

Inevitability 501

Chapter 501 Honorific Name

City of Exiles, Morora, doesn't exist? When Lumian perused the information Ludwig had “stolen,” he couldn't shake the sensation that Morora was vivid and right before him. This stemmed from the fact that the scribe had meticulously chronicled every folklore and characteristic of the city. Even those who hadn't set foot there could conjure a mental image.

Yet, Madam Magician had just dropped the bombshell—the City of Exiles, Morora, didn't exist in Lenburg!

I read it so intently, feeling so nervous and afraid. Finally, you tell me, 'I'm sorry, I made all this up?' As Lumian grappled with the absurdity, his gaze reverted to the letter, eager to uncover Madam Magician's speculations.

The Major Arcana card holder teased, “Perhaps the individual who penned this Sealed Artifact information had already lost their sanity, conjuring the City of Exiles, Morora.

“Maybe it's a colossal prison nestled in the mountains, patrolled by guards. They provide supplies unattainable independently and remain cut off from the outside world.

“Perhaps Morora is genuinely an imagined City of Exiles, yet, in a peculiar way, it already exists...

“Don't dismiss the first and third conjectures as absurd or hyperbolic, making them implausible. Let me enlighten you; when dealing with Grade 0 Sealed Artifacts, numerous things defy common sense and intuition. Especially when we're talking about 0-01.

“Personally, I fancy the first conjecture. It emanates a fantastical beauty. A deranged Keeper jotting down information about a Sealed Artifact, filled with ramblings and delusions, and treating it as reality. But what about the truth? Where did it vanish to? Is it no longer in place?”

At the sight of this, Lumian felt an inexplicable chill, and his hair stood on end.

Madam Magician had expounded terrifying possibilities. Moreover, she had employed seemingly casual strokes, brisk descriptions, and a barrage of questions to cultivate an atmosphere of composure and distortion, pushing one's nerves to the brink. Prolonged contemplation of it could drive one to the brink of insanity.

Isn't this superior to the narrative prowess of most current bestselling authors in crafting horror tales? Lumian critiqued his Major Arcana card holder.

Shaking his head, he relegated 0-01 and the City of Exiles to the recesses of his mind.

He feared that dwelling on it might tip him into madness.

It wasn't out of the realm of possibility. Lumian hadn't slept since perusing the information. While he leveraged the 6 a.m. reset of his body every morning to alleviate fatigue, he occasionally heard indescribable and spine-chilling voices resembling calls from the depths of the mountains.

Phew... Lumian exhaled and resumed reading the letter.

“Alright, I won't terrify you any longer. In essence, until you truly confront 0-01, don't summarily dismiss any conjecture or potentiality.

“I've verified the auditory hallucinations you mentioned. It's a mild corruption induced by delving into 0-01's information. Some entities can induce corruption merely by knowing their names instead of their code names. Fortunately, your destiny is entwined with that long-named fellow. To some extent, it's akin to having the status of an Angel. Furthermore, you bear Mr. Fool's seal, the Blood Emperor's aura, and other high-level paraphernalia. That's why you only experienced a faint auditory hallucination and sensed the beckoning. You didn't suddenly descend into paranoia and extremism, harboring a desire to seek treasure in the mountains before vanishing one night.”

Madam Magician revels in spinning horror stories. She insists on expanding concise explanations into potential scenarios for me... Lumian had been in correspondence with his Major Arcana card holder for quite some time, becoming well-acquainted with her choice of words and writing style.

“Let me remind you that you're akin to an Angel to some extent, yet you won't succumb to the corruption associated with higher Sequences. That's what sets you apart. It's why you can venture into many peculiar places. Hence, some entities seek to exploit this. Exercise caution and vigilance, continually scrutinizing yourself.

“By the way, Miss Justice and Judgment extend their gratitude. The revelation of 0-01 and Vermonda Sauron's whereabouts allowed them to fulfill a mission entrusted by Mr. Fool before his slumber. Hence, the rewards are particularly generous this time...

“Your concerns are valid. If you miss the initial trail, whether it's Bard, Mad Lady, or the traces left by other key members of April Fool's, it's more likely a trap than a clue. Of course, traps can yield certain information. As long as you can withstand the associated peril, you might uncover the architect of the trap.

“If, and I say if, you chance upon a High-Sequence Beyonder of the Seer, Apprentice, and Marauder pathways while delving into the whereabouts of the key members of April Fool's, you can invoke my name and seek my assistance.

“Remember, this is my name. It carries the power to conceal secrets from others.

“Cosmic Traveler, beholden to the King of Yellow and Black, and the Sorcerer chronicling the world.”

The King of Yellow and Black is an alias for Mr. Fool... Cosmic Traveler and chronicling the world sounds amazing... Could she truly be the Angel of Stars from the Bible? As Lumian committed it to memory, he witnessed the honorific name gradually fading, as if erased and consumed by the void.

At the conclusion of the letter, Madam Magician added: "The Minor Arcana, Knight of Swords, subordinate to Ma'am Hermit, journeyed to Feynapotter a few months ago for a certain matter. When you arrive there, should you require assistance or information, you can reach out to him.

"His messenger is:

"A peculiar creature wandering above the world, a half-fairy who fiddles with melodic strings, a messenger that belongs solely to the Knight of Swords."

Half-fairy... Lumian had skimmed through information about such spirit world creatures, mainly to select a suitable contract partner. He hadn't delved into the details, making it challenging to recall.

Simultaneously, he noted that the Knight of Swords's messenger incantation deviated from the conventional format. Perhaps there was concern that foes could decipher the correct three-line description and summon the messenger to target him.

Regardless, with the limiting phrase "a messenger that belongs solely to the Knight of Swords," the second sentence didn't necessarily have to depict a creature friendly to humans. However, since it could serve as the messenger of the Knight of Swords, it could tacitly be considered as friendly to humans.

Lumian reread Madam Magician's letter from start to finish, mindful not to overlook any crucial information embedded in her cryptic statements.

Suddenly, a knock echoed on the bedroom door.

Lumian glanced up, and the door creaked open. Ludwig stuck his chubby head out and, in a daze, uttered, "I'm hungry. It's time for you to cook."

"Didn't you just eat plenty of cake and crackers?" Lumian's lips twitched.

Ludwig replied seriously, "That's dessert, not the main course."

Subtly, he licked his lips.

"Moreover, your culinary skills are quite impressive, and those dishes are quite unique. With a chef around, I don't want to settle for raw beef, hard bread, and freshly bought potatoes."

The boy's expression turned pleading.

Lumian scoffed.

"Why don't you do it yourself?"

"I can only cook by myself after I recover a little," Ludwig replied subconsciously before changing his tone. "I'm still a child. You're actually asking me to cook in the kitchen? Aren't you afraid that I'll be injured by a knife or burned?"

I'm just afraid you'll eat the knife... What does it mean to cook after recovering a little? Is Chef a higher rank than your current Sequence's strength? Can't you cook if you're not a chef? Lumian observed Ludwig leaning against the door frame, looking at him with expectant brown eyes, and suddenly found the scene familiar.

In the past, he had begged his sister Aurore in the same way.

Lumian sighed and stood up.

"I'm only responsible for three meals. The rest of the time, rely on dessert, bread, and cold dishes. Don't bother me."

As he spoke, he left the bedroom and entered the kitchen.

While donning an apron and engrossed in cooking, Ludwig, in a caramel coat, waited at the kitchen door, occasionally wiping his mouth.

After pan-frying a steak, Lumian picked it up and casually tossed it out.

Ludwig deftly caught it, tore it in a few bites, and stuffed it down his abdomen.

Observing this, Lumian chuckled inwardly, feeling that this fellow was even more absurd than he had been back then.

In Underground Trier, within a quarry cave.

Lumian stood before the altar, encircled by the recently dismantled wall of spirituality.

He had completed the Contractee summoning ritual and gained two new contracted abilities. Now, he awaited Franca and the others to witness who could successfully gain a messenger.

One of these abilities was Shadow Transformation. It allowed Lumian to authentically morph into a shadow, merging with it to conceal himself and move stealthily—a skill he currently lacked.

While such abilities existed in the mystical knowledge of Contractees, Lumian opted to acquire them from the spirit world creature information provided by Madam Magician. This prevented the bestowed of Inevitability from discerning the negative effects he might endure.

Ultimately, Lumian contracted a spirit world creature known as Long Shadow. He sacrificed six servings of fresh cow and sheep meat in exchange for this ability, making him more susceptible to sunlight than ordinary humans.

This wasn't as severe as the aversion Vampires had to sunlight. Lumian could endure it with his Ascetic endurance.

Another ability he had acquired was the Bottle of Fiction. He found the unique and practical ability demonstrated by the padre intriguing. It could effectively screen an enemy, creating a concealed space where the other party couldn't escape and could only exit through the bottle's opening; traps could be added.

Since no spirit world creature could provide this ability, Lumian summoned the creature called the Fantasy Face and completed the contract with a bottle of blood with strong spirituality.

The blood needed to come from a Beyonder above Sequence 7 or a corresponding Beyonder creature. Lumian, naturally, wouldn't use his own blood, as sacrificing it to the Fantasy Face could

gradually transform him into a monster. Instead, he used the blood Madam Magician extracted from Gardner Martin's corpse—one of the supplementary ingredients for a Reaper. It was substantial, and there was plenty.

The corresponding downside was a trace of greed.

Before long, Franca, Jenna, and Anthony arrived at the quarry cave, one after another.

Chapter 502 Messenger Ritual

Anthony stared at the altar, the flickering candlelight casting shadows on his face. He voiced his concerns and uncertainties about having their own messenger.

“Can we really have our own messenger?”

His knowledge of mysticism hinted that messengers were a rare occurrence. Only Beyonders of specific pathways at a certain Sequence or high-level Beyonders with godhood possessed these special contracted creatures, accessible at any time and summoned by others.

Franca, grinning, reassured him, “Other Beyonders might not cut it, but we still have a chance.

“There are three prerequisites for possessing a messenger. First, you need to understand spirit world creatures, knowing which ones can be used as messengers. You must grasp their characteristics and devise incantations for precise summoning. Second, the spirit world creature must be willing to respond to the summoning and not reject signing a contract to become your messenger. Third, you need a unique undead contract and a deity to bear witness, restraining both parties and clarifying their responsibilities.

“See, there aren't any restrictions on pathways and Sequences among these three. There are only hidden restrictions, but there are ways to bypass them.

“For ordinary Beyonders, the first requirement is the toughest. Usually, they lack a deep understanding of spirit world creatures. Summoning one might make them tremble with fear, afraid the incantation could lead to a monster that could harm their family. With time, they might rely on their predecessors' experiences to accumulate reliable summoning incantations, but most have nothing to do with a messenger.

“We're different. As members of the Tarot Club, we have Madam Magician, an expert in spirit world creatures. Ciel has a pile of information on them. Madam Magician selected 30 spirit world creatures suitable for being a messenger, some with a desire to serve as a Mid-Sequence Beyonders' messenger. This allows us to skip the greatest obstacle.

“Otherwise, consider the speed at which spirit world creatures traverse. Some messengers can cover the distance from southern Intis to Trier in just a few minutes. Others take ten minutes to half an hour, while some may take half a day or even a full

day. Without knowledge, signing a messenger that takes half a year or one year to cover such a distance is pointless.”

“My name isn't Ciel Dubois anymore,” Lumian reminded Franca after she finished explaining a portion of the knowledge to Anthony and Jenna, who were novices in the mysticism world.

Franca let out a hollow laugh.

“Isn't it just a habit of the mouth? When I first met you, your name was Ciel. I've been calling you that for months.”

She continued, “The second prerequisite is that we have a way to bypass it. Beyonders of pathways like Corpse Collector, affiliated with the undead and other creatures in the spirit world, can make them willing to be summoned. Then, it's possible to sign a messenger contract. At the Sequence of Spirit Guide, they can even semi-compulsively turn a target they fancy into their messenger. Without such specialties, one can often only rely on their status to suppress and intimidate them.

“As for us, we follow Mr. Fool. You've all heard the Church's bible, so you should know that Mr. Fool is the great ruler who controls the spirit world. Strictly speaking, those spirit world creatures are under his control. As members of the Tarot Club, summoning spirit world creatures and signing a messenger contract with them will definitely be much easier. In particular, Lumian here has Mr. Fool's power. Have you ever seen him fail in summoning spirit world creatures? At most, it's vague. What comes isn't what he wants.

“The third prerequisite is that Madam Magician has already given Lumian a special undead contract, specially prepared for messengers. The witness should be Death, but they can be replaced by an Angel from the Underworld or the undead domain. And there's an Angel of Death by Mr. Fool's throne. He's the Consul of the Underworld!

“Actually, I don't think it's a problem to use Mr. Fool's honorific name directly. Would spirit world creatures not obey the orders of the great ruler who controls the spirit world?”

The information from Madam Magician contained a four-line description targeting the Underworld, suitable as a witness.

Jenna and Anthony absorbed the mysticism knowledge attentively, realizing its value in explaining many problems in ordinary summoning rituals.

Once Franca had concluded her instructional role, Lumian produced a carefully selected stack of information about spirit world creatures and directed his attention to Jenna.

“You first.”

Jenna, pointing at herself in confusion and surprise, asked, “Me?”

She was a complete novice at summoning rituals.

Lumian let out a chuckle.

“You have the lucky gold coin. According to Madam Magician, it has a certain connection to Mr. Fool, equivalent to his memento. This will make you more likely to summon a specific creature and complete the messenger contract than Franca and Anthony.

“My chances of success should be about the same as yours, but I have a lot of messy things on me. I'm afraid it'll cause an anomaly and ruin the rest of tonight's attempts, so I'll be the last.”

Jenna considered Lumian's explanation and agreed.

Muttering under her breath, she took the document and flipped to the page she had chosen earlier.

It recorded a spirit world creature she was relatively familiar with: “Rabbit of Knowledge.”

However, this wasn't an ordinary Rabbit of Knowledge; it had absorbed some specific knowledge and undergone a special mutation to become suitable as a messenger.

Jenna had a positive impression of the Rabbit of Knowledge. She found it friendly and willing to help humans, making it her preferred choice from the beginning.

Additionally, its silly appearance added to its charm.

Retrieving the page of information, Jenna entered the altar. Recalling Franca's teachings and the mystical knowledge from the Witch potion, she swiftly sanctified the ritual silver dagger and created a wall of spirituality.

Having completed all the preparations, Jenna took two steps back, focused on the candle flame, and uttered a concise and forceful word in ancient Hermes.

“I!”

Then, she switched to Hermes.

“I summon in my name:

“Rabbit-shaped spirit that wanders about the unfounded, a friendly creature that can be communicated with, a runner who pursues knowledge.”

In this modified incantation, the original “weakling” was replaced with “runner” to specifically denote the special Rabbit of Knowledge.

The candle flame abruptly shifted to a dark green hue, expanding to the size of a human head.

A translucent creature resembling a rabbit emerged from the dark-green candle flame.

Unlike other Rabbits of Knowledge, its eyes emitted a wise glint, and it held a blurry book with an orange-red cover in its hand.

Its legs were powerful, indicating its proficiency in running.

Jenna couldn't contain her joy at successfully summoning it on her first attempt.

Slightly perturbed, she addressed the creature in ancient Hermes, "Are you willing to become my messenger?"

The mutated Rabbit of Knowledge glanced at Jenna and asked in Intisian, "Have you ever called my kind fools or idiots before?"

"No," Jenna replied sincerely. "I curse occasionally, but it's not directed at anyone. It's just an expression of my emotions."

Occasionally? Lumian mocked Jenna inwardly.

The mutated Rabbit of Knowledge observed Jenna intently, somehow confirming that she wasn't lying.

However, this might have been more of a formality, as the answer of not having engaged in name-calling was sufficient. Whether it was entirely true or not seemed inconsequential.

The rabbit nodded and said, "You have to pay me. Every time you summon me, you have to give me a book or knowledge of equal value. You can give it to me directly or burden the person who's writing to you."

It agreed just like that? Having name-called it in the past, I can't summon this rabbit as a messenger? Well, I can't summon it now either. There should only be one special Rabbit of Knowledge that has evolved to be capable of being a messenger... Lumian knew it was generally easy to deal with, but he didn't expect it to be so amiable.

Jenna glanced at the information placed at the edge of the altar, noticing a notification: "The knowledge you feed the Rabbit of Knowledge determines what it will become in the future."

Will reading more postman-related books improve its awareness and abilities as a messenger? Jenna wondered to herself as she replied, "No problem. Let's sign a contract."

Following the template provided by Madam Magician, she used the dark-red fountain pen on the altar to swiftly write a contract on the yellowish-brown goatskin, outlining the agreed compensation.

The contract was composed in ancient Hermes, with every word seeming to resonate with the forces of nature and the spirit world. Jenna had utilized her usual studies and the knowledge from the Witch potion to quickly grasp this Beyond language.

In addition to the contract, Jenna penned a description of the mysticism related to the Underworld.

"The home of all death, the hell hidden deep within the spirit world, the witness of the decay of all living things, one that solely belongs to the kingdom of Death."

As she wrote, the ancient Hermes words burned with dark-green flames, including the original ones.

Remembering Lumian's earlier advice, Jenna deliberately included a clause fixing the summoning incantation as "Rabbit-shaped spirit that wanders about the unfounded, a runner who pursues knowledge, a messenger that belongs solely to the Seven of Cups."

Still cautious about revealing her real name, Jenna refrained from using it. She worried that someone familiar with her messenger summoning incantation might uncover her true identity, potentially implicating her brother Julien in the future.

After scanning the contract and confirming its accuracy, Jenna signed her code name.

The goatskin floated up and flew toward the mutated Rabbit of Knowledge.

Picking up another fountain pen, the Rabbit of Knowledge wrote its name: “Chasel Sávio.”

“You have a name?” Lumian was a little surprised.

He was also within the wall of spirituality.

“I named it myself after reading a book. It's my name now,” replied Rabbit Chasel as the ghastly green flames on the goatskin merged, incinerating the contract into ashes and transforming it into an invisible force.

Jenna breathed a sigh of relief and engaged in a brief conversation with Rabbit Chasel before concluding, “I! I end this summoning in my name.”

Rabbit Chasel returned to the spirit world, and Franca eagerly watched as the wall of spirituality dissipated before stepping into the altar.

Jenna's ease had filled her with confidence.

However, she faced a shameful failure.

Chapter 503 Penitent

Franca attempted summoning five different spirit world creatures. Despite her successful summonings, none of the spirit world creatures were willing to sign a contract and become her messenger.

The repeated failures struck her hard, and her disappointment and frustration were evident from her blank expression.

Nevertheless, she didn't let her emotions dictate her actions. Undeterred, she proceeded to summon the remaining 24 spirit world creatures.

The situation was becoming increasingly clear—success, if achievable, would happen in the first few attempts!

Jenna glanced at the disappointed Franca.

“Give it a try when your Sequence is higher.”

Franca grumbled, “When I reach a higher Sequence, I might use a mirror and the mirror world to send messages. Why would I need a messenger? Why aren't there any spirit world creatures tempted by a Demoness's charm and willing to become a messenger?”

Lumian let out a chuckle.

“I've seen something similar in the information about spirit world creatures. Would you like to give it a try?”

Despite her reluctance to admit defeat, Franca remained pragmatic. She cursed, “Forget it, forget it. Such spirit world creatures are definitely dangerous. All they can think about is dragging a Demoness into the spirit world. Even delivering a letter will help me turn my friend into an enemy.”

Seeing that she had calmed down, Anthony Reid, a fellow novice in ritualistic magic, made his attempt.

Like Franca, he too faced a series of challenges. Five attempts were made, with two summoning failures and three unsuccessful contract formations.

“Looks like I can't have a messenger for the time being,” Anthony sighed with a bitter smile.

Franca's emotions eased significantly.

She wasn't alone in facing difficulties.

“Which one do you want to summon?” she asked Lumian curiously.

“The coolest one.” Lumian, maintaining an air of nonchalance, sanctified the ritual silver dagger and recreated the spiritual barrier.

Focusing on the burning candle flames, he took steps back, alternating between ancient Hermes and Hermes.

“I!

“I summon in my name:

“A creature wandering above the world, the penitent who awakens from the flames of pain, a friendly person corrupted by darkness.”

This summoning incantation, unique information from Madam Magician, deviated from the norm. It wasn't just a spirit but a creature wandering above the world. The latter descriptions combined encounters and characteristics, adding an intriguing layer to the summoning.

Lumian found the temperament and style of this particular creature impressive and decided to make it his first attempt. He sought a messenger capable of delivering a letter and traversing the spirit world, indifferent to other considerations. Why not choose the coolest one?

As the incantation echoed, the candle flame expanded, acquiring a dark-green hue bordering on black.

With each intensifying flicker, a figure materialized.

It was a tall, human-like being dressed in deep-black robes reminiscent of the Eternal Blazing Sun Church clergy.

However, his exposed face and limbs bore the marks of prolonged incineration, leaving only bones and charred flesh. Empty eye sockets glowed with dark flames, while strange, viscous black flames lingered, causing perpetual pain to the spirit.

Lumian gazed at the Penitent and asked in ancient Hermes, “Are you willing to become my messenger?”

Responding in ancient Feysac, the source of several Northern Continent languages, the Penitent offered a condition,

“If you're not concerned about being implicated by me and slowly slipping into the darkness, I can help you deliver letters.”

No compensation, but there's latent danger? Since Madam Magician provided the Penitent's information, it means I can bear it... Lumian, who had too much mysticism “debt” to worry about, smiled and said,

“That depends on whether you and darkness can win the tug-of-war. No problem. I was mentally prepared for this before summoning you.”

This time, he switched to ancient Feysac to communicate with the other party. After all, it was quite troublesome to use ancient Hermes, which could stir the power of nature, to say so much.

Soon, he drafted the contract and penned the four-line mysticism description representing the Underworld's representative as witness.

Illuminated by ancient Hermes words engulfed in ghastly green flames, Lumian fixed the summoning incantation to: “A creature wandering above the world, the penitent who awakens from the flames of pain, a messenger that belongs solely to Lumian Lee.”

Lumian didn't adopt a code name like Jenna and the Knight of Swords. After all, those who knew about his messenger might not know that he was a Minor Arcana card holder of the Tarot Club. This was the self-cultivation of a veteran spy, and it didn't matter if Lumian Lee's name and corresponding background were known.

With his name penned down, Lumian witnessed the yellowish-brown goatskin fly towards the black-robed Penitent.

The Penitent signed his name: Baynfel.

The ghastly green flames intertwined, consuming the contract and seamlessly merging with the spirit world.

Curious about his new messenger, Lumian queried Penitent Baynfel, “What are you penitent about?”

However, Baynfel remained silent, and a viscous black flame descended from his body, disappearing into the soil.

Despite Lumian's persistent questioning, Baynfel kept his silence.

Lumian chuckled and remarked, “Very good. All hairdressers should learn from you,” before concluding the summoning.

After he dismantled the wall of spirituality, Franca looked at him with a resentful expression.

“You succeeded on the first try?”

“I succeeded on the first try.” Lumian lacked any evident joy, as if he was talking about something ordinary.

Perplexed and unable to let go of her own failures, Franca questioned, “Why? Why aren't Anthony and I popular with the spirit world creatures? Why?”

It had to be said that the Demoness of Pleasure was quite charming. Seeing Franca like this, Ascetic Lumian wanted to walk up to her, raise his right hand, and flick her forehead.

It made him want to bully her!

He pondered for a moment.

“I roughly understand the reason. Being a Minor Arcana card holder of the Tarot Club increases our chances of successfully summoning special spirit world creatures. Even a Psychiatrist like Anthony succeeded several times during his first ritualistic magic.

“However, to gain their favor or obedience, you need a higher level, a special pathway, or something related to Mr. Fool. For example, Jenna's lucky gold coin and Mr. Fool's power on me.”

A sudden realization struck Lumian.

If that's the reason, does the Knight of Swords, who also possesses a messenger, have something similar?

“I see!” Franca, buoyed by this insight, regained confidence.

It wasn't that there was a problem with her; she simply lacked a “prop.”

She then looked at Jenna, contemplating whether to borrow the lucky gold coin to complete the messenger contract.

Franca eventually dismissed the idea. There was a significant mysticism difference between “ownership” and “loaning.” She was afraid that Jenna wouldn't be able to handle it if she were to give it and take it back in the future without a unique opportunity.

Phew... Franca exhaled and was about to inquire when Lumian planned to leave Trier and how, when she noticed her companion's inexplicable silence and a hint of dejection.

“What's the matter?” Franca inquired, concerned.

“Nothing.” Lumian shook his head.

He suddenly remembered that Aurore had once yearned for a messenger.

Anthony glanced at Lumian, but no words were exchanged. Jenna brought up the Purifiers' Deacon Angoulême's proposal to purchase the Pride Armor, prompting Lumian to fall into a brief silence before chuckling.

“I'll decide after some time.”

Despite recognizing the danger of the Pride Armor, Lumian acknowledged its formidable power. It could pose a threat to all Beyonders below the demigod level. If wearing it was the key to defeating

Loki and other key members of April Fool's, Lumian wouldn't hesitate to use it, prepared to face the consequences.

Lumian wouldn't give up on the Sealed Artifact just because it was dangerous, until he eliminated all those scoundrels or until he was too strong for Pride Armor.

“Alright,” Franca inquired, “Are you leaving Trier tomorrow? Will you take a boat, a steam locomotive, or seek the spirit world's coordinates from Madam Magician and 'teleport' there?”

Lumian chuckled.

“All of them are possible. I'll decide tomorrow. Let's see what fate has in mind.”

Franca muttered, “When did you learn to act all mysterious...”

After bidding farewell to his three companions, Lumian adorned the silver Lie earring and subtly altered his hair color and appearance. Making his way down Avenue du Marché into Rue Anarchie, he arrived at Auberge du Coq Doré's underground bar.

Seemingly unaffected by the previous night's catastrophe, the bar retained its lively atmosphere. Regular patrons occupied their usual spots—some singing loudly, others dancing around small round tables, and a few engaged in gambling with alcohol as stakes.

Charlie, now in a black coat, stood at a small round table, enthusiastically exclaiming, “You might not know this, but Ciel Dubois and I are friends. We've been through life and death together! Look, look, his bounty has been updated to 60,000 verl d'or! What a substantial sum!”

You're quite proud of me... Lumian scoffed and settled at the bar, ordering a glass of absinthe.

In the midst of the commotion, he silently listened, savoring the bitter liquor.

Pavard Neeson, the proprietor wiping glasses, noticed the new face and smilingly inquired, “Have you just arrived in the market district?”

“Yes,” Lumian responded in a deep voice.

Pavard Neeson said gently, “You seem to have a story.”

Lumian sighed, taking a sip of the dreamy La Fée Verte. With a self-deprecating smile, he said, “I'm a nobody...”

Chapter 504 “Breakup”

“In an instant, I found myself with no alternative but to depart. Staying put was not an option. Besides, lingering too long might jeopardize my friend and jeopardize the fortune he had tirelessly amassed.

Lumian raised the emerald-green absinthe to his lips once more.

Pavard Neeson, the proprietor of the bar, gently placed his glass on the counter and let out a sigh.

“That's truly unfortunate.”

A sly grin played on Lumian's lips.

“Alright, I've wrapped up my tale. How about a complimentary drink on the house?”

Pavard, his ponytail giving him a somewhat artistic appearance, was momentarily taken aback.

Minutes before the stroke of midnight, Charlie, clad in a black coat, exited the basement bar of Auberge du Coq Doré and retraced his steps to his rented apartment.

Under the gentle autumn night sky, a soothing breeze played, neither bone-chilling nor overly brisk. It seemed to cleanse both body and mind with each inhale. Charlie couldn't resist taking a deep breath.

“Dogsh*t, which drunkard peed all over the place again?” The foul odor in the air soured Charlie's mood.

At that very moment, a silhouette emerged from the shadows up ahead.

The figure boasted golden-black hair, piercing blue eyes, and a strikingly handsome face—none other than Ciel Dubois.

Haven't you left Trier? Charlie's heart surged with joy, ready to inquire further.

But almost instantly, he caught sight of the dark expression on Ciel's face, as if a tempest brewed within his eyes.

Charlie jumped in fright, his thoughts racing. Instinctively, he said, “I-I was going to let you know...”

Before he could finish, Lumian materialized before him, his right fist meeting Charlie's face with a solid impact.

The force sent golden specks dancing in Charlie's vision. He teetered backward, struggling to maintain his balance.

Lumian's countenance darkened as he spoke, “Considering our past friendship, I won't kill you this time.”

With that, he pivoted in his dark jacket and strode towards a dimly lit alley, away from the glow of street lamps.

Clutching his throbbing face, Charlie watched Ciel vanish into the shadows. Anxious and incensed, he blurted out, “But I couldn't locate you! How was I supposed to inform you that you're wanted?”

Lumian offered no response, disappearing into the alley.

Rooted to the spot, Charlie couldn't suppress his curses.

Frustration and resentment welled up within him.

Why did he suddenly become so unreasonable?

It's not my fault you're wanted. I've done my utmost to help!

I'm just a clerk; there's a limit to what I can accomplish!

The next morning, Charlie had just settled into his subterranean office at Église Saint-Robert, armed with a meatloaf. Before he could even start brewing a cup of coffee, he spotted Angoulême, the deacon clad in a brown double-breasted coat, heading his way.

“Morning, Deacon,” Charlie exclaimed, rising to his feet and greeting him with eager deference.

Angoulême glanced at the bruises on his left cheek.

“What happened? Did you get into a scuffle?”

“Oh, no, not at all! I, uh, collided—with a statue!” Charlie suddenly grew jittery and waved his hand dismissively. “It might sound unbelievable, but those lunatics get wild when they're drunk. Some rant about toppling the government, others believe their vomit is gourmet cuisine, and a few decide to relocate hefty statues to random corners. I accidentally bumped into one.”

Angoulême maintained a steady gaze on the clerk and spoke with measured calmness,

“Your lies lack finesse. Do you recall the clause in the contract about not concealing crucial information?”

Charlie's expression stiffened, his lips faltering before he stammered, “I-it's Ciel. Ciel Dubois attacked me. Perhaps he's resentful because I didn't notify him beforehand about being wanted by us.”

Angoulême listened in silence. After a brief pause, he remarked, “Very well. That's more like what a competent Purifier clerk should be. Where did you encounter him?”

“Right outside Auberge du Coq Doré, just past the first alley leading to Avenue du Marché,” Charlie responded, a blend of nervousness and concern coloring his voice.

Angoulême delved into further details and said to Charlie, “Given that Ciel Dubois's true circumstances surpassed our expectations, we scrutinized all the files associated with him. It came to light that you share a close bond with him and that he was implicated in Susanna Mattise's Beyonder case. Upon including him in that matter, it became apparent that you concealed numerous details.”

Charlie, upon hearing the deacon's words, stiffened, beads of cold sweat forming on his forehead.

“I-I...” He faltered, unable to find words, as if the specter of his impending doom loomed large.

At that moment, Angoulême took the initiative to ask, “Did Ciel force you to hide these details?”

“No, it wasn't coercion,” Charlie responded instinctively, quickly adding, “He requested it.”

“As expected, a request,” Angoulême nodded thoughtfully and probed into every nuance of the Susanna Mattise incident.

With his psychological defenses stripped away, Charlie laid bare every detail to the Purifier deacon.

Upon concluding his account, Angoulême spoke with gravity, “For someone in your position as a Purifier clerk, concealing vital case details would typically lead to immediate dismissal, if not imprisonment...”

Though Charlie had braced himself for such a repercussion, the actual words felt like a blow to the head. His body swayed, teetering on the brink of imbalance.

Before he could mount a plea, Angoulême shifted the conversation.

“However, your recent performance has been commendable. You've shown diligence, dedication, and commitment to your studies. Moreover, it appears you haven't leaked information to Ciel, causing his resentment towards you.

“As the deacon of the market district's Inquisition, I'm inclined not to cast aside someone who has earnestly climbed out of the abyss and crush their last hope. Given your clean record after becoming a Purifier clerk and the authenticity of the Susanna Mattise incident, I'm offering you another chance. I can't just push you out and wait for Ciel to kill you or the Mother Tree of Desire's bestowed to find you again, can I?

“You'll be terminated, but you can intern here. Your salary will revert to the intern level for six months. If you excel and avoid errors during this period, you may be rehired. Otherwise, you'll be asked to leave immediately.

“In simpler terms, your punishment is a six-month probation.”

Charlie, upon hearing these words, felt a surge of relief, as if he had plummeted into hell only to be yanked back into heaven.

In a frenzy of gratitude, he slumped back into his seat, drained of strength.

As Angoulême departed, Charlie's mind reeled, scenes flashing before his eyes.

After a few seconds, he raised his right hand and delivered a self-inflicted slap.

Muttering in frustration and regret, he reflected,

“To think, last night at the bar, I boasted about Ciel and me being friends who had faced life and death together...”

Shortly after returning to his office, Angoulême received a telegram.

It originated from Saint Viève Cathedral's Plessy Descartes, overseeing the Trier diocese.

The Cardinal summoned Angoulême to Saint Viève Cathedral for a discussion.

Saint Viève Cathedral.

Ascending a dazzling staircase to an area near the dome, a small room awaited. It stood as one of the places in Trier closest to the sun.

Clad in a white robe adorned with golden threads, Cardinal Plessy spent his days here, bathed in holy light.

An elderly man with high cheekbones and grizzled blond hair, his demeanor lacked sternness, yet a radiant glow made direct eye contact impossible, rendering the room eerily devoid of shadows.

“While you faced challenges during the recent catastrophe due to unforeseen events and intel disruptions, your ability to grasp crucial information and manage subsequent arrangements was noteworthy. We haven't overlooked your performance in the market district over the past year,” Plessy commended amicably.

“Praise the Sun!” Angoulême proclaimed, extending his arms in acknowledgment of the Lord's glory.

Plessy's satisfaction deepened.

“In light of the current circumstances and the foreseeable future, we intend to establish three Purifier teams directly under the Trier diocese. This will provide flexibility in handling various Beyonder incidents.”

At this point, the Cardinal offered a rare smile.

“You've been swamped with work for the past six months. Privately, you've voiced concerns about lacking leisure time. Do not blame yourself; it's a common human experience. As a deacon in the Trier diocese, you should find more leisure time. Your role will involve addressing cases beyond the capacity or timeframe of the Purifiers in the districts.

“Of course, this also entails risk. You must comprehend this clearly.

“François, Sequence 4 marks a qualitative transformation. Many within the Inquisition are aspiring to become Saints. If you wish to surpass them, you must make remarkable contributions. The first step is to become a deacon of a small team under a large diocese. The second step involves amassing contributions and wielding a Holy Artifact. The third step is to await an opportune moment.

“Do you aspire to be a deacon? I respect your desires.”

Flexibility... Addressing cases beyond the reach of Purifiers in various districts... I should typically have considerable freedom. How could there be so many significant matters... I don't know if Gandalf's apocalyptic prophecy holds true, but there's no harm in self-improvement... Angoulême pondered briefly and responded, “Your Eminence, thy will be done.”

Plessy smiled and said, “As a deacon, you'll be tasked with selecting team members.”

“Yes, Your Eminence.” Angoulême extended his arms once more, praising the sun.

Upon returning to the underground confines of Église Saint-Robert, he summoned the mixed-blood Imre to his office, apprising his subordinate of the Trier diocese team.

“Are you willing to follow me?” Angoulême inquired.

Imre smiled and replied, “Does this mean I can advance my Sequence and earn a higher salary? I have no issue with that!”

After agreeing, the mixed-blood inquired, “Who should we choose next?”

Angoulême fell into silence for over ten seconds before stating, “Don't consider individuals like Valentine, those with a wife and children. Approach those who are single.

“A team under direct command is both an honor and a risk.”

Angoulême released a soft sigh and added, “Which Purifier with a happy family wouldn't want to witness their child grow and spend more time with their spouse? Let the single individuals among us bear this burden.”

Chapter 505 Departure

Having apprehended everyone deserving of it in the market district and putting those who hadn't been arrested on the wanted list, Angoulême found a rare moment of leisure. He shifted his focus to selecting members for the Trier diocese team.

Choosing from the Inquisition in the market district was impossible. Armed with information from Saint Viève Cathedral, he casually visited the Inquisition in Quartier de l'Observatoire, the prison district, and other locations where he engaged in detailed conversations with the target Purifiers.

He swiftly concluded his work and returned to his rented apartment in Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative, promptly falling asleep.

Angoulême slept until the early hours of the morning, awakened by the growling of his stomach. He nibbled on a piece of white bread, complemented by his stockpiled jerky, butter, and red wine.

Observing the unwashed cutlery on the coffee table, he contentedly seated himself in front of the miniaturized analyzer and switched on the radio transceiver.

During this time, the telegraph group was most active.

After sending a telegram to announce his presence, Angoulême pulled over a pillow, placing it behind him as he leaned comfortably against the wall.

Soon, amidst the clicking sounds, the analyzer, powered by numerous components, spat out a telegram.

Angoulême's forehead twitched at the sight of the telegram's signature: Hidden Blade.

He picked up the telegram and quickly scanned its contents.

“007, you're finally here. I have something to tell you!

“I've just received news that the Mirror People we mentioned have been infiltrating Trier over the past decade, replacing the original ones. Countless Trier citizens are already Mirror People, and no one knows their ultimate goals, but it can't be anything good.

“I'm investigating these Mirror People. I'll give you new clues at any moment. Keep an eye out for such matters in advance.”

After reading it, Angoulême took a deep breath and exhaled slowly.

The following morning, Lumian sat in a four-wheeled, four-seater rental carriage. Ludwig, clad in a caramel coat and carrying a red school bag, occupied the seat beside him. On the opposite side sat Lugano Toscano, with thick eyebrows and large eyes, emanating a distinct protagonist aura.

Glancing out the window at Avenue du Marché, Lumian noticed little deviation from the usual scene.

Street vendors, public carriages, and rental carriages bustled about. The Suhit steam locomotive station welcomed numerous foreigners, waiters actively seeking customers, cafés doubling as beer houses, inexpensive restaurants, and card rooms, along with clerks and workers in a hurry.

While seemingly unchanged, subtle shifts had occurred. “Rat” Christo had fled, “Giant” Simon was apprehended, and Baron Brignais was nowhere to be found. He didn't even commission information brokers to seek out his smuggled godson.

The Savoie Mob, once dominant, faced total annihilation, setting the market district on the brink of new mob conflicts.

The dark-brown rental carriage, marked with a yellow plate, gradually departed from the lively and somewhat chaotic surroundings.

Observing Lumian divert his attention, Lugano inquired ingratiatingly,

“Should we travel by boat to Feynapotter, or perhaps get false identities and take the southbound steam locomotive to explore Riston Province first?”

He initially considered mentioning Cordu but refrained, sensing it might unsettle Lumian. Instead, he referred to their shared hometown, Riston Province, in a broader context.

“It's in the hands of fate,” Lumian replied with a smile.

Producing three post-it notes, he scribbled various options with the black fountain pen he carried: “Boat,” “steam locomotive,” and “direct travel.”

Crumpling the notes into balls, he deftly shuffled their positions, presenting a dazzling display of sleight of hand.

“Your turn. Let's see what fate has in store.” Lumian extended his right hand to Lugano.

Isn't this too arbitrary? Lugano pondered, surprised by the randomness of selecting their travel method to the Feynapotter Kingdom through drawing lots. Despite the absurdity, he dutifully picked up a paper ball.

In any case, he had already received the 5,000 verl d'or advance payment!

Lugano unfolded the paper and read the word “ship.”

Lumian nodded and smiled.

“Very good. Then let's take the steam locomotive.”

“...” Lugano's expression became uncertain as he instinctively glanced at the wanted criminal worth 60,000 verl d'or sitting across from him. He wondered if Lumian was manipulating him to eliminate the wrong option or simply playing a prank.

Forcing another smile, Lugano suggested, “Shall we head back to the Suhit steam locomotive station?”

“No, to the Northern Train Station,” Lumian replied, turning to Ludwig, who had been quietly eating without uttering a word.

Northern Train Station? Lugano felt increasingly puzzled by his employer's decision.

Trier had two main steam locomotive stations: Suhit, connecting the southern and central regions, and the Northern Train Station, responsible for the northern provinces. If their destination was the Feynapotter Kingdom and Riston Province, the logical choice would be Suhit. Why, then, were they going north?

Recognizing that it wasn't his place to question his employer's decisions, Lugano instructed the carriage driver to alter their course.

As noon approached, the rental carriage arrived at the Northern Trier Train Station.

I have to disguise myself and find a broker to fake my identity to buy a ticket... As Lugano directed the carriage driver to a more remote area, he turned to look at Lumian, preparing to make a suggestion.

He was met with an unfamiliar face.

The short flaxen-colored hair, brown eyes, and other facial features combined to create the appearance of a stranger.

If not for the silver earring on his right ear and the familiar clothes, Lugano might have believed they were ambushed by official Beyonders, having quietly dealt with Lumian.

“Purchase a ticket to Port Gati in Upper Coastal Province,” Lumian calmly instructed.

Upper Coastal Province, Port Gati... Lugano suddenly grasped Lumian's strategy.

While his employer did intend to take a boat to the Feynapotter Kingdom, he chose a less obvious route. Instead of departing from the nearest Port LeSeur in Paz Province, he opted for Upper Coastal Province to the north.

For an ordinary person, it might seem wasteful, but for a wanted fugitive evading enemies, an unconventional approach could prove to be a prudent choice at avoiding potential dangers.

In the business carriage of the steam locomotive, divided into six cozy private rooms, Lumian's gaze swept across the slightly ajar carved wooden door, the table adorned with a vibrant, multi-colored tablecloth interwoven with golden threads, the plush sofa that doubled as a bed, and the slender wooden wall adorned with oil paintings. A satisfied nod escaped him.

A private room like this commanded a hefty price of 400 verl d'or, accommodating no more than four individuals.

The steam locomotive promised a 12-hour journey with an eight-hour night stop, totaling 20 hours. Travel costs were 30 verl d'or for a third-class seat, 45 verl d'or for second class, and 60 verl d'or for first class. The exclusive small private rooms in business class demanded 100 verl d'or per person, sold only in packages to maintain the privacy of business companions.

For a wanted fugitive like Lumian, this setup was perfect.

Equipped with the Lie earring and the Niese Face, Lumian had no real need for the privacy or luxury of the business carriage, but there was a compelling reason for his choice:

The business carriage provided two complimentary meals—dinner tonight and breakfast tomorrow.

A convenience that would spare Lumian from many hassles.

Sigh, a child has to eat something warm.

I just hope his appetite doesn't startle the attendants...

After catering to Ludwig for over two days, Lumian recognized the importance of his Traveler's Bag, capable of storing ample rations and desserts for long trips with the boy. The boy had to eat frequently!

Amidst the whistle, Lumian settled into his seat, absorbing the rhythmic clanging sounds as the scenery rapidly retreated on both sides.

In less than fifteen minutes, the colossal steam-spewing train departed from the bustling metropolis through the "cave door" carved into the high wall.

It left behind a metropolis pulsating with desires, immersed in both joy and pain.

Lumian half-closed his eyes, overhearing someone in the private room ahead sigh, as if reciting a poem.

"Goodbye, Trier!"

At 8 p.m., under the cover of complete darkness, the steam locomotive came to a halt at its scheduled stop—Dardel Station.

Situated on the outskirts of the Upper Coastal Province's Faust region, in Darder Town, the platform was already bustling with 20 to 30 men and women eagerly rushing to different carriages. Devoid of luggage, their faces radiated enthusiasm.

Knock! Knock! Knock! A middle-aged man, sporting thick black hair and a slightly hooked chin, rapped on the glass window corresponding to Lumian's private room.

With interest, Lumian pushed open the window and greeted with a smile, "What can I do for you?"

"Monsieur, would you like a drink? Perhaps a cozy bed instead of a sofa?" the middle-aged man inquired in Intisian, his accent heavy.

"A bar with its own motel?" Lumian was enlightened.

It seemed like local merchants were soliciting customers right on the platform.

"That's right, that's right. Our bar boasts some charming little frogs," the middle-aged man winked suggestively.

“Little frogs?” Lugano, seated across from Lumian, asked, puzzled.

The middle-aged man pondered for a moment and explained, “That's our slang here in Coastal. It means the same as your Trier pussies.”

In Trier, “pussies” often carried dual meanings, referring to both “female reproductive organs” and “prostitutes.”

Is that so... Lumian had suspected as much but wasn't entirely certain.

Seated beside Lugano, Ludwig chimed in eagerly, “Anything good to eat?”

Without awaiting the middle-aged man's response, Lumian teased Ludwig with a smile, “I thought you were going to ask if the meat was tender or chewy and if it tasted good.”

Initially unresponsive, Ludwig suddenly realized something and cursed, “Sick!”

Observing this, the middle-aged man swiftly introduced the local specialties.

Meanwhile, outside the station, dogs started barking in the town.

A lone bark triggered a chorus of canine voices, shattering the night's silence.

The middle-aged man's expression shifted, tainted with an indescribable sense of fear.

Chapter 506 Illness

Amidst the nighttime cacophony of the town's barking dogs, Lumian let out a low chuckle.

“Do you have that many dogs in Dardel?”

“Y-yes.” The middle-aged man managed a hesitant smile.

Something is off as expected. Has something happened to this town? Lumian had intentionally inquired, keen on observing the reactions of the resident across from him.

Amidst the persisting dog chorus, he concentrated on gauging the other party's luck.

He had no plans to leave the steam locomotive and venture into Dardel for investigation. His only recourse was to probe into the luck of the town's residents, anticipating hidden problems before they could unexpectedly spread to the train station.

While Termiboros could influence his luck observation, there was always a chance of being misled. Lumian, lacking expertise in divination or prophecy, had limited options for gathering information without leaving the steam locomotive.

Factoring in various environmental details, he aimed to discern potential issues.

In Lumian's view, the middle-aged man's luck took on a ghastly green hue.

This indicated an impending illness—a rather peculiar one.

The specifics, such as when or what kind of illness, eluded Lumian's current Sequence.

Dog barking inducing fear, future special illness—do Dardel's wild dogs cause calamities by biting and spreading diseases? That's a plausible explanation, and it's not a Beyonder incident, but that

means there's a potential solution. The man outside seems to be grappling with a hint of despair... Lumian turned to the middle-aged man who was soliciting customers and said, "Can you bring over the food we ordered?"

"We can do so if the meal cost exceeds two verl d'or. You know, it's not easy for us to enter the platform," the middle-aged man, now smiling again, replied.

At that moment, the clamor of dozens of dogs subsided, no longer as intense as before.

"No problem," Lumian casually ordered a variety of dishes—apple liqueur, deep-fried potato pancakes, shrimp in gravy, Dardel meat sauce, stewed pork, saltmarsh mutton, buttered pancakes, and wick cheese. The total cost amounted to 10 verl d'or.

Ludwig couldn't help but gulp with each mention of a dish.

Four hours prior, an attendant had delivered a four-person standard dinner. Despite managing to finish two portions alone, Ludwig remained unsatisfied. He had also retrieved multiple pieces of jerky from Lumian's Traveler's Bag.

Two hours ago, he had his first supper, consisting of cheese, dessert, bread, jerky, and more.

Now, he was hungry again.

The middle-aged man, who had used simple words and symbols to record the dish names, couldn't resist asking,

"Is the food provided in a carriage of this level not tasty?"

Otherwise, why would Ludwig look as though he hadn't eaten dinner?

Lumian responded in turn, "That's right. Don't ever expect to eat tasty food on a steam locomotive."

After noting down the dish names and receiving 5 verl d'or banknotes as a down payment, the middle-aged man with a slightly hooked chin moved to another private room.

"Wait," Lumian suddenly called out.

"Is there anything else, Monsieur?" the middle-aged man turned around and inquired.

Lumian smiled and said, "You don't look well. If you don't want to get sick, you need more rest in the next few days."

The middle-aged man froze, his expression struck by lightning.

After a momentary pause, panic and fear mixed on his face.

"alright. Thank you." He turned around in a hurry and dashed out of the platform, forgetting to solicit other customers.

Dardel's abnormality is indeed linked to illnesses... Lumian mused as he withdrew his gaze thoughtfully.

Lugano asked with curiosity, "Why can't I tell that he's sub-healthy and could fall ill at any moment?"

Being a Doctor, he possessed corresponding abilities. Even without activating his Spirit Vision, he could discern various external manifestations of a person's body.

Recognizing a concealed illness and with Lumian's warning, he activated his Spirit Vision to observe the person's Ether Body.

“Sub-healthy” was a term coined by Emperor Roselle, but it had only gained popularity in Intis's medical world in recent years.

He's not currently in a sub-healthy state, but it's very likely that he will contract a special illness... Lumian used Lugano's questions to confirm that the townsfolk's illness didn't originate from him.

He smiled and responded to Lugano's question, “It's never wrong to care about others' health and encourage them to rest more.”

Instinctively, Lugano revealed an expression that said, “I don't buy it.” Then, he masked it with a smile.

“He seems to share that concern.”

“That's right,” Lumian replied patronizingly.

Dardel's barking subsided and resounded at times. Sometimes, it was just outside the platform, and at other times, it came from the edge of the town. Lumian listened quietly and sighed inwardly.

Why am I encountering something like this again?

Do I bring calamity, or does calamity lure me here?

From the looks of it, the problem in Dardel has been around for a while. It has nothing to do with my arrival... No matter how I avoid it or make choices via the use of others, I'll always be drawn to calamities and unknowingly approach them...

Is this why a Hunter with an angelic level and the Blood Emperor's remnant aura will inevitably encounter an abnormal situation despite their low Sequence?

In the future, will a novelist write about my experiences like Gehrman Sparrow's? Then, the line “he's always accompanied by calamity” would be included.

As time ticked by, the middle-aged man who had been soliciting customers arrived with a bar waiter, each carrying a food container.

“Is this what you want?” He and the waiter handed plates and glasses through the window.

Seeing the table covered in an exquisite tablecloth filled with tempting food, Lumian took a sip of the slightly sour apple liqueur and paid the remaining 5 verl d'or for the meal.

“We'll collect the cutlery in an hour. We won't be disturbing you, will we?” the middle-aged man asked politely.

Lumian nodded, giving them permission.

After sidestepping with the waiter for a moment, the middle-aged man found himself returning to his original position. He couldn't resist the urge to inquire,

“Monsieur, how do you know I'm about to fall ill?”

Lumian, gesturing towards Lugano across the way, explained, “My friend is a renowned doctor in Trier.”

The term “renowned” here applied to a wanted poster.

Without awaiting the middle-aged man's reply, Lumian casually inquired, “What's your name?”

“Just call me Pierre,” the middle-aged man replied, hunched over as he observed Lumian in the snug private room on the steam locomotive.

Do you folks fancy that name around here too? Lumian grinned and asked, “Do you think you'll get sick too?”

Pierre's eyelids twitched, his expression momentarily freezing.

Instinctively, he replied, “No, no. Just a bit concerned.”

“Well then, get some rest, drink more water, and perhaps seek out the clergyman at the cathedral for repentance,” Lumian advised without pressing further.

Pierre moved towards the front of the locomotive in silence, hoping to drum up more business. However, his steps seemed burdened, as if his feet were encased in lead, each stride a struggle.

“Woof, woof, woof!”

The barking resumed near the platform.

Pierre's face contorted, overwhelmed with worry and fear. Suddenly, he turned around, shaking off the waiter and rushing to the window of the small private room where Lumian and the others were situated.

“Save me, Doctor, save me!” he pleaded, pressing his hands against the glass with a desperate expression.

Lumian seized the moment, stating, “Unless you disclose the cause of the illness, my friend won't be able to treat you.”

The commotion reached the passengers in the adjacent private rooms, but in their slumber, they were indifferent to the unfolding drama.

Pierre swallowed hard, stealing a glance at the equally terrified bar waiter.

“Yes, yes...”

Before he could complete his sentence, a figure materialized on the platform's wall.

The figure stood firmly, legs apart, body contorted, but its head tilted upward, fixated on some distant point.

It was a man, clad in tweed garments, conspicuously marked by tears and frays. His facial muscles contorted dramatically, and his eyes were rolled back, leaving only a white patch visible.

Saliva dribbled from his open mouth as he attempted to speak.

“Woof! Woof! Woof!”

The barking harmonized with the other canine sounds in Dardel, forming a disconcerting chorus.

“It's Derangement!” Pierre finally exclaimed.

“Derangement?” Lumian shifted his attention from the man barking on the wall to Lugano.

Lugano observed the abnormality for a moment before slowly shaking his head at Lumian.

His message was clear: this wasn't your typical case of rabies.

Pierre, mistakenly thinking Lumian was addressing him, was on the brink of emotional collapse.

“Yes, Derangement!”

“I don't know when it started. People in our town began turning into barking lunatics. Initially, it was just one, but then two, three, ten... Many acquaintances of mine got infected, completely losing their minds. They only bark like dogs and are most active during the night!”

“Did they contract it from being bitten by these lunatics?” Lugano inquired with a furrowed brow.

“No, the ones I know weren't bitten, but they still went mad! I-I feel like I'm soon next!” Pierre exclaimed in despair.

“You didn't seek help from the government?” Lumian was puzzled, thinking that official Beyonders wouldn't allow such a situation to escalate.

“We heard about a village having a similar situation as Derangement; they reported it to the government, and then the whole village vanished. We... we didn't dare approach either the government or the Church!” Pierre explained frantically, with the bar waiter by his side equally terrified.

Lumian's eyes narrowed.

“Where are the people from the town's health department, police station, and the cathedral's padre?”

“They were the first to succumb to madness.” Pierre, caught up in distress, didn't consider Lumian's intentions in asking.

The initial casualties were the padre, police, and health officials... Lumian raised an eyebrow and remarked, “So why haven't you tried escaping from Dardel?”

“Escape...” Pierre and the bar waiter were startled, staring blankly at Lumian.

Beneath the crimson moonlight, the whites of their eyes took on a bloodshot hue.

Chapter 507 Dead End

Pierre and the bar waiter locked eyes with Lumian and the others, their bloodshot gaze shifting from vacant to sheer terror.

In hushed tones, they uttered frantically, "You folks are aware... You folks are aware that there's Derangement here..."

Abruptly, Pierre's face contorted, and he bellowed in hysteria, "None of you can leave!

"Once the outsiders catch wind of this, we're all done for!"

He swiftly maneuvered through the steam locomotive's open window, attempting to climb in and forcefully pull Lumian and the others out.

In response, Lugano rose to his feet, delivering a powerful blow with his right fist.

With a resounding thud, Pierre slumped, unconscious, hanging awkwardly from the window. The bar waiter, seemingly unhinged, trampled over the fallen man, attempting to leap into the carriage.

Lugano struck again, his punch rendering the bloodshot-eyed bar waiter unconscious. He slumped over Pierre, creating an unusual tableau.

They didn't abnormally transform into monsters... Lumian had previously speculated that the two town folks had succumbed suddenly to Derangement.

Turning to Lumian, Lugano inquired in a low voice, "What do we do?"

"What do we do?" Lumian echoed the Doctor's inquiry.

The unfolding events not only displayed an abnormality but also left him with a sense of inner conflict and displacement.

The peculiar Derangement, causing people to lose their sanity and transform into canine-like creatures, coupled with the consecutive onset of various illnesses, unmistakably hinted at supernatural forces at play. However, the mystery deepened as Pierre and the other townsfolk, who were evidently concerned about keeping Derangement a secret, freely disclosed the information to Lumian.

This apparent contradiction could be attributed to Pierre's overwhelming mental stress, pushed to the brink. Lumian's mention of future sickness served as the tipping point, prompting Pierre to instinctively guard the secret from leaking when reminded.

Yet, the lingering question persisted: Why not escape?

Faced with an infectious and unstoppable Derangement, wouldn't it be prudent for ordinary humans to flee Dardel and return once the plague had subsided?

Even if they feared attracting attention from the authorities by fleeing, a temporary escape into the nearby mountains after addressing those potentially afflicted could provide a solution.

Unless there was some force preventing the citizens of Dardel from escaping!

Lumian deduced this from various details.

The townsfolk were cognizant of similar Derangement cases elsewhere, resulting in entire villages being wiped out by the authorities. Normally, such incidents would be reported as a tragic disaster with everyone buried.

After the initial infection, key figures like the cathedral's clergyman, the police, and health department officials succumbed to madness, severing Dardel's connection with regional authorities from the start.

It appeared as if an intelligent and dangerous individual deliberately spread Derangement, employing tactics to hinder the townsfolk from escaping.

Why would this mastermind allow Pierre and others to divulge the situation to the Doctor on the steam locomotive?

If the steam train were to stay in Dardel, unable to reach Port Gati by the next morning, it would undoubtedly attract official Beyonder investigation.

Lumian, thinking from the mastermind's perspective, considered it illogical to choose a transportation hub regularly frequented by steam locomotives. Even without Lumian's inquiries, those choosing to enter Dardel to sleep under a warm blanket and sample beautiful frogs would eventually notice the abnormality, raising suspicions. They couldn't all be made to stay behind, could they? This would lead to an investigation!

There are many contradictions, inconsistencies, and inexplicable aspects... He's smart yet foolish, cautious yet careless... Lumian, contemplating the intricacies, turned to Lugano and said, "What else can we do? Of course, we have to find a way to inform the authorities about this. Don't tell me you want to investigate the source of the Derangement and save the residents here, do you? I didn't expect you to be so noble."

Lugano smiled awkwardly. The latter possibility had never crossed his mind.

"How should we inform the authorities?" he asked sincerely, admitting his lack of experience in such matters.

"The simplest solution is to get the train police here and tell them what Pierre said. Have them use the train's radio to contact the relevant departments in the Faust area or the Upper Coastal Province," Lumian suggested casually.

However, Lugano hesitated, expressing concern, "B-but as witnesses, we'll be invited to assist in the investigation. O-our identities are fake, and even if we use your mystical item to change our appearances, it's easy to expose that we're Beyonders under the influence of some mysticism abilities."

Lumian pondered for a moment and offered an alternative with a smile, "Then find an empty room on the platform, pile dozens of bundles of explosives, and detonate them. The explosion will send the roof flying, destroying the house. This way, the conductor and the train police will report it quickly, and the officials in the Faust area will take notice. When they investigate further, they'll discover the hidden problem in Dardel. How about that? We won't need to personally show our faces in this plan, right?"

Lugano considered the proposal but raised another concern, “When the authorities investigate further, they'll discover that we've interacted with Dardel's residents. They'll worry that we might also be in danger of contracting Derangement. When the time comes, we won't be able to pass the scrutiny.”

Lumian felt a twinge of frustration, recalling how he and his sister had been trapped in Cordu after the abnormality. Everything they did had its cons.

He chuckled and said, “Then investigate the source of the Derangement personally and blast it into pieces!

“This will completely resolve the problem without attracting the officials' attention!”

Ludwig, who had consumed countless suppers, swallowed the deep-fried potato pie in his mouth and calmly said, “After informing the authorities about Derangement, why stay here and wait for them to investigate?”

“Can't we just leave, change our identities, and take another steam locomotive to another port?”

Uh... Lumian was taken aback.

Why hadn't I thought of such a simple idea?

Just now, the more Lugano and I discussed, the deeper we delved into a dead end. We were entirely focused on finding a reason and excuse for entering Dardel to investigate the source of the Derangement...

A realization hit Lumian, and his heart skipped a beat.

Nonchalantly, he gazed at Lugano, assessing the Doctor's luck.

The other party's luck in the future would also be tainted with a ghastly green!

With a smile, Lumian said to Lugano, “You also have the possibility of contracting Derangement.”

Lugano was taken aback for a moment before asking with a pale face, “Really?”

“Think of it as a joke,” Lumian turned his head, seemingly relaxed, and said to Ludwig, “See, there are many benefits to studying more. In the past, you wouldn't have thought of such a solution and only knew nothing but eating.”

Ignoring the Hunter, Ludwig forked a piece of mutton into his mouth.

“What should I do? What should I do...” Lugano muttered to himself, attempting to use his Doctor powers on himself to see if he could be saved.

Lumian interrupted him.

“No rush. There's just a risk of contracting the illness. You just need to leave this place before you get truly infected.”

As he spoke, he stood up and walked out of the private room.

“W-where are you going?” Lugano blurted out.

Lumian slipped his hands into his pockets and responded with a smile. "Inform the authorities about Derangement."

Lugano was momentarily at a loss for words and expressions. All he could do was watch in a daze as Lumian strolled out of the private room.

Reaching the train's washroom, Lumian locked the door and activated the black mark representing Spirit World Traversal.

His figure swiftly vanished, reappearing in Apartment 702 at 9 Rue Orosai, Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative in Trier.

Neither Franca nor Jenna was asleep at this hour. One was engrossed in a novel, while the other contemplated what knowledge to impart to Rabbit Chasel.

"W-why are you back?" Franca jumped in fright.

She had the illusion that she had just dropped him off at school in the morning and found him at home, legs up, eating snacks, and watching television in the afternoon.

Lumian glanced at Franca and smiled. "We encountered a Beyonder incident and wish to inform the authorities through your channels to have them resolve it."

Franca exclaimed in surprise and amusement, "Y-you encountered another Beyonder incident? What a mysticism catastrophe detector!?"

Jenna looked at Lumian and suddenly felt that it was a good thing for him to leave Trier.

"I didn't want to either." Lumian spread his hands sincerely.

Franca exhaled and said, "Where is it? What kind of incident?"

"In Dardel in Upper Coastal Province's Faust region..." Lumian briefly recounted the situation.

Franca and Jenna were both surprised and terrified by the contagious Derangement.

Simultaneously, Franca muttered inwardly, I wonder how 007 will react to this "surprise"...

He's always telling me to get out of the market district. If I really do, he'll realize that not only will Beyonder cases in Trier's other districts pile up on him, the mystical catastrophes of Intis's other provinces will also descend upon him...

Ah, that's right. What does it have to do with me? It's all Lumian's fault!

Thankfully, this fellow is heading to the Feynapotter Kingdom in the future. No matter what Beyonder incidents he encounters, it's no longer 007's problem. He can't possibly collaborate across borders...

After explaining the situation in Dardel, Lumian didn't linger. He "teleported" back to the washroom of the steam locomotive's business carriage.

He turned on the tap and washed his hands without hesitation. Then, he left the washroom and returned to the small private room. He said to Lugano, "The authorities will react soon. Let's prepare to leave."

Lugano sprang to his feet.

At that moment, the unconscious Pierre slowly regained consciousness, shaking the bar waiter off his body and landing on the platform.

Lumian looked at him and smiled.

“We'll stay and investigate the source of Derangement. Can you tell me who patient zero was?”

“Who was it...” Pierre didn't lose his mind and attack Lumian and the others like before. Instead, he fell into deep thought.

Chapter 508 Patient Zero

Lugano, who had been listening, shot Lumian a puzzled glance. He couldn't fathom why Lumian would strike up a casual conversation with Pierre just as they were on the verge of departing.

A few more moments, and the official Beyonders would make their entrance!

Besides, delving too deep into this matter could invite trouble down the road. They might end up under scrutiny, or worse, attract the attention of the Derangement's source, prompting immediate intervention!

Pierre pondered for more than ten seconds before uttering with uncertainty, “Patient Zero seemed to be a guest renting a room at our bar...”

“Foreigner?” Lumian inquired with composure.

Having already briefed the official Beyonders about the Derangement through Franca and resolved to find an opportunity to “teleport” away later, Lumian was no longer as tense as before. Thus, before leaving, he aimed to unravel more about Derangement and construct a plausible explanation for the inconsistencies.

This quest for information, problem analysis, and uncovering of clues and answers was all part of a Conspirer's acting. With some idle time on his hands, Lumian seized the chance to digest some of the potion.

Lumian wasn't overly concerned about the potential repercussions of being privy to this situation.

Could the information on Derangement hold a candle to 0-01's sealed intel?

Moreover, as long as he didn't go berserk on the spot, he could later seek assistance from his superior to explore potential solutions!

Pierre contemplated for a few seconds, his expression reflecting confusion, and then he said, “Probably... I can't recall her name, and I have no idea where she came from. All I remember is that she suddenly lost her mind and dashed from the motel upstairs to the bar. She tried to bite people and barked like a dog.”

The infected foreigner spreading Derangement to Dardel? Then why were the townsfolk displaying no inclination to escape this place? Is this also a manifestation of Derangement? Lumian asked thoughtfully, “Did she manage to bite anyone? What happened to her?”

“We took care of her before she could sink her teeth into anyone. We apprehended her and handed her over to the health department,” Pierre recollected.

Sent to the health department? Lumian nodded slowly.

“Did the next person to succumb to madness come from the health department?”

“Yes, exactly!” Pierre affirmed this time.

Lumian pondered for a moment and inquired, “What did the resident look like?”

“A young woman. Her face was a bit pale, and her eyes were vacant. I-I can't recall her appearance...” Pierre couldn't help but raise his palm and rub his head.

Upon hearing this, Lumian's heart stirred.

If the root of all the abnormalities in Dardel indeed stemmed from a deranged individual, many contradictions could find an explanation!

Patient Zero was already in a state of madness; instinctively, she would spread Derangement to those around her in a supernatural sense, regardless of whether it was an isolated village or a bustling town serving as a transportation hub.

Simultaneously, she would subconsciously employ her ability to disseminate the supernatural Derangement, dropping hints to the townsfolk that leaving wasn't an option. She would control all channels that might carry the news. However, due to her madness and lack of thorough consideration, she didn't explicitly order the townsfolk not to discuss Derangement with the steam locomotive passengers.

Certainly, it wasn't necessarily due to a lack of thorough consideration. Lumian believed it was more plausible that the lunatic's instincts desired to involve more people and infect them with Derangement. Consequently, people who were aware of this weren't permitted to leave or seek help from the authorities. On the other hand, the prohibition didn't prevent residents from discussing Derangement with passersby.

This was a limited and relatively safe method of contagion. Passengers who knew about Derangement were akin to approaching the source of the plague. For instance, Lugano's luck had turned, increasing the probability of contracting the disease. Lumian and he had forgotten the option of escaping. The more they communicated, the more desperate they became, ultimately reaching a dead end. They were resolute in entering Dardel to investigate.

This was a precursor to becoming infected with Derangement. Unbeknownst to them, they had inadvertently received a mental cue.

With this in mind, Lumian suspected that the young woman might be a survivor of the village that had previously been eradicated, a potential carrier who had escaped the authorities' purge.

She had intertwined these memories with Derangement and disseminated them. That was how the residents of Dardel learned about a similar plague in a village wiped out by the authorities.

Typically, they lacked the qualifications or means to know such things!

Having formulated this preliminary hypothesis, Lumian smiled and turned to Pierre and the bar waiter, asking, "Where is the village you mentioned that was destroyed by the authorities because of Derangement?"

"I-I think it's somewhere in the Haut-Hornacis Province..." Pierre recalled the rumors he had heard.

Haut-Hornacis Province... That's quite a distance from Upper Coastal Province. Moreover, there's no direct steam locomotive; it requires a transfer through a few provinces in the West Midseashire Coast or Trier. How could you folks, who rarely leave Dardel, have heard such a rumor? Did a bard or passenger from Haut-Hornacis Province pass by this transportation hub? The more Lumian pondered, the more he leaned toward his hypothesis.

He refrained from pressing further and probed Pierre, "This Derangement holds significant research value. We'll venture into Dardel to investigate its source and try to find a cure.

"However, preparations will take some time. Moreover, it's nighttime.

"At dawn, we will step into Dardel. We won't depart until we resolve the problem."

Lumian stressed the phrases "will enter Dardel" and "will not leave for the time being" to gauge Pierre and the bar waiter's reactions.

Their expressions underwent several changes, and they were no longer as hysterical as before.

After a few moments, Pierre implored, "You must come to town tomorrow!"

"No problem," Lumian replied with a reassuring smile.

He was now even more convinced that this was an instinctive infection and influence. There was no structured approach to handling the alterations. As long as he avoided triggering a crucial matter or even took the initiative to broach the topic of cooperation, he could effectively deceive the source of Derangement.

Observing Pierre and the bar waiter about to move toward the other windows of the steam locomotive, Lumian called out to them, "Wait a moment."

After the two of them turned in surprise, Lumian gestured towards the table between the two sofas.

"You can take the cutlery away now."

Pierre and the bar waiter glanced at the dining table in confusion, realizing that only remnants were left on the empty plates.

Had they finished eating already? The delivery men hadn't even departed yet!

Pierre and the bar waiter were aware that they had spent a considerable amount of time discussing the Derangement issue, but it still felt surreal.

Won't they eating too quickly?

Was he feeding three lions?

Burp... Ludwig wiped his mouth with a tablecloth, a content expression on his face.

After the two townsfolk cleared away the cutlery, gathered their food boxes, and departed from the platform, Lumian smiled at Lugano and remarked, "Continue watching. Chill."

I can't chill. How are we to escape when the official Beyonders arrive? Lugano's heart felt like it was being grilled.

Observing his reaction, Lumian muttered silently, He's indeed acting like a wild Beyonder with a low Sequence and little knowledge... He doesn't show anything special like Ludwig... Is he really an ordinary wild Beyonder who only accepted a mission to follow me?

Simultaneously, Lumian focused his attention and checked Lugano's luck. He realized that the ghastly green traces had vanished, and there was no grisly calamity in store.

This meant that the Doctor no longer had the potential to contract Derangement, and he likely wouldn't be embroiled in the officials' operations to deal with Dardel's abnormality later.

After a while, Lumian heard a loud noise and saw the night suddenly brighten outside.

Light streamed down from midair.

Lumian looked up and noticed two colossal objects floating in the night.

They were two airships clad in dark gray paint, frantically spinning their paddles.

They were much smaller than the one Lumian had seen in Trier. The condensed light shone from their front and lower positions, converging on the edge of Dardel.

Simultaneously, the town erupted in a cacophony of barking once more, as if movement was taking place everywhere.

The officials from the Faust region are here? Lumian averted his gaze, awaiting the outcome.

Shouts, cries, gunshots, and various beams of sunlight continued for nearly an hour before completely subsiding.

Before long, a team of police officers entered the private room, questioning the now disguised, fake identification-wielding Lumian and company's interactions with Dardel's residents.

Other than anything related to Derangement, Lumian told them everything honestly.

He was ready to "teleport" away with Ludwig and Lugano at any moment.

After recording and comparing tickets and identification, the police officers left the carriage.

Lumian patiently waited until dawn. The police officers returned, presenting three contracts and requesting their signatures.

The contract explained that the disturbance from the previous night had resulted from a special military operation, and everyone was obligated to keep it confidential.

Does what I revealed before my signature count? Lumian chuckled inwardly and calmly signed with an alias.

His fake identity had just been activated, and it had minimal mystic connections.

After the police departed, Lumian, having intentionally gone through the official process firsthand, intended to grasp Lugano and Ludwig's shoulders and "teleport" away.

Uncertain if the contract signed with an alias would be discovered, he aimed to avoid potential risks.

At that moment, Lumian noticed a towering figure behind Lugano.

It was his messenger, Penitent Baynfel, draped in a dark clergyman's robe and surrounded by charred flames.

Baynfel sent a folded letter drifting towards Lumian.

Lugano was taken aback to see a piece of paper materialize. He instinctively glanced behind him, but Lumian opened the letter and perused its contents.

“Based on the feedback I received, this should be the escape of a Sealed Artifact.

“That Sealed Artifact resembles a young woman. It first surfaced during a catastrophe in Haut-Hornacis Province. Most of the time, she remains in her normal state, appearing lifeless, pale, and muddle-headed. However, once she enters a state of madness, she gradually infects the surrounding people with the same Derangement as her. There's no definite transmission pattern.

“She might not be in the same state every time she goes mad. The same goes for her Derangement symptoms.

“In her normal state, although she's like an unintelligent ghost and acts on instinct, she possesses a power akin to the power of speech, where whatever she says comes true, and if she declares someone dead, they will die...”

Chapter 509 Ironclad Merchant Ship

Also possesses the ability to turn spoken words into reality... Before the Derangement took hold, she acted on instinct, her pale face and lifeless eyes mirroring the description of Patient Zero by Pierre. Lumian delved into the catastrophe's details through Franca's letter, gaining a deeper understanding.

His speculations, rooted in Pierre's answers and behavior, aligned closely with the truth.

The divergence lay in Lumian's belief that the initial infected individual was a genuine lunatic that acted on instinct, while official information identified her as a humanoid Sealed Artifact, still governed by instinct, that lacked intelligence whether in her normal state or deranged state.

Lumian's speculations, however, didn't rule out the possibility that the young woman had transformed into a true lunatic—one that instinctively spread Derangement—due to some form of corruption, necessitating her sealing.

As for why it was a seal and not a direct eradication, Lumian could roughly guess the reason.

The ability to kill anyone at will was still coveted, despite various restrictions. The power to eliminate anyone at will remained highly sought after, despite certain constraints. Whether it was

the Inquisition, the Machinery Hivemind, or Bureau 8, they all prioritized sealing over destruction if a viable method existed. Lumian knew they might even depend on her to handle future crises.

His eyes moved down the letter's contents, absorbing the information.

“As for additional details, confidentiality prevents the source from providing more.”

“Keep a vigilant eye on individuals like her. If you uncover anything suspicious, immediately distance yourself and report it to the authorities.”

No specifics about her origins, the sealing technique, the manifestation of speech, or how to counteract Derangement were provided. No concrete seal level or number... Despite Dardel's abnormality and prior descriptions, even if it isn't a Grade 1 Sealed Artifact, it holds significant and terrifying properties among Grade 2 Sealed Artifacts... Lumian pondered briefly, then stowed the letter in his Traveler's Bag without incinerating it on the spot.

At that moment, Lugano was observing his back in bewilderment.

Despite activating his Spirit Vision, he found nothing.

Lumian's messenger, Penitent Baynfeld, had long departed.

“Let's go,” Lumian sighed, reaching out to grasp Ludwig and Lugano's shoulders.

His foremost regret was the wasted third of the 400 verl d'or fare.

He still needed to source different cafés for Ludwig's breakfast; he couldn't allow him to be satiated from one place to avoid raising suspicion.

In the next instant, Lugano felt as if he had crossed into the spirit world he'd just glimpsed. Instead of being a mere observer, he plunged deeper into layers of saturated colors, bathing in the light of seven different-colored brilliances overhead. Surrounded by indescribable faces and figures, he “sped” toward an unknown destination.

Dizziness overcame him, but in just over ten seconds, his feet met solid ground. Buildings in beige, brownish-red, and light yellow surrounded him.

Lumian hadn't “teleported” too far and chose Faust, with Dardel falling under its jurisdiction.

Under the dawn's light, Lumian adorned the Lie earring and retrieved a tweed coat from his Traveler's Bag, seamlessly altering his appearance, height, and attire in a secluded alley.

In less than a minute, he morphed into an entirely different person.

Though not the first time Lugano had witnessed this, he couldn't help but be slightly shocked by the scene.

What a mystical item and formidable ability!

Whether it was the silver earring allowing one to adjust appearance within a certain range or the coin bag with seemingly infinite capacity, Lugano had never seen anything like it. Occasionally, he'd heard other bounty hunters speak of official Beyonders possessing Beyond-level disguises.

Lumian tossed the Lie earring to Lugano, casually stating, “Get three more sets of fake identities and buy steam locomotive tickets that will arrive in Port Gati today.”

Am I a translator, guide, or your attendant? Lugano criticized as he caught the mystical silver earring.

He forced a smile and said, "I've never been to the Faust area, so I don't know who to find for fake identities."

"The principles are common. I trust your experience," Lumian replied with a smile.

Alright, since you're paying... Lugano muttered silently, retrieving a change of clothes from his suitcase.

At the Northern Trier Train Station, Lumian had already paid him 1,000 verl d'or for the fake identities and informed him that he would handle similar expenses in the future.

After Ludwig put on the Lie earring, Lugano left the alley with his suitcase.

Lumian activated the Niese Face, altering his appearance once more, and trailed Lugano from afar while holding Ludwig, who was adjusting his height and appearance.

He wanted to observe the Doctor's actions and reactions in an unfamiliar place to uncover potential issues.

To prevent Ludwig from protesting, Lumian held down his wide-brimmed hat and tossed him a few loaves of baguettes.

Ludwig, not clamoring for a hot meal, obediently nibbled on the food as Lumian pulled him along.

In the early morning, the bars were closed, so Lugano headed to the nearest market and approached a prowler suspected to be a mobster. Using money, he bought access and discovered where to obtain fake identities.

Throughout the process, Lugano appeared no different from an ordinary bounty hunter.

Lumian wasn't disappointed or displeased. He calmly followed Lugano until he secured a differently scheduled steam locomotive. Only then did he dispel the Niese Face and rendezvous with his companion.

In Port Gati, Upper Coastal Province, Lumian occupied a luxurious hotel room near the sea.

Standing before the expansive glass window, he observed the azure sky, seemingly washed in water, contrasting with the clear and pure sea below, resembling gems.

The clear and melodious calls of gurgling seabirds, accompanied by their graceful figures, traversed between white clouds, white beaches, and ship masts. Even without opening the window, Lumian could intuitively feel the refreshing sea breeze from the sea.

This port, a main entry point for products from industrial cities in the West Midseashire Coast into the Fog Sea, was famous for trade and shipbuilding, boasting prosperity.

Contrary to Trieriens' beliefs about scarce sunlight in the north, Port Gati remained perpetually bathed in sunlight, with autumn maintaining a mild temperature.

As Ludwig chewed, Lumian admired the seascape and distant harbor, awaiting Lugano's return with tickets to the Feynapotter Kingdom's Port Santa.

At that moment, Penitent Baynfeld, abnormally tall and clad in a black clergyman's robe, emerged from the void, silently handing Lumian a letter.

“Thank you,” Lumian acknowledged out of habit before taking the letter and unfolding it.

“Dardel's Derangement has been contained. They've eliminated the severely infected residents, treated the slightly infected, but the Sealed Artifact is nowhere to be found.

“According to the information gathered at the scene, it appears she returned to normal a few days ago and left Dardel. Her current whereabouts are unknown. The spreading Derangement resulted from the severely corrupted sea of minds.

“The townsfolk's abnormal behavior—unwilling to leave Dardel yet keen on informing passersby about Derangement—likely stems from the corrupted sea of minds. Anthony's recently learned terminology describes it as a sea of collective subconscious forming a mind world with the island of consciousness and the spirituality sky.

“Be cautious in the future; there's a risk of being drawn to another mystical catastrophe caused by the Sealed Artifact.”

They didn't catch the Sealed Artifact... Lumian clicked his tongue, sensing a brewing headache.

Honestly, there was nothing he could do. Upon arriving in Dardel, the other party had already departed, leaving the catastrophe still unfolding.

At 3 p.m., Lumian, accompanied by Lugano and Ludwig, boarded the Flying Bird, a merchant ship bound for the Feynapotter Kingdom's Port Santa.

Opting for a first-class cabin, they secured a suite featuring a master bedroom, a child's room, a servant's quarters, a living room, and a washroom. With specialized attendants at their service, they gained access to the most upscale dining room and the exclusive cigar room. The cost, a hefty 700 verl d'or, was nearly equivalent to Charlie's annual income as a hotel attendant.

Money was something Lumian cared about, yet not too much. Past experiences and his sister's guidance had made him instinctively calculative, but the relatively “easy” acquisition of money, like the 30,000 verl d'or he obtained from the safe at Salle de Bal Brise, lessened the sting.

Besides, he already possessed the potion formula, main ingredients, and supplementary ingredients for his next Sequence, eliminating the immediate need for accumulating funds.

As a devoted reader of The Adventurer series, Lumian knew of the numerous human-shaped treasures at sea. If he needed money, he was willing to imitate his idol and cull them.

The Flying Bird, the latest steam-powered ship, was entirely made of steel, with no sails but smokestacks emitting fog and masts with watchtowers.

Iron-gray with intertwining red and gold colors, the ship boasted a wide deck, numerous gun emplacements, and surpassed classic sailboats in displacement, passenger capacity, speed, and

sturdiness. When compared to those backward-era fellows, it was like an adult looking down on children.

Before the Cordu incident, Lumian had considered embarking on a maritime journey, inspired by the adventurer Gehrman Sparrow, to entice his sister. However, Aurore had deferred this plan until after his university graduation.

In the spacious, brightly lit living room of the first-class cabin, Lumian gazed out the window at the azure sea, lost in thought.

Ooo!

Amidst the whistle, mist billowed from the chimneys of the Flying Bird.

The massive iron-armored merchant ship slowly departed Port Gati, accompanied by the symphony of various machinery starting to operate, heading into the depths of the sea.

Squawk! Squawk! The cries of seabirds reverberated through the clouds.

Chapter 510 First Day at Sea

Amidst the billowing smoke, the Flying Bird cut through the Fog Sea, heading west towards the Intis colony in the Fog Sea Archipelago. They were the same islands in the saying, “never trust an Islander.” From there, it would journey south to Port Santa, northwest of the Feynapotter Kingdom.

Though the Fog Sea was notorious for its heavy fog, the offshore areas were less affected. Lumian spent the next three hours under the bright sun, immersed in a book—an introductory textbook for the Feynapotter Kingdom's Highlander language. While he had Lugano, his translator and guide, Lumian didn't want to be completely reliant on him for information and communication. If anything happened to Lugano, or if he were to deliberately manipulate translations, Lumian would be vulnerable.

Mastering some basic Highlander phrases before reaching Port Santa would allow Lumian to verify the accuracy of translations and give him some independence.

Typically, learning Highlander in less than ten days was nearly impossible for Beyonders not from the Reader pathway. However, Lumian had a significant advantage: his knowledge of ancient Feysac, the original language from which Highlander evolved. The two languages shared many similarities in sentence structure, meaning, grammar, and word structure, allowing Lumian to learn Highlander much faster.

“When can dinner be delivered?” Ludwig paced restlessly in front of Lumian's recliner, frustrated that the exclusive attendant hadn't yet arrived with dinner, despite the darkening sky.

Lumian closed his book as the sun dipped below the horizon, casting long shadows illuminated by the kerosene lamp. With a chuckle, he said, “Blame yourself for ordering so much. They need time to cook it all. Thankfully, the first-class cabin has an independent kitchen, otherwise they'd be overwhelmed...”

Before he could finish, the doorbell rang.

As the chimes reverberated, Lugano opened the thick vermilion door to find the young attendant pushing a dining cart into the room, its surface covered in a thick yellowish-brown carpet.

Under Ludwig's eager gaze, the attendant calmly laid out the tablecloth and utensils.

“This is a local delicacy, Gati herring. It involves marinating smoked soft herring filets, onions, and carrot slices in olive oil, thyme, bay leaves, and other spices for 24 to 48 hours. It's perfect with warm potato salad.”

“And these are deep-fried fries. In Upper Coastal Province, there's a saying: without fries, there's no heaven...”

“There's also raisin cream bread...”

“These are fresh oysters and shellfish...”

“This is Faust turkey, ham and mushroom burrito. This is Umu's duck minced meat and coarse brown sugar vanilla waffle...”

“This is traditional orange cheese... and there's also a pungent gray cheese. Would you like to give it a try?”

“This is Upper Coastal Province's favorite apple cider[1]...”

Lumian listened with genuine interest as the attendant described each dish. He noticed that, despite his impatience, Ludwig didn't immediately attack his food. Instead, he waited patiently until the attendant finished before sampling the pre-meal bread and savoring the pickled herring.

Did something awaken in him? Lumian glanced at the child in confusion.

“Not bad,” Ludwig remarked with a professional air. “The smoky taste is just right. It blends perfectly with the fragrance and seasoning...”

Despite his praise, seven-year-old Lumian couldn't help but find the whole scene with Ludwig's chubby, youthful face and serious demeanor comical.

Port Gati, being near the sea, boasted excellent seafood. The oysters and other shellfish were not only tastier than most restaurants in Trier, but also considerably cheaper. Lumian sipped his brewed apple cider, enjoying the unique local flavors.

With Ludwig's impressive appetite, the eight-person dinner soon ended, leaving only clean plates and bones behind.

Lumian and Lugano, despite not being small eaters themselves, found themselves dwarfed by Ludwig's consumption despite eating two servings each. This was especially impressive considering he'd already devoured afternoon tea and dessert earlier.

I don't see you visiting the washroom often... Where does all the food go? Do you have a bottomless pit for a stomach? Lumian mused, sizing Ludwig up. He stood up and turned to Lugano.

“I'm feeling for a drink. Want to join me at the ship's bar?”

“I didn't catch a wink last night. Planned to hit the hay early today.” Lugano couldn't wrap his head around his employer's boundless energy. Despite a sleepless night and a full day of travel, Lumian buzzed with life, ready to hit the bar.

Could it be because his Sequence is higher?

The kid with the odd appetite looks pretty charged too...

Lumian didn't extend an invite to the translator. After leaving a late-night snack for Ludwig, he swapped into a plain dark brown jacket and left the room, heading for the first-class bar.

The bar oozed elegance, filled with the soft tunes of a small band. Sparse patrons scattered around, soaking in the quiet atmosphere.

Lumian scanned the scene for a moment from the entrance, then shook his head and exited.

He descended the stairs to the deck, slipping into the bar serving third-class cabins and the regular crew.

A chaos of noise—shouts, cheers, claps, and random singing—saturated the air, echoing around Lumian.

He instantly felt a sense of homecoming. A wave of ease washed over him, and every cell in his body kicked up a notch.

That's more like it... A seasoned regular at the Ol' Tavern from a young age, Lumian swayed a bit as he edged up to the bar counter.

“A glass of La Fée Verte.” He thumped the wooden surface.

The bartender, a young man with Feynapotter features, greeted Lumian. His face was slim, adorned with black hair, eyes, and distinct contours. His slightly yellowish skin highlighted his appealing facial features.

“Alright, 10 licks,” the bartender replied in Intisian, his foreign accent apparent.

The ship's prices trumps even those in Trier... As Lumian counted out the coins, he noticed the bartender divert his attention and engage with sincerity and enthusiasm.

“Madame, what would you like to drink?”

“A glass of cherry wine,” a lady in a thick yellow dress responded, showcasing a pretty face and light green eyes.

“Alright!” The bartender, not seeking payment upfront, prepared to serve the lady.

“I was here first,” Lumian reminded the bartender with a smile.

Without hesitation, the bartender replied, “This is such a beautiful and dazzling lady. My heart tells me to serve her first.”

Oh, he's truly from Feynapotter... Lumian didn't get upset. Instead, it felt like he was watching a circus act.

Feynapotterians, with their romantic nature and relentless pursuit of love, placed their faith in Earth Mother, emphasizing the importance of women. Men in this kingdom would praise any woman they encountered, openly pursuing those they fancied.

Aurore had once mentioned that Feynapotter's men were masters of country romance. Despite their mushiness and overt sincerity, they didn't come off as cheesy; rather, they exuded a different kind of elegance.

In comparison, the romantic Intisians seemed lacking.

However, influenced by tradition and faith, most Feynapotterians placed great importance on family, reproduction, and children, preferring settled family lives. Unless entering marriage without coercion, they were akin to the conservative Loenese, finding it challenging to accept extramarital affairs.

While exceptions existed, even in the most conservative Loen Kingdom, the prevalence of adultery wasn't as exaggerated or common as in Intis. Many believed that love didn't necessarily thrive within the confines of marriage.

After the lady settled her tab and departed with the cherry wine, the bartender served Lumian La Fée Verte, garnishing it with a mint leaf.

He remarked without a trace of guilt, "My grandmother always said to give special treatment to every lady, especially the beautiful ones."

"I get it." Lumian slipped back into his role as a regular at Ol' Tavern. Sipping his absinthe, he concocted a tale. "I once had numerous beautiful companions, even more stunning than the last lady. Unfortunately, being just one person, I couldn't marry them all simultaneously..."

The bartender suddenly felt a camaraderie.

"I often feel the same regrets. There are too many beautiful women in this world, and I'm just one person."

"What's your name?"

"Louis, just call me Louis." Lumian provided his alias.

His current identity was Louis Berry.

"I'm Francesco," the bartender shared with Lumian.

The familiar setting, the customary boasting, and the vibrant ambiance left Lumian feeling a bit tipsy, despite not imbibing much.

If not for the mysticism catastrophe, if Aurore were still alive, if he'd already entered university with no other concerns, wouldn't it be nice to just unwind at a bar?

Sea travelers couldn't help but discuss pirates. Bartender Francesco informed Lumian, "With the widespread use of ironclad warship technology on merchant vessels, it's become tough for pirates. Their sailboats can't match these iron-skinned monsters cruising at 16 to 17 knots. They can't plunder them even if they tried!"

Lowering his voice, Francesco continued, "Pirates' go-to strategy now is sending individuals disguised as passengers to board ships from different ports. Once they hit a designated area in the sea, they create internal chaos, gaining initial control and allowing a nearby pirate ship to close in."

"Is that so?" Lumian inquired with interest. "Any guesses on who might be an undercover pirate on this ship?"

Francesco was taken aback.

"It's just the first day. How can I tell?"

Lumian smiled, teasing, "Ever been through something like this before?"