being in Apartment 601 at 3 Rue des Blouses Blanches.

She didn't hide the existence of the ancient silver mirror anymore. She only said that she had accidentally obtained it underground a few months ago. This time, it had some effect but disappeared without a trace after they sank underground.

Everything she said was the truth—every word the truth.

Demoness of Black Clarice interrupted Franca's account and asked thoughtfully, “Did you run into Gardner Martin as soon as you entered?”

Although she hadn't seen it with her own eyes, she seemed to foresee the development.

“Yes, there was also that Carbonari member. He's General Philip, who faked his death. This strange figurine was found on him,” Franca replied truthfully. “At that time, Anthony and I nearly died at Gardner and Philip's hands. Fortunately, Ciel and Jenna inexplicably entered and were hidden nearby.”

She briefly recounted the battle and deliberately redirected Jenna's ability towards Vampires.

After listening for a while, the Demoness of Black raised her right hand and gently stroked her face.

“You said that there was an area in the wilderness with chaotic weather in the distance, and there was a giant figure surrounded by hurricanes and thick fog?”

“Yes, we also heard his roar and nearly lost control. Fortunately, we entered the gray fog-shrouded city in time. The commotion outside became very muffled.” Franca hadn't expected the Demoness of Black to be so concerned about the giant.

Clarice listened quietly and let out a soft sigh. She felt a mix of sorrow, disappointment, and indescribable relief, making her feel exceptionally pitiful.

Browns looked at her teacher with a puzzled expression, as if she didn't understand why the Demoness of Black had such a reaction.

Franca was puzzled at first, but then her heart skipped a beat.

Browns belongs to the Sauron family. Could it be the same for the Demoness of Black?

Could they be a branch of the Sauron family that had pledged allegiance to the Demoness Sect?

However, the Demoness of Black's hair and eyes don't resemble those of a genuine Sauron family member...

If they are all from the Sauron family, could the Demoness of Black be Browns's relative, or even her father or mother, leading to Browns's current state?

Had the Demoness of Black heard about Vermonda Sauron's current situation and understood the Iron and Blood Cross Order's scheme? Is that why she's so emotional?

As these thoughts raced through Franca's mind, she continued to recount the battle between the four of them and Mirror Gardner. Finally, she took out the pitch-black Mirror World Fragment.

“Your Excellency Demoness of Black, what's this? And what's this figurine?”

Demoness of Black Clarice gazed at the Mirror World Fragment and the black Primordial Demoness figurine and said, “In conventional mysticism, the mirror world isn't a true world. It's an amalgamation of the concept of doors, connected to mirrors and alternate spaces. However, many members of our Demoness Sect are aware that in certain special places, for specific reasons, there are a few mirror worlds with monsters. You encountered one of them, and this is a fragment of that world...”

She briefly recounted what Franca already knew about the Mirror World Fragment. Finally, she said, “This should have been handed over to me for a reward, but according to your description, many underground Mirror People have already infiltrated Trier. This fragment can help you track them, find them, and eliminate them. You can keep it for a while until the mission is completed.

“Hmm, this is your next mission. Clean up Trier's Mirror People and gather any similar fragments that might be on them.”

The origins and effects are the same as what Madam Magician said. From the looks of it, Clarice wasn't lying to me... Sigh, my next mission is in Trier. I can't follow Ciel to Feynapotter to search for Bard and company... At critical moments, I can get him to 'teleport' me there to provide help... Franca sighed inwardly and said, “Yes, Your Excellency Demoness of Black.”

The Demoness of Black continued, “This figurine originates from one of the special mirror worlds. “We believe in the Primordial One in reality. The Mirror People believe in the mirrored Primordial One, but it's actually just a projection of the Primordial One in the mirror.”

Just as I suspected... The Primordial Demoness's projection in the mirror underwent an abnormality and gained self-awareness, causing Her condition to worsen? Or is Clarice not telling the entire truth? Under the Demoness of Black's instructions, Franca handed over the special figurine.

Clarice nodded slightly and said, “You completed the Iron and Blood Cross Order mission better than I expected by retrieving this special figurine. What reward do you want?”

Franca didn't hesitate and answered, “The potion formula for Affliction, or perhaps a mystical item that allows me to traverse the spirit world.”

The Demoness of Black revealed an inconspicuous smile.

“This time, I'll give you the potion formula for Affliction. Once you complete your next mission, you can choose a mystical item with the Spirit World Traversal ability.”

Does that mean I can't exchange my contributions for teleportation-type items this time, but they surpass the value of the Demoness of Affliction formula? I can save a portion and exchange them together when I make other contributions? Franca pondered for a moment and said, “Okay.”

Demoness of Black Clarice raised her right hand and swiped at the void.

Franca immediately noticed numerous dark Hermes words outlined on the watery surface at the edge of the circular pavilion.

“Affliction potion formula:

“Sequence: 5;

“Main ingredient: Flower-Faced Bat's head, Two-Tailed Black Snake's gallbladder;

“Supplementary ingredients: 30 milliliters of Flower-Faced Bat blood, 50 milliliters of a seriously ill human's blood, tail tip of the Two-Tailed Black Snake, 10 drops of Enfinitas Eucalyptus essential oil;

“Ritual: Without substitutes, be burned at the stake for fifteen minutes and survive without going mad.”

Hiss... Just reading the description hurts... Franca couldn't help but shrink back.

After memorizing the potion formula, she left the manor with Browns.

Demoness of Black Clarice watched her silently as she retrieved an item from a hidden pocket in her black court dress.

It was a pitch-black mirror fragment.

It bore a striking resemblance to Franca's Mirror World Fragment, albeit with an irregular fracture at the edge.

Chapter 498 Suspicious Attitude

Lugano Toscano, a burly man with brown hair, brown eyes, and sharp features, donned a budget-friendly black formal suit. He lowered his head as he navigated through the lively crowd, his top hat shading his face.

After a series of turns, the Beyonder, now a Sequence 8 Doctor, entered Rue des Pavés beside Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman. He ascended a creaking wooden staircase to the top floor of an ancient house.

Upon waking that day, before having breakfast, his companion informed him of being wanted—due to his role as Ciel Dubois's trusted subordinate managing a dance hall.

Despite Lugano's confusion about the Savoie Mob's motives and his certainty of non-involvement, as a wild Beyonder, merely existing rendered him guilty. Reluctant to seek clarification from the Purifiers and Machinery Hivemind, he packed his bags and moved to the safe house without notifying his companions. His plan was to observe for a few more days before deciding on his next move.

During the factories' lunch break, making the market district bustling, Lugano descended and surveyed the area. True to his expectations, he discovered he was indeed wanted, with a bounty of 2,000 verl d'or.

Considering his perceived lack of importance, Lugano hoped to fade from the official Beyonders' attention in due time.

Entering the room, not much larger than an attic, Lugano used a brass key to open the dark-brown wooden door.

Amidst the creaks, a figure caught the Doctor's eye.

Seated at a simple wooden table, Ciel Dubois displayed golden-black hair, a silver earring, a white shirt, a dark jacket, grayish-blue pants, and leather shoes.

How did he find this place? Besides me and the landlord residing in another quartier, no one knows about this safe house! Officially put to use for the first time today! Lugano's pupils dilated, as if he wanted to scrutinize the figure in the dim room.

At some point, the open curtains had been drawn.

Lumian grinned at Lugano and remarked, "Why? Am I not welcomed?"

Lugano instinctively forced a smile, replying, "It's an honor to have you here. I just didn't expect you to know about this doghouse of mine."

He spoke with humility but also subtly hinted at Lumian: I haven't forgotten that I'm your dog!

As Lugano spoke, he entered the room, closing the wooden door behind him.

The space darkened, and a snap echoed.

The candles on the simple wooden table suddenly ignited, casting a yellowish flame.

Lumian lowered his raised right palm and nodded slightly, asking, "Any questions?"

Lugano didn't delve into the crimes of the Savoie Mob's brass that had made him a wanted man. Instead, his concern was elsewhere.

"Monsieur Ciel, how did you know about this safe house of mine?"

Lumian chuckled.

"I can find anything if I put my mind to it."

Wh— Lugano's eyes narrowed, sensing the formidable confidence in the other party.

Ciel's actions also validated his words.

Of course, Lumian wouldn't tell Lugano that he had followed him multiple times, determining the locations of his three safe houses.

As a Hunter, Lumian often roamed the market district during his free time, honing his tracking skills. He was well-acquainted with the area.

While he randomly chose targets for ordinary passersby and residents, Lugano Toscano, a Beyonder seeking to join his ranks, was a crucial subject of investigation to prevent betrayal. Lumian kept a close eye on him to avoid being blindsided by any potential treachery.

Without waiting for Lugano to delve into further inquiries, Lumian got straight to the point.

"I need your help with something."

"It's my honor." Lugano didn't seek details and acted as if he was unquestionably on board.

Isn't this too toady? I'm now a wanted criminal. Without Salle de Bal Brise and other businesses, it's impossible for me to provide any more resources... Lumian stroked his chin with his right hand.

"I need to make a trip to the Feynapotter Kingdom. I wish for you to be my translator."

Lugano promptly responded, "No problem."

Is that so? But I have a problem... Lumian, a Conspirer, grew suspicious of Lugano's unquestioning loyalty, given the lack of inquiry or discussion about returns. He instantly became highly focused.

Could it be that this fellow, like Ludwig, has been "sent" by some faction to interact with me? Lumian raised his eyebrows and smiled.

"I thought you'd refuse. After all, you've already become a Doctor. Even without taking any risks, you can lead a very good life."

Doctors could use superpowers to treat illnesses and injuries, easily sustaining themselves in any country or city.

Lugano said sheepishly, "I'm also wanted. I'm planning to find a place to hide before returning to Trier. Besides, I believe you'll reward me handsomely.

"Although Doctors can treat illnesses, we can't use Beyonder powers openly. That would attract the attention of official Beyonders unless we only dabble in the black market. The best choice is to forge a doctor's license and open a clinic. Add on Beyonder powers while providing regular treatment. However, it will require a large sum of starting funds and sufficient medical knowledge. I already have the latter. As for the former, I've just exchanged all my savings for the main and supplementary ingredients for the Doctor potion."

As he spoke, Lugano's smile ingratiated.

"Once I become a renowned doctor in Trier, I'll earn at least 200,000 verl d'or annually. That way, I won't have to adventure anymore. Even if I don't want to become too famous and attract the attention of official Beyonders, it'll be easy for me to earn 40,000 to 50,000 verl d'or a year."

You're quite familiar with Trier's doctor incomes... Lumian gazed at Lugano's face, his doubts dissipating but still lingering.

He quickly made up his mind and stood up slowly.

"Excellent. Wait three days for me here. I'll come to you after I'm done with other matters. When the time comes, I'll pay you a 5,000 verl d'or advance. When I don't need your translation services, I'll give you another 5,000 verl d'or. If there's a battle midway, you can divide the spoils of war according to rules between adventurers. I'll provide further compensation later, no less than 5,000 verl d'or."

"Alright, Monsieur Ciel." Lugano escorted Lumian out of the room with a smile.

Throughout this process, Lumian observed Doctor's expressions and actions from the corner of his eye, but he didn't detect any abnormalities.

Is this really how he is? There's nothing abnormal about him, or is his acting skills good enough? Lumian looked ahead and descended the stairs steadily.

Jenna didn't linger in Apartment 601 at 3 Rue des Blouses Blanches. She swiftly packed her belongings, intending to transfer to Franca's safe house in Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative.

Despite being a leader of the Savoie Mob and Gardner Martin's mistress, Franca strangely hadn't become a wanted criminal. However, the Demoness of Pleasure anticipated that she might face arrest by official Beyonders at her residence soon. Therefore, Franca had prepared to move to Trocadéro Town, having packed her own belongings and Jenna's luggage into a Traveler's Bag for a quick escape.

Carrying a brown suitcase, Jenna entered Rue des Blouses Blanches and noticed peculiar symbols in a side alley, resembling child's graffiti—a sign of the Purifiers' request for a meeting.

Jenna hesitated as she walked forward.

Although she had discussed with Lumian, Franca, and Anthony what to say about the previous night's encounter, meeting official Beyonders still felt risky. The unease lingered.

After nearly ten minutes of contemplation, Jenna let out a soft sigh and turned onto Avenue du Marché, making her way towards the alley behind Église Saint-Robert—the designated meeting venue.

Her brother Julien was still in Port LeSeur and would return to Trier in a few months. Jenna aimed to avoid implicating her remaining relative and wanted him to live free from hiding and fear. Her plan was to establish a positive relationship with the Purifiers and entrust them with her brother's safety.

I'm already a Witch who can bring about a catastrophe. I'll shoulder these dark and dangerous matters, Jenna silently muttered to herself, lowering her eyes and quickening her pace.

This time, Valentine and Imre weren't the only ones in the back alley of Église Saint-Robert's cathedral. There was also a man with blond hair, golden eyebrows, and a golden beard, dressed in a brown double-breasted coat.

“This is our deacon, Monsieur Angoulême,” Imre introduced. “He attaches great importance to last night's catastrophe and wants to know what information you have.”

From their perspective, Celia Bello had close ties to Ciel and Franca. One of them was Gardner Martin's subordinate in two aspects, while the other was his mistress. They were expected to be aware of the riots and anomalies in the market district.

Jenna's role as an informant had prompted the Purifiers, on Angoulême's suggestion, to hold off arresting Franca and Apartment 601 at 3 Rue des Blouses Blanches. For now, their focus was on making Ciel Dubois, confirmed as a “soldier” of the secret organization, a wanted man.

Jenna averted her gaze from Angoulême's golden buttons and suddenly smiled.

“Are you referring to the catastrophe triggered by the unsealing of Fourth Epoch Trier last night?”

Imre and Valentine were initially dazzled by Jenna's smile, but then their eyes widened in shock at the information she revealed.

Angoulême was taken aback and sighed inwardly, as if he had anticipated this.

Jenna tilted her head slightly and added with a smile, “Would you believe me if I said that I witnessed the beginning of the problem and the ritual's process with my own eyes, and I entered Fourth Epoch Trier yet managed to escape?”

Valentine and Imre's eyes widened as they remained silent, unsure of how to respond.

“Is it related to the Hostel you previously reported?” Angoulême asked in a deep voice.

Jenna tersely acknowledged and nodded.

“Where are Franca and Ciel?” Angoulême inquired.

Jenna replied truthfully, “They've left the market district. They probably won't return.”

Angoulême breathed a sigh of relief and said, “Tell me more about your experiences.”

Chapter 499 Minor Arcana Card

Jenna briefed the three Purifiers about their investigation of Hostel, emphasizing the encounter with a cyborg monk from the Deep Valley Cloister underground, who carried a load of paints and brushes. As they subsequently investigated, Ciel and she stumbled upon a tunnel collapse during an earthquake-like upheaval, leading them to fall into the painting's world.

Imre couldn't hide his disbelief, interrupting Jenna with a skeptical tone. “You just fell into the painting world like that?”

Seems too coincidental?

The coincidence seems so unreal that even best-selling authors wouldn't concoct such a plot twist!

Valentine muttered to himself, “Could it be a miracle from God?”

Jenna nodded, recalling her initial disbelief when she first laid eyes on the painting's market district. “Yes, it was hard to believe at first.”

Angoulême, with a subtle gesture of his right hand, signaled Imre and Valentine not to press further, allowing Celia Bello to continue.

Jenna shifted her focus to Séraphine and Gabriel's detailed description of Hostel, delving into her and Ciel's harrowing escape, encounters with pixies, and the relentless attacks from the other “Rooms.”

Upon grasping the significance of “Hostel” and “Rooms,” Valentine's mind churned with contemplation, making a vital connection.

“Each room harbors a 'resident,' akin to concealing immense power within one's body, allowing a portion of it to leak out... Where have I seen such a state before...”

As images and information flashed through Valentine's mind, he looked up, interrupting Jenna's narrative with a probing question.

“What's Ciel's true identity?”

When the Purifiers plastered the wanted posters across the city, they were onto Ciel Dubois and his fake identity cooked up by the Savoie Mob. The police headquarters had their hands full interrogating the captured Savoie Mob members, digging for any shreds of information about Ciel Dubois's background.

Jenna understood that now that he was wanted, Ciel couldn't conceal his true identity further. After some consideration, she smiled and said,

“Don't you know?

“His real name is Lumian Lee—also a wanted criminal from Cordu in the south.”

Lumian Lee... Valentine's eyelids twitched as he realized his suspicions were correct.

Jenna glanced at him and softly “explained,” “Ciel joined the Savoie Mob and the Iron and Blood Cross Order to enhance himself and seek revenge on the evil gods' bestowed. He played a crucial role in this matter. Without his investigation, the Hostel ritual wouldn't have been brought forward, and the catastrophe would have been even more severe. Though he claims it's to finish off the bestowed of evil gods, deep down, he doesn't want others to suffer the same fate after he experienced a disaster.”

Valentine's expression eased, revealing a mix of regret and relief.

He sighed, acknowledging, “He is indeed a devout follower of God. Unfortunately, fate and those malevolent forces pushed him into the darkness.”

Jenna, muttering silently, A devout follower... I'm afraid you have some unnecessary misunderstandings about Ciel.

Angoulême responded to the revelation with a self-deprecating smile.

“I didn't expect the one preventing the catastrophe from escalating last night to be a wanted criminal, a member of an evil organization. Even without standing in the light, one can still be a hero.”

Jenna agreed with this sentiment, choosing not to divulge the pixies' reference to Lumian as Room 1. Instead, she focused on the escape from the painting world, describing their emergence in the wilderness outside Fourth Epoch Trier after passing through the darkness corresponding to the Salle de Bal Brise at sunrise.

She detailed the collapsed grayish-white stone pillar, the distant giant's figure, General Philip's feigned death, the black Primordial Demoness figurine, Mirror Gardner Martin, the terrifying roar, the descending sun, the reddened sky, and the rain of fire. However, she discreetly omitted the specifics of the ensuing battle.

Angoulême and the rest wisely held back from prying too much. Among wild Beyonders, certain intel could fetch a handsome sum, but the details of their abilities and combat techniques were strictly confidential.

“Finally, we obtained the figurine and the fragment left behind by Mirror Gardner, left the seal, and returned to the normal underground,” Jenna continued. Though the first half of her sentence wasn't directly related to the second half, it created an impression of how they left Fourth Epoch Trier.

“The complexity of the matter is beyond imagination, and it involves a high-level power,” Angoulême sighed softly.

They had no idea what had happened for the sun to rise from the Sacred Heart Cloister last night, nor did they understand why it had fallen into the Fourth Epoch Trier's seal. They felt that it had something to do with an Angel-level battle.

"Where is the figurine and the mirror fragment?" Valentine asked anxiously.

Jenna couldn't be more honest. "It's with Franca."

Angoulême nodded gently.

"Where's the full-body armor?"

This was linked to the deaths of his two former colleagues.

Of course, Gardner Martin's death could be seen as a form of successful "revenge."

"Magic Mirror Divination revealed a terrifying betrayal curse associated with it. Gardner Martin's fate served as proof. None of us dared to take the risk. Ultimately, we left it with Ciel." Jenna, even as a Witch, found the curse to be exaggerated and ridiculous.

After a brief silence, Angoulême addressed the issue, "If you encounter Ciel again, tell him he can sell us the armor."

Jenna nodded in agreement, and the Purifier deacon got serious.

"The intel you provided is very important. What kind of compensation do you want?"

"The potion formula for Pleasure and all the ingredients," Jenna replied, intending to set a high starting point for negotiation.

This came from years of bargaining experience.

Angoulême glanced at the Witch and said, "Are you planning to leave the market district too?"

"That's right." Jenna smiled sadly and self-deprecatingly. "Witches bring catastrophe. I don't want to impact the people here. No wonder the Witches in stories always live in the dark forest, away from people. However, I'll return occasionally and remain your informant. You can continue to contact me through the agreed method."

Her slightly sad smile prompted an instinctive urge in Imre to look away, wary of falling for her.

"Once we verify the authenticity of your intel, we'll help you apply for the formula and ingredients for Pleasure. I can't guarantee its success. Items at this level require approval from the higher-ups," Angoulême promised without entering into further negotiation.

After bidding farewell to the Purifiers, Jenna picked up her suitcase and took a carriage to Franca's safe house in Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative.

Once settled, she reflected for a moment and decided to express her gratitude at The Fool's cathedral in Lavigny Docks. She felt compelled to thank this great entity for answering her prayers and enabling Ciel to enter the painting world to provide assistance.

This marked the official commencement of her commitment to Mr. Fool.

In the pristine cathedral with clear windows, Jenna sat at the edge of the last row of pews. She closed her eyes, clasped her hands, brought them to her chest, and bowed her head in prayer.

Amidst the tranquility of the religious space, it felt as if she had entered a deep slumber, her mind empty, and her words mere offerings of praise.

Vaguely, she sensed someone settling beside her.

Ignoring the newcomer, she continued with her prayer.

After a few minutes, she opened her eyes and noticed a petite lady praying beside her.

The lady had shoulder-length yellow hair and wore light pants, a masculine-looking shirt, and a small brown coat.

Although her eyes remained closed, the delicate contours of her brows, mouth, and nose were discernible from her side profile. Despite her lack of height, she exuded a calm and dignified aura.

Sensing Jenna's gaze, the woman opened her eyes and greeted her with a smile.

"Jenna?"

"Yes... Whom am I speaking to?" Jenna felt puzzled and vigilant, but she sensed no danger in Mr. Fool's cathedral.

The young lady introduced herself, "I'm the Major Arcana card holder of the Two of Cups, whom you might know as Franca, Judgment.

"I came to The Fool's cathedral to pray today, not expecting to meet you. Perhaps this is fate. How about it? Do you want to draw a Minor Arcana card?"

Feeling the friendliness in her tone, Jenna nodded and said, "I'd be delighted, Madam Judgment."

If it were any other Major Arcana card holder, Jenna might have been instinctively worried, but Franca and Lumian had already mentioned Judgment and Magician to her. She had a natural favorable impression and trust in them.

Judgment retrieved a stack of tarot cards from a small black bag hanging from her waist. She casually cut them a few times and handed them over with a smile.

"Draw one."

Jenna felt inexplicably nervous. After contemplating for a moment, she reached out her right hand and drew a Minor Arcana card.

The card depicted seven cups floating in the clouds, with skulls and people looking at them below.

“Seven of Cups,” Madam Judgment chuckled. “This represents confusion, puzzlement, dreams, illusions, and choices. But what's important is not that. Our Tarot Club's two Demonesses drew a Cup card.”

She produced another tarot card, this one portraying an angel sounding a trumpet to guide the departed.

Major Arcana card, Judgment!

“Keep this card. When faced with unforeseen danger, take it out and recite 'Rain Judgment' in Hermes. As long as I'm in Trier, I can provide assistance. Of course, you have to be in Trier too when requesting. Except in places like Fourth Epoch Trier—I won't be able to hear you,” Madam Judgment calmly explained.

“Thank you, Madam Judgment,” Jenna expressed her gratitude sincerely, accepting the Major Arcana card.

Judgment nodded and continued, “Now, cooperate with the Two of Cups to carry out the Demoness Sect's mission, but with a different direction. Avoid the Demoness Sect and investigate the special mirror worlds. The Demoness of Catastrophe, Krismona, who perished in the Fourth Epoch, is a starting point. She's a child of the Primordial Demoness, a natural-born woman—a pure female Demoness, just like you.”

Chapter 500 “Nonexistent” City

The child of the Primordial Demoness must be born as a woman? Jenna pondered the Sequence name “Witch” and began to grasp its significance.

A god's offspring can't be just ordinary, and being a Sequence 9 or 8 from birth seems impossible, doesn't it?

“Alright,” Jenna agreed.

Upon joining the Tarot Club, her initial mission didn't require her to part ways with her companions or expose herself to unnecessary risks, bringing a sense of comfort.

Madam Judgment responded with a smile, saying, “Allow me to update you on the Tarot Club's current situation...”

After Anthony Reid left Apartment 601 at 3 Rue des Blouses Blanches, the exhaustion of a sleepless night hit him hard.

As a Psychiatrist, his physical condition hadn't improved much. Staying awake until dawn and enduring severe injuries took a toll. Surviving with the help of the blood-sucking obsidian arrow had left him weakened, having lost a significant amount of blood. Subsequent intense battles and relentless running had drained his stamina, leaving him naturally fatigued and yearning for a bed.

At times like these, he couldn't help but envy the Hunters. Lumian, just one Sequence higher, hadn't slept either. Despite being the main force in both battles, he showed no signs of weariness, appearing energetic enough to take on Gardner Martin once more.

Pressing on, Anthony Reid turned onto Rue Anarchie, entering a brownish-gray house and reaching a corner on the third floor.

This was his safe house, an apartment vacant for a long time.

He believed it unsafe to rent from a landlord or broker for a safe house. Any interaction risked betrayal and tracking. Leveraging his identity as an information broker, he identified unused or abandoned apartments in the market district. If things went awry, he could choose a random one to hide without making contact.

Dusty bed and moldy blanket didn't bother Anthony. He collapsed and quickly succumbed to sleep.

In the hazy dream, clarity and rationality returned suddenly.

Ahead, Avenue du Marché unfolded, a café bustling with patrons and thriving.

Following his peculiar intuition, Anthony Reid passed a golden retriever at the café's entrance and arrived at Booth D by the window.

A lady in a light-green and white dress sat there. Anthony sensed he should see her face clearly, one capable of leaving a stunning impression, but a clear mental image eluded him.

It was as if all the information had been gathered, but his brain or Body of Heart and Mind struggled to process it.

"Good morning. I'm Justice," the lady introduced herself in a gentle voice, carrying a hint of briskness.

Justice... Anthony had already learned from Lumian and Franca that the secret organization they belonged to was the Tarot Club. Members used tarot cards as code names, with Major Arcana card holders representing key demigod members, and Minor Arcana card holders as peripheral members under the different Major Arcana cards.

Justice was undoubtedly a Major Arcana card.

"Are you going to be my Major Arcana card holder?" Anthony asked respectfully, taking a seat across from her.

Justice smiled.

"You can also choose to switch. It's not that fate can't be changed.

"Of course, some entities don't think so."

The Major Arcana card opposite him was friendly, not imposing at all. She even initiated a joke, easing Anthony's tense heart.

He exhaled quietly and said, "I can draw a card now."

As he finished speaking, a stack of tarot cards appeared in front of him.

Anthony habitually selected one from the middle and placed it on the table.

The Minor Arcana card revealed: a man carrying a sword sitting beneath three hanging swords.

Four of Swords!

“You've already unburdened your heart. The remaining rest and preparation are for propelling yourself further into the future. As a Psychiatrist, this card signals you to be vigilant about your mind at all times. We can shoulder new burdens at any moment, and it's crucial to know how to accept, accommodate, and resolve them,” Madam Justice interpreted the Minor Arcana card.

A stack of tarot cards appeared in front of her, noticeably less than before.

With casual ease, she drew a card and placed it at the center of the table.

The card portrayed an impartial goddess seated on a stone chair, wielding a sword and scales—the Justice card from the Major Arcana!

Pushing the Justice card toward Anthony, she smiled and said, “You have two missions now. First, collaborate with the Two of Cups to eliminate Mirror People and investigate the Demoness Sect's predicament. Second, make contact with a covert organization known as the Psychology Alchemists...”

Psychology Alchemists... Anthony mulled over the name.

After laying out the missions, Justice inquired, “Did they brief you on the specifics of the great existence we're following and the Tarot Club?”

“All I know is that you follow an orthodox god named The Fool and use tarot cards as code names, following His name,” Anthony honestly replied.

Before formally joining the Tarot Club, Lumian and Franca had kept details scarce.

Justice chuckled.

“Then allow me to introduce you to our beacon and savior, the great Mr. Fool...”

Her tone held a touch of joy.

After leaving Lugano Toscano's secure hideout, Lumian took a carriage to Quartier du Jardin Botanique. He navigated the street named Rue des Pavés in the market district and entered the safe house he had leased earlier.

Ludwig sat on the sofa, engrossed in a novel and indulging in dessert. Lumian glanced at him, sneering, “Escaping the Church of Knowledge doesn't mean you should stoop to reading novels only!”

Ludwig diverted the conversation. “Someone of ill temper sent you a letter. It's in the bedroom.”

“Ill-tempered?” Lumian furrowed his brow.

“The one in the golden dress, like a doll,” Ludwig replied, not bothering to look up. Midway, he paused to savor a bite of carrot cake, a specialty from the Loen Kingdom.

Madam Magician's messenger... Lumian asked in puzzlement, “Why did she lose her temper at you?”

“I saw her and had a little spat with her,” Ludwig replied nonchalantly.

Just an argument? She didn't string you up for a beating? Lumian muttered silently as he entered the bedroom and picked up the folded letter from the desk.

This letter differed from the one that had previously rewarded him. It primarily addressed Lumian's inquiries after acquiring the 0-01 information.

“This seems to be a hint from the Church of Knowledge.

“If you can attain a high position, they are willing to offer some assistance. They might even tacitly permit you to take possession of the Sealed Artifact.

“However, there are two prerequisites. Firstly, you must achieve the status of a Sequence 4 Saint at the very least, possessing godhood and the qualifications to step onto the chessboard. Secondly, you must have a method to transport that Sealed Artifact without causing harm to the surrounding humans and the environment.

“If you fail to meet these two conditions, the Church of Knowledge won't extend clear support.

“There's also a contradiction for becoming a demigod and how those more formidable than Sequence 5 are unable to approach 0-01. Perhaps there's a hidden message here, suggesting that after proving your ability to advance to Sequence 4, but before consuming the potion through a ritual, entering the City of Exiles, Morora, and approaching 0-01 is the next step. Leave a mark or achieve something to lay the groundwork for controlling it when you advance to a higher Sequence.

“As for their specific expectations, I cannot discern them at the moment.

“In simple terms, if you demonstrate and prove your potential, the Church of Knowledge is willing to support your bid for the Red Priest position, competing against Red Angel Medici. Does that surprise you? Are you excited?”

Surprise? More like shock! Lumian had never truly entertained the idea of becoming a true god.

Despite not being a devout believer, he had grown up in a society influenced by such beliefs. His exposure to the mystical world was relatively recent, making the notion of “I too can become a god; I also want to become a god” unlikely.

As for the terror and might of Red Angel Medici, Lumian had witnessed it in Fourth Epoch Trier.

The prospect of becoming enemies with such a formidable entity and vying for the Red Priest's deity position instinctively struck him as absurd and meaningless.

What's the fundamental difference between this and Aurore's jest during combat class, claiming you've mastered basic combat techniques and can now slay a god?

As these thoughts raced through his mind, Lumian suddenly muttered to himself, If I become a true god, can I resurrect Aurore...

After a moment of silence, he smiled self-deprecatingly and said, “Even deities can perish, and may not be resurrected.”

Madam Magician mentioned that the betrayal curse of the Pride Armor stems from the aversion and hatred of a deity before Their demise... However, according to the information she provided, the Pride Armor first appeared at the end of the all-out war in the Northern Continent. Did a true god perish back then?

The abilities of the Pride Armor clearly belong to the Warrior pathway... The one who perished was the God of War? But in the Feysac Empire, the Church of the God of Combat is still fine. Uh, that's what the newspapers, magazines, and merchants said...

Lumian pondered for a moment but couldn't come to a conclusion. He shifted his gaze back to the letter.

“I never intended for you to pursue the Red Priest's deity position, actually. I believed that with an Angel sealed within you and a changed fate, there was a chance for you to become a High-Sequence Beyonder. Now, follow your heart's desires. Our Tarot Club is here to support you.

“However, there's something to be cautious about:

“I went to Lenburg and consulted a few local scholars known for their knowledge, but none of them have heard of the City of Exiles, Morora.

“In the eyes of ordinary people and even the lower- and middle-class clergymen of the Church of Knowledge, this city is nonexistent and unrecorded.”