

## Inevitability 531

Chapter 531 Depths of Death

Bathed in the yellowish glow of the kerosene lamp, Lumian perused Burman's notebook. The pages chronicled the erratic musings of a mind teetering on the edge of instability.

“Once life slips away, spirits journey to the spirit world, except in rare cases!

“If I can craft the right summoning chant, a Spirit Guide's power could pull Helen's spirit back to our reality.

“That's step one toward bringing her back.”

Upon seeing this, Lumian indiscernibly shook his head.

If only resurrection were that simple...

He turned the page.

“New mystical knowledge gained:

“In ancient times, intelligent beings ventured into the Underworld after death. Those deeply devout or exceptionally impactful could ascend to the corresponding deity's Heaven. However, during the Fifth Epoch, a surplus of undead lingered beyond the Underworld.

“I'm uncertain if Helen's spirit has entered the Underworld or returned solely to the spirit realm. When summoning, I must address these separately; mixing them would guarantee failure.

“Despite the sea monsters' formidable might, they lack the power to confine a soul. No similar occurrences manifest in that sea region. For now, special circumstances needn't be considered. Additionally, Helen wasn't a fervent follower of the Eternal Blazing Sun.”

“I encountered Helen again.

“But she's entirely lost the memory of me.

“Her form and essence are gradually fading away. In a few short years, she'll transform into just another undead.

“I have no more than five years.

“How can I reawaken her consciousness and recover her memories? Merely providing a vessel capable of housing a departed spirit doesn't seem sufficient.”

“Don't forget the moonlit waves by the city's lighthouse. They bore witness to my proposal and Helen's acceptance.”

“Don't forget Gasparo seafood rice; it's Helen's favorite. After every adventure, when we returned to Port Farim, she always suggested indulging in it.”

“Don't forget the sunset at Andatna volcano. That's where we met and vowed to revisit often in the future. Even as we age, we can't let that romance fade away...”

“Don't forget... Don't forget... Don't forget...”

“My head hurts.”

“I razed a town, leading to the deaths of two to three hundred people.

“The sight of those couples, parents, and children perishing didn't bring me joy.

“Instead, my heart plunged into darkness.

“I acknowledge this as my sin, an irreversible mistake. I'm aware that I'm no longer the Burman you once liked.

“Yet, I harbor no regrets.”

“Swindlers, curse them!

“Ending these swindlers has rekindled a long-lost sense of satisfaction.”

“Helen, if you were still alive, we might have had our own child, right?

“Why do those evil Warlocks always employ infants, children, and their remains as essential ingredients for the creation of their dark arts?

“I've become even more evil than them...”

“Helen, I've lost my way. All my endeavors have ended in failure.”

“Helen, I aspire to acquire the Sequence 5 potion formula and ingredients for the Death pathway.”

“Helen, Fidel intervened. He warned that it would turn me into a monster and erase my original memories.

“Helen, I refuse to forget you.

“Helen, please forgive my cowardice.”

“Helen, I actually encountered that islander from Resurrection Island!

“It truly exists!

“Harrison defeated me, but he spared my life. He questioned why I had forcibly transitioned to the Death pathway.

“He revealed that my previous attempts were misguided. True resurrection isn't that straightforward.

“He explained that within the depths of death lies everyone's mark. Only by bringing forth the corresponding mark into reality and utilizing it as a foundation to reconstruct spirit and flesh can we achieve genuine resurrection, retaining our original knowledge and complete memories.

“Helen, I'm overjoyed. I glimpse hope in reviving you once more.”

“Harrison imparted knowledge about the Death domain to me. It's through understanding this knowledge and reclaiming their mark that he and his kin can undergo repeated deaths and resurrections, escaping the clutches of mortality.

“While they seldom depart Resurrection Island, it's not an absolute. Travel-loving islanders like Harrison have ventured to different lands, leaving the Resurrection Island legend imprinted in the memories of a select few humans. Those with sinister motives compiled this information into a sea map for Resurrection Island.

“The treasure map Mark sold us is counterfeit, but parts of it trace back to the genuine one. Harrison, in his quest, left Resurrection Island to eliminate the authentic map and eradicate all who know how to reach that sea and discover Resurrection Island.

“Helen, armed with Harrison's information, I attempted to summon a spirit from the depths of death. I succeeded, conjuring an evil spirit named Arden. As it was feeble, I easily vanquished it, collecting its blood for the ensuing ritual.”

“Helen, forgive me. I couldn't rein in my emotions.

“Ever since encountering Harrison and gaining the knowledge to truly bring you back, impatience has seized me. I can't control my emotions.

“Those islanders are swindlers deserving of death. I ended the life of a swindler and numerous others. I refused to squander any more time, hastening the ritual.

“Helen, I'm sorry. I failed again. I wasn't adequately prepared.”

“Helen, have I lost my sanity entirely? A mere retort from Fidel triggered a frenzy, leading me to slay everyone in the house.

“He must perish too, the one who dared to threaten me and Fidel!”

“Helen, I've failed. It's been a while since I sustained such severe injuries.

“My body is largely undead. These wounds aren't fatal, but I lack any allies.

“Damn it, damn it, damn it!”

“Helen, I've missed you once again.”

Lumian reached the conclusion of the dark soft-covered notebook and fixated on the sentence for an extended moment.

It was as if he had transformed into a statue.

After a few minutes, Lumian couldn't resist raising his right hand to massage his temples.

The marks from the depths of death, Resurrection Island, and Harrison inundated his mind, prompting a sudden regret for not seeking Franca's assistance.

To ensure a clean demise for Burman, he never intended to channel the Demon Warlock's spirit from the outset. This meant he had no plans to return to Trier and bring Franca to his current location.

However, his instinct now urged him to delve further into the resurrection method outlined by Harrison. He desired an understanding of the island where inhabitants experienced repeated deaths and rebirths.

Phew... Lumian closed the notebook and exhaled, making an effort to recollect his knowledge of death-related mysticism.

He recalled hearing the words “death” and “mark” conjoined.

Madam Magician had mentioned the term “death mark” while answering a question about the Tudor figure at the Samaritan Women's Spring!

Is this a concept distinct from remnant spirits and imprints, directly linked to resurrection?

From the depths of death... What lurks within the depths of death...

What I now know that is explicitly tied to death—the Underworld, the Samaritan Women's Spring, the River Styx connecting two worlds...

What a pity. I wonder what Harrison from Resurrection Island looks like...

Burman's recorded knowledge is in disarray. It seemed he wrote whatever thoughts occurred to him. Without him, organizing a complete resurrection ritual and the corresponding principles proves exceedingly challenging...

No, not just challenging. Impossible. Burman only documented what he feared he might forget. The remaining knowledge is entirely absent... Lumian rubbed his temples once more and unfolded the counterfeit treasure map. After careful scrutiny, he couldn't discern which parts were authentic and which were spurious.

He intended to send the map to Franca and Jenna at dawn, employing them to employ mysticism to differentiate between the real and the fake.

The next morning, Lumian wiped his mouth with a napkin and observed Ludwig grappling with the breakfast dishes.

Knock, knock, knock. A gentle rap echoed on the door.

“Please come in.” Lumian gestured for Lugano to open the door.

Do you really think I'm a servant? Alright, providing the money makes you the boss... Lugano criticized, leaving the dining table to open the door.

It was Philip outside.

Philip entered the room, smiling at Lumian.

“We'll set sail in two and a half hours. If you have any special items you want to buy, do it as soon as possible.”

“I don't,” Lumian replied with a smile as he stood up.

Philip glanced out the window and said, “By the way, you might not be aware, but the Demon Warlock has been apprehended.”

“Is that so?” Lugano looked surprised.

Over the past few days, the most popular topic among the passengers on the ship was Demon Warlock Burman, who had caused them to stay in Port Farim.

Seeing Lumian raise his eyebrows in inquiry, Philip said with a relaxed expression,

“Not only was Burman apprehended, but he was also in the state of a corpse.”

“Who's behind this?” Lumian asked, his curiosity piqued.

Philip shook his head.

“I don't have all the details yet. What I do know is that it's closely tied to The Fool's Church. The adventurer Gehrman Sparrow is said to be their messenger.”

“Could it be that the adventurer took matters into his own hands?” Lugano asked eagerly.

At sea, he naturally heard about faith in The Fool and had no doubts about it

—sailors, passengers, and dock porters would tell him about it.

“Hard to say. But anyone capable of taking down a Demon Warlock has to be at least as formidable as a pirate admiral.” Philip sighed deeply.

Suddenly, a commotion echoed from the gangway. Passengers destined to board at Port Farim were finally given the green light to board the Flying Bird.

Lumian approached the window and spotted a familiar face.

Batna Comté!

He and the adorable-looking female adventurer climbed aboard the deck together.

Lumian pushed open the window and called out, “Batna, are you guys headed to Port Santa as well?”

Batna looked up, surprised, his eyes fixed on the rooms on the top floor.

Spotting Louis Berry, he grinned and replied, “Absolutely. I’m off to witness Port Santa’s sea prayer ritual!”

## Chapter 532 “Real” Map

Among the nations of the Northern Continent, only the Lord of Storms in Loen wielded authority over the sea. Yet, sailors, sea merchants, and adventurers loyal to other deities sought to evade shipwrecks, brutal weather, and the need for specific protection. This led to various compromises and unique circumstances.

Certain Churches established subsidiary gods, Angels, and Saints endowed with storm and serelated powers for followers with corresponding concerns. Take, for instance, the Sea God of the Church of The Fool.

In some Churches, believers were tacitly permitted to hold a partial belief in the Lord of Storms.

Other Churches turned a blind eye to the folklore beliefs flourishing in ports and islands, allowing the performance of specific rituals without requiring the presence of clergymen.

The sea prayer ritual of Port Santa in the Feynapotter Kingdom fell into the latter category. Its folklore was believed to trace back to the Fourth Epoch. This annual event, overseen by the Church of Earth Mother, was modest and confined to this port; it lacked any widespread publicity.

In essence, nearly nobody—neither the locals of Port Santa nor the merchants, adventurers, or pirates frequenting the shores of the Fog Sea—

was aware of such a sea prayer ritual.

After gathering the pertinent details, Lumian made an initial assessment that either Bard or Ultraman, the culprits behind the sea prayer ritual pranks, were likely locals of Port Santa or actively engaged in maritime affairs.

Considering that Bard’s work, “Emperor Roselle’s Secret Chronicles,” had been specifically handed over to Trier’s underground booksellers for publication, Lumian leaned towards the belief that Ultraman had been the instigator of the problems at Port Santa’s sea prayer ritual.

Despite the fact that “Emperor Roselle’s Secret Chronicles” seemed more suited for sale in Intis, Lumian reasoned that if Bard had a permanent residence in the Feynapotter Kingdom, it would be wiser to publish it under the Feynapotter Kingdom’s name before discreetly selling it to Intis. This precaution was to avoid drawing the attention of Intis’s secret police.

Many Beyonders had underestimated the vigilance of ordinary police officers and investigators, resulting in unwanted attention and arrests by official Beyonders who got wind of the news.

Upon learning that Batna and his female companion desired to witness Port Santa’s sea prayer ritual, Lumian waved with a grin.

“Me too!”

He stepped back from the window, biding his time until nearly noon to compose a letter detailing his recent encounters and the handling of Burman’s “legacy.”

After folding the letter and wrapping it within the folds of the fake treasure map, Lumian summoned Rabbit Chasel once again.

The rabbit-like spirit creature still sported its gold-rimmed glasses and a small, blurry half top hat. Silently observing for a few moments, Lumian then handed over the items destined for Franca and Jenna.

“Thank you,” he said politely.

That's basic courtesy!

“No need to thank me,” replied Rabbit Chasel, removing his half top hat and executing a slight bow.

Lumian's lips twitched as he witnessed the mutated Rabbit of Knowledge disappear from the room.

He was worried that this rabbit might unpredictably draw its gun and finish off the sender at any given moment.

The next time around, he resolved to caution Jenna against imparting such dangerous knowledge to Rabbit Chasel!

Trier, within the Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative, Apartment 702 at 9 Rue Orosai.

Franca glanced at Rabbit Chasel, adorned with its half top hat and gold-

rimmed glasses. Leaning closer to Jenna, she whispered, “Isn't it too dangerous to let it read the Adventurer series?”

Jenna smiled and replied, “Don't you find Rabbit Chasel adorable? Furthermore, a messenger can encounter danger. Reading more about Gehrman Sparrow might make it stronger.”

Franca had only briefly raised the issue but shifted her focus to unfolding the fake treasure map and letter, reading it with earnest attention.

“Wow, Lumian's efficiency is impressive. He aimed to punish Burman for his sins and managed to complete the hunt in less than twelve hours!

“The Beyonder characteristics didn't form Sealed Artifacts with mixed abilities; instead, they emerged and merged separately. Could it be because Burman no longer harbored madness and paranoia before his death, and his emotions had calmed down?”

“Heh heh, there's no need to inform 007 so quickly if we encounter similar cases in the future. Lumian might resolve it himself within a day. Everything will return to normal, and world peace will prevail. That way, 007 won't blame me for always causing trouble for him.”

Franca had previously informed Jenna that the code name of her collaborator among the authorities was 007.

So fast? Demon Warlock isn't weak... Jenna couldn't believe it.

That was a criminal with a bounty of 600,000 verl d'or. All the verl d'or she had seen so far added up to less!

Lumian's bounty amounted to less than 100,000.

Franca pursed her lips and remarked, "Think about his experiences in Trier and the items and abilities he possesses. He's simply a supermodel, alright? If he were to be released, it would be equivalent to a dimensional reduction strike on Beyonders without any special traits. He wouldn't be much inferior to most Sequence 5 Beyonders!"

Jenna recalled the dangerous situations she had faced alongside Lumian and nodded in agreement.

"What do you mean by dimensional reduction strike?"

Franca, slightly surprised by Jenna's question, took a moment before explaining, "It's akin to an adult bullying a child or a demigod bullying a Low-Sequence Beyonder.

"Furthermore, think about it. A half-mad Beyonder like the Demon Warlock is mentally, psychologically, emotionally, and physically problematic. He was completely countered by Lumian's Symphony of Hatred. When facing him, all you need to do is be wary of the strange combination of abilities and avoid provoking him into a monster. Lumian has the experience, so he won't be careless."

Jenna muttered, "Now that you mention it, why do I feel that killing the Demon Warlock isn't too difficult?"

"You can't put it that way. It can only be said that the forced switching of pathways will indeed make one very powerful and dangerous, but it also has huge flaws and many problems. It's easy to target," Franca corrected her before continuing reading Lumian's letter.

After she was done reading, Franca sighed with excitement and said, "The sea sounds so fun, and the scenery is beautiful. If it weren't for the mission, I'd want to be an adventurer at sea and hunt pirates!"

Jenna, leaning against the sofa and reading the letter from behind, felt a longing in her heart.

Who wouldn't love to travel? It was just that they hadn't had the luxury before.

Franca regained her composure and clicked her tongue.

"Lumian is truly generous. He actually donated all the bounty and spoils of war to establish a charity fund. Sigh, actually, I understand his thoughts..."

Until now, she had been covertly providing for the family of her body's original owner until now.

As Franca and Jenna conversed, they both performed Magic Mirror Divination.

Their answers were unanimous: The map was real!

"Whether it's Burman or the immortal islander, Harrison, they both admit that a portion of this map is fake. It can't help adventurers reach Resurrection Island, and



they might even encounter great danger along the way... What's fake about it?" Franca pondered, casting her gaze at the treasure map.

On the map, the location marked as Resurrection Island lay deep within the Fog Sea. The westernmost colonial island of the Intis Republic, Aroca, was still quite a distance away.

Can't distinguish the fake parts? Lumian shook his head after receiving the reply and continued reading the information about spirit world creatures in his hand.

His primary focus was to find any introduction to the Arden evil spirit that Burman had summoned from the depths of death.

Lumian flipped through the information until evening, satiating his hunger in his room. Grabbing the golden straw hat he had recently taken a liking to, he descended to the deck and entered the bar.

By that time, the Flying Bird had already departed Port Farim. As expected, Batna and his female companion sat at the bar counter, engaged in animated conversations with the surrounding passengers about Demon Warlock Burman's demise.

"We don't know which adventurer did it either. If it hadn't been officially announced, we wouldn't have known that Burman had been killed. No one in Port Farim's adventurer circle knew about it in advance!" Batna held the Lanti Proof and said excitedly, "To think that such a powerful adventurer remains hidden in Port Farim! Indeed, we can't be arrogant or conceited. Perhaps the tramp sitting by the roadside is a powerful figure!"

Spotting Lumian pushing his way through, Batna whistled.

"You're staying in first-class? Are you that rich?"

"I'm not considered rich," Lumian replied with a smile as he settled onto a barstool. "I just feel that accidents can happen at any moment at sea, and I can be killed by pirates at any moment. So, why not try to pamper yourself? What's the point of saving up money when you're dead? Since you're an adventurer, you have to lead a carefree life because who knows if there'll be a tomorrow."

"Since you're an adventurer, you have to lead a carefree life because who knows if there'll be a tomorrow..." The female adventurer beside Batna whispered Lumian's last sentence, seemingly touched.

Batna took a sip of the Lanti Proof and chuckled.

"However, the prerequisite is that you have some savings. Otherwise, if you end up having fun today, you'll go hungry tomorrow.

"Man, 600,000 verl d'or. I wonder which adventurer obtained Burman's 600,000 verl d'or. And the items on him..."

Batna revealed a yearning and envious expression.

Lumian picked up the absinthe he had just requested and took a sip, savoring the faint bitterness lingering in the fragrance.

In the following days, the Flying Bird calmly navigated towards the Feynapotter Kingdom. Philip, the security supervisor, found it surreal.

Is the bad luck over? Did the major problem disembark? Did Demon Warlock Burman's death stem from the major problem entering Port Farim?

Just as Port Santa was only a day away, Philip observed his subordinate deliver a telegram.

“Boss, it's from your comrades in Port Farim.” The subordinate handed the folded telegram to Philip.

What happened in Port Farim that requires me to be informed? Did the major problem cause trouble in Port Farim and trace it to the Flying Bird? He unfolded the telegram and scanned its contents.

“The adventurer who hunted Demon Warlock Burman is suspected to be on your ship. His name is Louis Berry.”

Chapter 533 Forgotten

“His name is Louis Berry.”

Philip's gaze froze at the last sentence.

Him?

He killed Demon Warlock?

Suddenly, Philip recalled the tragic scene of Room 5 in the first-class cabin as though it had been shelled.

Could it be that the clash between Louis Berry and Demon Warlock Burman had caused this devastation?

Rumors circulated that the Church of The Fool exchanged Burman's head for a bounty the following day, but procedures like that didn't happen instantaneously. A delay of half a day was ordinary!

Did Louis Berry truly kill Demon Warlock?

Is he truly that formidable? I couldn't discern it at all...

I understand he's a magnet for trouble, and various details attest to his strength and unpredictable nature, but the notion of him vanquishing Demon Warlock caught me by surprise. And he appeared unscathed.

He even contained the battle's impact within a single room, ensuring no one overheard anything...

Could he have also been the one who frightened off Bone Splitter Basil? No, he was near me and didn't make a move... Unless Basil knows him and comprehends his danger?

A person capable of eliminating Demon Warlock is indeed capable of deterring Bone Splitter... Even though Basil might not be weaker than Burman despite the relatively low bounty. Louis Berry, however, possesses the ability to silence Burman without a trace...

What caused the encounter with the Death Navigators?"

Philip muttered silently.

Though he couldn't fully embrace the idea that the young man who always boasted in the bar with a smile was a powerful enough adventurer to vanquish Demon Warlock, Philip hesitated to harbor too many doubts.

"Boss, should we... should we expose Louis Berry's identity as a fake?" the crew member who had delivered the telegram asked in a hushed tone.

Philip instinctively raised the paper bearing the telegram and delivered a light smack to his subordinate's head.

"Do you have a death wish? I've emphasized repeatedly, when faced with anomalies on the ship, turn a blind eye unless it's an immediate crisis, and wait until we reach our destination."

Philip pondered for a moment, concerned that his subordinate might act in error due to misunderstanding or disbelief. He clarified deliberately, "We're still at sea. Even if we report the false identities now, confirming Louis Berry's true identity and existence won't save or aid us unless someone departs from Port Santa. Yet, such inter-country cooperation requires days of prior communication. By the time assistance arrives, Louis Berry will likely have disembarked.

"Moreover, verifying his real identity takes time. To blow the whistle successfully, we'd be risking Louis Berry noticing and retaliating. Is it worth it?"

"I prefer to preserve the peace of these past few days."

The crew member pondered for a moment and ultimately concurred with the boss's decision.

Philip breathed a sigh of relief, tearing up the telegram and casually tossing it into the trash can.

"Inform the recipients and translators of the telegram to keep this information under wraps!" Philip instructed before leaving the room and descending the stairs to the deck.

Just as he was contemplating the romantic plans for the evening with his newfound lover, his thoughts came to a sudden halt when he spotted Louis Berry, the central figure of the telegram. There he stood by the shipboard, his gaze fixed on the gently undulating blue sea, idly twirling a golden straw hat in one hand while holding a glass of light golden champagne in the other.

As if sensing Philip's gaze, Lumian turned around, locking eyes with him.

A subtle smile played on Louis Berry's lips as he raised the champagne glass in his right hand, as though toasting him, before taking a leisurely sip.

Philip's body tensed, determined to conceal any change in expression.

Is Louis Berry merely extending a greeting, or does he possess knowledge about the telegram and my decision?

Waa! Waa! Waa!

White-headed seabirds soared gracefully under the pristine, blue sky, their cries distinct from those in Port Gati and Port Farim.

At times, they glided low, skimming past wooden fishing boats adorned with billowing white sails.

Fishing, a vital industry in Port Santa, instilled both fear and reverence for the sea in every fisherman's veins.

While they could have children who strayed from the beliefs of the Earth Mother, they couldn't bear descendants who dared to blaspheme the sacred sea prayer ritual.

Lumian, taking in the scenery different from the Intis port and Port Santa's gradually rising mountain range in the distance, silently offered praise to The Fool.

The journey from Port Farim to Port Santa unfolded surprisingly uneventfully —no storms, no pirates, and no encounters with Beyonder incidents.

This respite allowed him a few days of tranquility. Lumian finished two foundational Highlander textbooks and perused information on spirit world creatures.

He failed to find a description of Arden, the evil spirit from the depths of death. Whether Madam Magician omitted the information or remained unaware of it remained uncertain.

“We'll be entering the port in half an hour.” Lumian, who had been taking respite for the past few days, cracked his neck from the living room window of Cabin 5 in first class.

Here lay potential clues about the key members of April Fool's, Bard, and Ultraman!

Of course, it could also be a trap.

Lumian's body trembled slightly, filled with anticipation.

Finally, the Flying Bird smoothly docked at Port Santa.

Lumian, hand in hand with Ludwig and trailed by Lugano carrying their luggage, made their way towards the gangway. On the deck, they encountered Batna Comté and his companion Nolfi, already awaiting their turn.

Perhaps influenced by Lumian's words about seizing the moment as an adventurer, Nolfi, who had initially insisted on separate cabins, had moved in with Batna two days ago.

Batna's face radiated a flush of confidence as he waved and exclaimed, “Louis, you don't strike me as much of an adventurer. What adventurer brings their child out to sea?”

“Isn't it a common task for adventurers to protect their employers' children?” Lumian retorted with a smile.

In a sense, the Church of the God of Knowledge and Wisdom was indeed his employer.

Batna, eyeing Ludwig, dressed in a young gentleman's attire and carrying a distinctive red school bag, found Lumian's explanation reasonable.

Yet, he couldn't help but wonder, how could the child's parents be so nonchalant about entrusting their son to an unfamiliar adventurer?

"At the same time, he's my godson," Lumian added.

Understanding dawned on Batna as he gestured towards the harbor below.

"Where do you plan to stay? Shall we attend the sea prayer ritual together?"

"I'm not sure yet. If the gods will it, our paths may cross again." Lumian's demeanor shifted upon arriving at Port Santa, his nerves tightening. Casual disclosure of his whereabouts was no longer in his plans.

Batna, accustomed to Lumian's occasional seer-like words, detected nothing unusual. He sighed and said, "I hope our paths cross once more."

With a casual wave, Batna led Nolfi toward the ramp.

Lumian smiled and offered a parting reminder, "Do you know Highlander?"

"A bit," Batna replied, gesturing toward Nolfi, whose adorable features, black hair, and brown eyes spoke of her mixed Feynapotter and Intis heritage. "Her mother is a native of Port Santa. She carries blood from both Feynapotter and Intis."

Port Santa local... That explains your desire to experience the sea prayer ritual after learning about it. Lumian held his silence, watching as Batna and Nolfi descended the gangway with their suitcases.

"Not only is Louis generous and warm, but he also has a knack for humor. He appears quite professional," Batna commented before leaving the port district. Glancing back at the Flying Bird, he said to Nolfi, "He didn't disclose their lodging just now. Clearly, he's unwilling to unveil his employer's circumstances. He likely came to Port Santa to escort that child home."

Nolfi nodded gently.

"You shouldn't have asked. An adventurer's companions are only in the present. We might not cross paths again in the future."

"Haha, you've been influenced by Louis's life philosophy." Batna noticed a paperboy approaching and suggested to Nolfi, "Grab a few newspapers related to maritime rumors. We've been at sea for days, and we're out of the loop."

Nolfi shared the same idea, using degan copper coins she had exchanged prior for two newspapers.

Standing on the street, she unfolded the coastal port favorite, Five Seas News, and began reading its contents.

Batna, unfamiliar with Highlander, patiently waited for Nolfi to digest the news and relay the information to him.

Suddenly, Nolfi's eyes narrowed, and her grip on the newspaper tightened.

“What's wrong?” Batna asked curiously.

Nolfi hesitated before sharing, “There's a rumor in Port Farim that the adventurer who hunted the Demon Warlock is named...”

“What's his name?” Batna pressed.

Nolfi fell silent for a few seconds before saying, “His—his name is Louis Berry.”

Louis, Louis Berry? Batna was taken aback.

Lumian, Ludwig, and Lugano patiently waited for most passengers to disembark before making their exit.

As Lumian stepped off the gangway, his attention was drawn to a woman in a black nun's attire and matching hat. Carrying a brown suitcase, she turned into a fork in the road.

C-could it be the weeping woman I glimpsed through the Mystery Prying Glasses? Lumian pondered, averting his gaze thoughtfully.

As he moved forward, his mind raced with plans for the immediate future.

Firstly, he needed to find an inn in the harbor district. Secondly, he had to compose a letter to Madam Magician, notifying her of his arrival in Port Santa. The situation involved Celestial Worthy and potentially played into Loki's schemes. Carelessness was not an option.

Write a letter to Madam Magician...

Write a letter!

Lumian's pupils dilated as he sought to discern if the world ahead was real.

Throughout his days aboard the ship, he kept forgetting to write to Madam Magician!

He had intended to consult his Major Arcana card holder, questioning the significance of the frequent occurrences related to the Flying Bird's calamities.

Yet, he had completely forgotten about it!

Chapter 534 Over the Mountain

It was today, amidst Lumian's contemplation of his next moves, that he seemed to snap out of a dream-like trance. The recollection of his intention to write a letter to Madam Magician, now forgotten, hit him like a bullet.

The realization was more unsettling than a battlefield injury, sending shivers down his spine, and causing his hair to stand on end.

Had this situation escalated, he might have perished without even realizing it!

It feels like déjà vu... That's right! In Dardel, Lugano and I had unintentionally overlooked the option of escaping. We were searching for a pretext to enter the town and investigate Derangement. As Lumian's thoughts raced, a sudden revelation struck him.

The woman he had seen weeping on the Flying Bird was the source of Derangement—a humanoid Sealed Artifact that had escaped its restraints!

After leaving Dardel, she had reached Port Gati and boarded the Flying Bird.

Could she be instinctively influencing the minds of those around her, erasing thoughts that might pose a threat? But that would require her to monitor everyone's psychological activities at just the right time.

Or, as Anthony had speculated, did she naturally implant mental cues, causing observers to overlook her existence? Even if glimpsed, the memory of her would fade later. Simultaneously, any communication with High-

Sequence Beyonder powers would be 'actively' forgotten or abandoned. This classification wasn't determined by her but by the individual's self-

awareness. If they believed the person to be a High-Sequence Beyonder, then so they were...

Once she disembarked and ceased planting those natural and persistent cues, the overlooked issues could be recalled through other connections.

Fortunately, the Sealed Artifact remained dormant on the Flying Bird. Otherwise, I might have lost control and transformed into a monster...

Apart from me and Ludwig, she also played a part in scaring off Bone Splitter Basil? Heh heh, it's quite funny from the perspective of the notorious pirate. Choosing an ordinary merchant ship for plunder, Basil found himself faced with three escalating waves of malice upon surfacing—a hornet's nest stirred into action. In that scenario, he had no other choice but to escape.

Were the strange Death Navigator fish also drawn by her presence?

Initially, Lumian felt lingering fear, but soon a sense of joy washed over him.

This revelation confirmed that his contribution to the calamities on the Flying Bird was minimal, just as Aurore had suggested. Throughout the journey, only the Demon Warlock incident could be attributed to him.

Lumian could accept such frequency.

With determination, Lumian retrieved a post-it note and fountain pen, hastily scribbling a memo:

“Find a nearby motel and write to Madam Magician. Focus on the death mark and the humanoid Sealed Artifact.”

After folding the note and stowing it in his pocket, Lumian utilized Lugano's interactions with the dock's inhabitants to discreetly inquire about nearby motels. Lowering his voice, he addressed his left chest.

“Temiboros, you actually failed to notice such a dangerous Sealed Artifact nearby.”

Temiboros's majestic voice resonated. “Why should I warn you?”

Lumian criticized, Oh, you've learned the art of sophistry... He turned to Ludwig, who was nibbling on a long piece of bread.

I wonder if this kid's lack of awareness stems from the Church of Knowledge's seal or a belief that there was no danger since the woman hadn't gone mad. I don't have to dwell on it for now...

Averting his gaze, he waited for Lugano to gather directions before leading Ludwig toward the exit of the port district.

Port Santa stood divided, its territories sliced into thirds. One-third bustled with the comings and goings of fishermen, surrounded by a vast open space. Nearby, three ice mills hummed with activity. The remaining two-thirds, a realm reserved for merchant ships, witnessed a constant influx of passengers. Mechanical cranes labored tirelessly, lifting smelted steel, forged swords, and woven wool into the undercabin.

Amidst the pungent scent of fish, Lumian maintained an outward calm. Sometimes, his gaze wandered to the distant mountain range; other times, he scrutinized the billowing black smoke drifting from the southeast, carried downwind by the breeze.

Tasking Lugano and Ludwig with selecting two candidates each, Lumian delegated the decision-making. Ultimately, they settled at an unassuming motel named Solow.

In Highlander, "Solow" translated to "sun."

Although the Feynapotter Kingdom didn't subscribe to the Eternal Blazing Sun faith, instead venerating Earth Mother, the prevalence of sunlight in their environment resulted in the frequent use of words like "Solow" and "Soros" (sunlight) in various place names.

Lumian removed his golden straw hat, shielding him from the October sun, and secured a suite from the motel's owner—a gray-haired, tall figure with prominent cheekbones and a thick beard. The cost: 1.5 gold risot per day, or 3 verl d'or.

Official currencies in Feynapotter included risot, setta, and degan. Legend had it that before the kingdom's split from the south-central regions, the Church of Earth Mother and the Church of the God of Knowledge and Wisdom jointly governed the land. Unlike the Loen Kingdom's unconventional gold pound system, Feynapotter's currency was designed by scholars from the Church of Knowledge. One risot equaled 10 settas, and one setta equaled 10 degans, denominated as five degans, whole degan, half degan, and a quarter degan. Currently, one risot was roughly 2 verl d'or, making 12 risot equivalent to approximately 1 gold pound.

Having exchanged for 1,000 risot, Lumian held a variety of settas and degans in his possession.

After settling the bill and ascending to his quarters, Lumian's attention was drawn to a young girl with long brown hair and freckles entering the establishment. She greeted the proprietor using the Highlander term for "grandfather."

The owner, his cheekbones tinged by the sun, warmly embraced the girl, their right cheeks meeting as he responded with a smile and a single word

unfamiliar to Lumian. Puzzled, he turned to Lugano, seeking an explanation with his eyes.

"Ol' Delva said, 'It's so good to see you, my little cabbage.'"

"Little cabbage..." Lumian echoed, taken aback by the term.

Lugano, with his pronounced eyebrows, large eyes, and sharp features, inquired with confusion, "Don't you know that there are many descendants of Dariège here?"



Positioned on the second-floor staircase, he gestured towards the wall outside.

“The distant mountain range is the Pyraez mountain range. You Dariège folks prefer calling it the Dariège mountain range.”

At that moment, Lumian grasped the entirety of the situation.

“Is this south of the Dariège mountain range?”

“Southwest. The Dariège mountain range is a few hours away by train. In between, you'll find vast plains, pastures, and numerous towns and villages,” Lugano clarified as he ascended the stairs. “As you might know, every autumn, shepherds from Dariège and nearby areas migrate to the southern plains for grazing. Some settle down, while others seek opportunities in the larger surrounding cities, including Port Santa.

“If you head northeast, Highlander might not be necessary. Many people there are familiar with Intisian. I have a cousin who was a widow initially. Later, she met a local while shepherding and married him. She gave up grazing and helped the herdsmen develop businesses related to sheep, cheese, wool, and more. Eventually, they saved enough to start a vineyard. Her husband values her opinions. This might be an example of Feynapotter men. Unfortunately, I'm not a woman; otherwise, I might have converted to Earth Mother!”

Listening to Lugano's insights, Lumian recalled a piece of information Aurore had once shared.

The Dariège mountain range acted as a barrier against the cold winds heading south.

Consequently, the Gaia Province, situated south of the Dariège mountain range, enjoyed abundant sunlight and warm weather. Even in winter, the plains and pastures thrived with lush grass suitable for grazing. Lumian sensed that this knowledge had become “dynamic,” forming a network that allowed him to comprehend the geographical and weather characteristics of Port Santa and its northeastern region.

Abruptly, another thought crossed his mind.

Could it be that most of the Beyonders captured by shepherds like Pierre, who believed in Inevitability, hailed from this area?

Given the presence of a thriving port and a mountain range rich in mineral deposits, it makes sense that there would be more Beyonders here...

If that were the case, perhaps my Hunter, Provoker, and even Pyromaniac Beyonders characteristics might have originated from this region.

I'm here now...

Why do I smell the scent of inevitability...

Lumian responded casually to Lugano's information, “How many children did your cousin have?”

“Three,” Lugano replied.

“If she hadn't produced children, would her husband have been so obedient?”

Lumian, aware of the beliefs of Earth Mother's faith, heard about these matters with the shepherds who frequented the pastures.

They held fertility and reproduction in high regard.

“Definitely not,” Lugano affirmed without hesitation.

As the conversation unfolded, the trio ascended to the fifth floor, entering a suite at the corridor's end.

Lumian strolled to the balcony, casting his gaze towards the rugged mountain range in the distance.

There lay a highlander pasture and Cordu.

After nearly fifteen minutes of silent contemplation, Lumian returned to his room and began composing letters to Madam Magician and Franca.

His intention was to inform Franca of the humanoid Sealed Artifact, urging her to alert the official Beyonders of the Feynapotter Kingdom through 007. A potentially hazardous pathogen capable of madness at any moment was not fit for roaming freely outside.

“Wow! See? What did I say? Lumian will definitely encounter the source of Derangement again!” exclaimed Franca as she was about to depart with Jenna when she received the letter.

They were heading to Trier's catacombs.

In the preceding days, Jenna harbored a desire to revisit Krismona Night Pillar, hoping to uncover something valuable. However, she hesitated to approach recklessly, fearing it might attract the suspicion of the Demoness Sect. Residing with Franca offered no guarantee of safety from their watchful eyes.

Thanks to Anthony's introduction, she finally secured a mission at a mysticism gathering, providing a valid pretext.

Her task involved venturing to a specific family's tomb on the catacombs' third level, retrieving an antique tearcatcher for her employer.

## Chapter 535 Reply

Jenna completed reading Lumian's letter and lapsed into silence for a few moments before remarking,

“The origin of the Derangement is genuinely formidable... Lumian unknowingly endured its effects for nearly half a month.”

Luckily, the woman's ailment didn't erupt. Otherwise, everyone on the ship would have descended into madness.

Jenna contemplated for a moment, convinced that if she were in Lumian's position, the outcome would be the same; nothing would alter.

“Hence, Sealed Artifacts above Level 2 wield immense power, but they're not practical for most situations. Their mere existence can bring catastrophe to the surrounding humans,” Franca seized the chance to enlighten her companion, who had only been a Beyonder for half a year.

She conveyed this information to Madam Judgment, not 007. This decision arose from the unpredictability of the emergency communication methods. What if 007 happened to be occupied and didn't go to that location? Regular communication had to wait until after 10 p.m.

Considering the imminent threat of Derangement, Franca didn't want to waste valuable time. With Madam Judgment's real-world identity, contacting the official Beyonders of the Feynapotter Kingdom was assured—no worries about not locating her. Come nightfall, she would notify 007, ensuring the message reached the right people.

With this matter settled, Franca and Jenna reached the catacombs in a rented carriage.

Having followed Lumian to the third level, they had drawn valuable information from him. The place was now familiar to them. Soon, they entered a small square illuminated by burning white candles and adorned with two sacrificial pillars.

Jenna reflected for a moment and, to Franca's confusion, approached the sacrificial pillar representing the Eternal Blazing Sun. She outstretched her arms and reverently declared, “Praise the Sun!”

She was seeking protection.

Franca couldn't help but twitch her lips as she observed the scene. Amused, she remarked,

“Why are you becoming more and more like Ciel—uh, Lumian?”

“Dammit! How do I resemble him?” Jenna retorted instinctively.

“In terms of faith flexibility,” Franca pointed out with a smile. “Like me, I only praise Mr. Fool. I didn't say anything like 'By Steam.’”

Jenna pondered for a moment and admitted, “Because Lumian and I once truly believed in the Eternal Blazing Sun...”

Suddenly, she halted, her lips moving as she cursed herself.

Am I admitting that I do resemble Lumian?

Franca had only been teasing. After praising The Fool, she left the sacrificial square with Jenna and headed towards the entrance of the fourth level, where the Krismona Night Pillar stood.

Thanks to Lumian's information, they navigated past the skeletal “blockage” on the road. In the dim environment, they moved cautiously, guided by the faint candlelight.

As Franca walked, an idea crossed her mind.

“Do you think we have to hold the lit white candles in our hands? Can we hold them above our heads or make a lantern and place them inside? Will this also protect us?”

Accustomed to Franca's occasional peculiar thoughts, Jenna casually replied, “You can give it a try.”

After considering the potential consequences of a failed experiment, Franca chuckled dryly.

“Forget it, forget it. No need to be curious about such things.”

She looked at Jenna beside her and changed the subject.

“Why are you dressed like this?”

Jenna, now in a black dress and a dark bonnet, exuded a beauty that carried a touch of maturity beyond her years.

Jenna instinctively scanned the surroundings for any dim yellow candles before whispering,

“I'm playing the part of a Witch to add a mysterious touch.”

Clad in a black robe with a hood, she might resemble the witches known to humans, but it could easily raise suspicion from the Demoness Sect, so Jenna found a compromise.

Franca quickly grasped the situation and nodded in approval. “You've put in the effort.”

Seizing the moment, Jenna inquired, “What about you? Since Gardner's demise, have you not found an opportunity to digest Pleasure with someone?”

Franca, usually thick-skinned, felt a bit embarrassed by Jenna's words. She coughed twice and replied, “It's not difficult to find someone if I wanted. If it doesn't work out, I'll turn down Browns at an opportune moment and see if she takes offense. Heh heh, if she truly experiences pleasure, she might invite me to join her...”

Franca suddenly shut her mouth, wishing she could raise her right hand and slap herself.

Why did I disclose all this to Jenna?

What a disgrace!

Clearing her throat, Franca said, “Besides, this presents an opportunity.”

“Opportunity?” Jenna was puzzled.

Franca nodded solemnly.

“Relying solely on the matters in bed and physical pleasure can indeed slowly digest the potion. It also aligns with the negative characteristics of a Demoness. However, I keep feeling that the meaning of Pleasure shouldn't be limited to this. Taking advantage of the absence of a target for physical pleasure, I want to calm down and slowly experience and explore other possibilities.

“For instance, captivating a man's heart. Bringing joy merely by being around me. Providing pleasure through interaction, yet beyond his reach. Each encounter

becomes a torment, a glimpse into the catastrophe and affliction a Demoness brings...

“Dammit, I despise such women the most!”

Franca's frustration blazed as she spoke.

Jenna was taken aback, her lips pursed, her body trembling slightly as she struggled to contain her laughter.

“Something along those lines. At any rate, that's the gist,” Franca abruptly concluded the conversation.

In the dim candlelight, Franca passed by a newly constructed tomb beside an ancient one. A sudden frown creased her forehead, questioning if she had missed an opportunity.

If I had sighed and hinted at the stagnation of my digestion due to the absence of a pleasure partner, would Jenna offer sympathy and assistance?

Argh, my stubbornness has cost me!

But perhaps she'd suggest Lumian...

Franca's thoughts raced, but she remained vigilant, especially when she noticed the jumbled bones strewn along the roadside.

Finally, she and Jenna reached the Krismona Night Pillar, a black marble structure supporting the cave's ceiling.

No etchings or signs of erosion adorned its surface.

Franca studied it for a moment and remarked, “It's reminiscent of the one in Fourth Epoch Trier, albeit smaller. More like a tip.”

Turning to Jenna, she inquired, “Do you sense anything peculiar?”

Furrowing her brow, Jenna shook her head slowly.

“No.”

Feynapotter Kingdom, Gaia Province, Port Santa, Solow Motel.

Lumian swiftly received a response from Madam Magician:

“Have you faced the dread of a Grade 1 Sealed Artifact?”

“Repeating it won't imprint as deeply as experiencing it firsthand.

“This likely is the power of a High-Sequence Beyonder in the Spectator pathway, constantly shaping the thoughts and perceptions of those around. Remember: 'Beware of the Spectator'...

“The Sealed Artifact has other powers. I'm uncertain if it belongs to the evil gods outside. For now, you needn't pursue or capture it. We'll liaise with the Earth Mother Church through Mr. Moon.”

Reading this, Lumian muttered to himself, I'd rather not get involved, but it's not my call. Sometimes, my nature thrusts me into things I'd rather avoid.

It was just like him and the Sealed Artifact being on the same voyage, headed for the same destination.

Simultaneously, Lumian gleaned a vital detail from Madam Magician's arrangements.

Mr. Moon of the Tarot Club had close ties with the Earth Mother Church.

After a moment's reflection, Lumian resumed reading the letter.

“We're also probing Resurrection Island's existence. Mr. Hanged Man and Madam Hermit are leading the investigation. They have theories but can't confirm yet. If they need your aid, they'll inform you and seek your consent. However, don't search for Resurrection Island now. It's very dangerous. Remember, very dangerous...

“The death mark is a lingering essence of death. Ordinary humans leave one mark; certain Sequences of certain pathways can leave many. Such marks erode and merge with death, lasting longer for those higher in status or with special abilities. As for ordinary Low-Sequence Beyonders, the corresponding death mark won't exist for anything beyond a few years.

“Setting up a ritual to summon the death mark is nearly impossible. Even a Sequence 0 true god wouldn't dare approach the essence of death, let alone with a ritual.

“I suspect something amiss with the Arden evil spirit Burman summoned. The decline in Burman's mental state may have started with that spirit, not his encounter with Harrison of Resurrection Island.

“Perhaps, the Arden evil spirit isn't dead.”

The Arden evil spirit, leaving behind blood traces and easily dispatched by Burman, isn't dead? What an absurd storyline... Even Madam Magician remains clueless about the nature of this creature. Recollecting Burman's encounter, Lumian couldn't detect anything abnormal.

This behavior seemed like that of a half-mad individual, forcibly transitioning between pathways.

In her closing remarks, Madam Magician cautioned: “Exercise caution during your investigations in Port Santa. Should you encounter any difficulties, don't hesitate to seek aid from the Knight of Swords.”

There's no need for that for now... Lumian replied inwardly.

This stemmed from a lack of leads or information. Even if he were to correspond with the Knight of Swords, Lumian wouldn't know what to inquire about or what kind of assistance to request.

Chapter 536 One in the Light and One in the Dark

Lumian's immediate priority upon reaching Port Santa was to delve into the events of the previous sea prayer ritual, particularly focusing on the individuals involved in the accident. This investigation would be crucial in uncovering the true identities of the key members of April Fool's.

However, this phase of his pursuit carried inherent risks of deception and potential traps.

Understanding the intricacies of last year's prank was paramount before engaging the Minor Arcana—Knight of Swords—in any assistance. Lumian didn't find it plausible to enlist aid on such matters.

The sealed knowledge surrounding the events in Port Santa made it apparent that unless the Knight of Swords happened to be present, he wouldn't yield much help.

Initially, Lumian aimed to gather information about the sea prayer ritual and the previous year's incident, but such details seemed exclusive to this location. Peripheral members of April Fool's, involved in minor roles, offered limited perspectives, offering mere snippets of the puzzle.

With a flick of his wrist, Lumian transformed Madam Magician's reply into a blazing fireball.

Exiting the master bedroom of the suite, he addressed Lugano, who waited in the living room, "Let's get ourselves a local identity."

"You've already used Louis Berry's identity to check into the motel," Lugano reminded Lumian after some thought.

Did this mean it's time to depart?

Wouldn't that be a waste of an entire week's rent?

Lugano's heart ached at the thought of the 10.5 gold risot.

Spending money wasn't an issue; just don't waste it!

As a bounty hunter who had lived a tough life for many years, he was quite sensitive to money. Otherwise, he wouldn't have been so thick-skinned as to ask Lumian for a "job."

"Any issues?" Lumian inquired with a smile.

In the October warmth of Port Santa, Lumian sported a straightforward ensemble—light linen shirt, brown pants, a golden straw hat cradled in his grasp.

For a moment, Lugano didn't know if he should voice his primary concern—the matter of money. Finally, he decided to broach the subject.

"Boss, I grabbed a few newspapers from the street. Seems there are rumors in Port Farim about you taking down the Demon Warlock."

Upon reading this news, Lugano rubbed his eyes several times, wondering if he had read wrongly.

When had his boss eradicated the Demon Warlock?

Why don't I know?

Only the memory of the seemingly bombarded master bedroom stirred skepticism.

"It was me," Lumian replied with a slight nod.

“...” Lugano momentarily lost the ability to organize his words.

After a brief pause, he suppressed his curiosity and feigned understanding.

“You've bagged a bounty of 600,000 verl d'or and some spoils of war. No wonder you've been throwing money around lately...”

The rent of 20 to 30 verl d'or didn't seem extravagant anymore.

“All donated,” Lumian disclosed matter-of-factly.

“Why?” Lugano blurted out.

Lumian glanced at him.

Lugano immediately shut his mouth and smiled sheepishly.

“We need to change our location. Louis Berry's fame in the Fog Sea makes him an easy target.”

In that gaze, Lumian conveyed an unspoken message:

Who's in charge here? You or me?

Did I need your approval to donate the bounty?

With a subtle smile, Lumian posed the question, “Who said we were relocating?”

Lugano, caught off guard, stammered, “Not relocating...”

Lumian's smile held a cryptic meaning as he shared, “Why else do you think I didn't ask the clergyman from the Church of The Fool, who helped collect the bounty, to conceal my identity?”

Louis Berry, the high-profile adventurer, served as a beacon, attracting attention and revealing the landscape of potential threats.

Lumian needed an inconspicuous local guise to operate discreetly in the shadows.

Lugano, grappling with the complexity of his employer's motives, confessed, “I-I thought you just wanted to be as famous as Gehrman Sparrow in the Five Seas.” He sensed there was more beneath the surface.

Lumian chuckled.

“Who among our generation wouldn't want to match Gehrman Sparrow's fame in the Five Seas?”

The desire for recognition satisfied his vanity, providing a plausible reason for not letting Theis, the Church of The Fool's bishop, conceal his identity completely.

A superficial motive—one genuine enough to make people believe—could effectively veil hidden intentions.

“Uh...” Lugano, feeling like he couldn't decipher Lumian's true colors or grasp his ultimate goal, sighed inwardly.



Sigh, I'm just a Planter, a Doctor, and a seasoned bounty hunter. My intelligence can only be considered ordinary...

Lumian cast a glance at Ludwig, munching on a potato omelet, and declared, "Let's go."

He nudged the coat rack into a blind spot, hanging the golden straw hat, creating the illusion of an inconspicuous figure if one looked from the opposite building.

Exiting the Solow Motel, Lumian strolled along the grayish-white stone street toward the lively bars near the harbor. Lugano followed, holding Ludwig's hand.

The ancient street boasted mottled houses with white walls and red tiles. Near entrances like Cordu, elderly women chatted in the sun, but they didn't lend a hand in catching lice.

Passersby tread softly, lowering their voices to maintain the tranquility of the scene.

In a casual exchange with Francesco, the bartender at the Flying Bird's basement bar, Lumian learned of a cultural phenomenon in Feynapotter, shaped by the Earth Mother's faith and the significance accorded to family traditions: "Matriarchal culture."

Within each family, the most venerable grandmother, a prolific progenitor, commanded unparalleled respect. As the unquestionable "parent," they wielded a certain degree of control over every family member. Even outside the confines of their homes, this reverence persisted, for these grandmothers represented the familial symbol, embodying the Earth Mother.

The combination of religious beliefs and societal norms secured a unique status for these elderly grandmothers.

Observing this dynamic, Lumian found himself contemplating a question.

In Riston Province, a married woman, functioning as a de facto parent, held the right to be addressed as "Madame" and have her name prefixed with "Na." Could this tradition be an influence from Feynapotter's matriarchal culture just a mountain away?

Nomadic herdsman and traders, traversing vast distances, inevitably brought back tales of their experiences. Ancient practices from the Dariège mountain range and its surroundings, spanning over a millennium, undoubtedly left an indelible mark.

Navigating the ancient yet serene streets under the brilliant sunlight, Lumian felt a sense of displacement. It was as if he had returned to Cordu during the bustling season when adults toiled in the fields, tended to sheep in the mountains, or embarked on hunting expeditions, leaving only an old woman and young children behind.

Trier, third level of the catacombs.

Jenna closed her eyes and extended her senses, but the black Krismona Night Pillar remained silent, devoid of any sighs or motion.

Assessing the Mirror Substitutions, she cautiously approached the enigmatic weather-free pillar, placing her palm against it.

The black pillar that supported the cave's ceiling, though cold and metallic, retained the texture of rock.

Yet, Jenna's probing mind received nothing beyond this information.

“It still doesn't work,” she communicated to Franca, shaking her head.

In her reflections, Jenna recalled the two instances and sought their commonality when she had heard Krismona's voice—during her advancement and within a special mirror world in Fourth Epoch Trier.

Both times, danger and intense emotions had been common denominators.

Jenna whispered, “The danger during my Witch advancement was suppressed by the sacrificial square. Is the key intense emotions?” Jenna pondered aloud, delving into memories of painful events that had stirred her emotions,

including her mother's death, separation from her brother, and other poignant experiences of suffering.

Despite the visible fluctuations in her emotions, the Krismona Night Pillar remained silent, the illusory sigh elusive.

Franca, after a moment's contemplation, suggested, “Must there be a special event to trigger it?”

“Perhaps,” Jenna replied, biting her lip. “Why don't we try the fourth level? Lumian mentioned the shadow suspected to have formed after the death of the Demoneess pathway's Angel. That should be Krismona.”

Franca's heart stirred, and she affirmed, “That's right. Moreover, the shadow is controlled by the seal and doesn't have the ability to attack humans. Yes, the prerequisite is that we strictly adhere to the series of rules in the catacombs.”

After a brief discussion, the two of them circled around the Krismona Night Pillar, replaced candles, and proceeded to descend the ancient, mottled stone steps. Under the watchful gaze of realistic dark-gray reliefs depicting human heads on both sides of the rock walls, they descended step by step.

Breaking the suffocating silence, Franca spoke up, “This place is perfect for ghost stories. The atmosphere is amazing.”

Jenna glanced at her, teasing, “Are you afraid?”

“How is that possible?” Franca retorted stubbornly.

Jenna chuckled.

“If you weren't afraid, you'd just tell ghost stories to scare me. Now, you're just sighing. It means you mainly want to rely on your voice to boost your courage.”

It's a waste of your talent not to choose the Spectator pathway... Do theater actors have to learn to read people? Franca was about to argue when they reached the last ancient stone step.

Simultaneously, a sense of oppression enveloped them.

In the next moment, a yellowish candle flame flickered in their eyes.

The candle flame didn't belong to them. It emerged from the distant fourth level of the catacombs.

## Chapter 537 Charm

Franca and Jenna's initial reaction was to steer clear of the newcomer. In this subterranean maze filled with corpses, they couldn't afford to be complacent with the living.

Yet, their circumstances didn't permit avoidance. They had to wield a glowing white candle, a feeble defense against the encroaching darkness of the catacombs. The candle's flame, though, made them conspicuous, a visible beacon in the shadows. True concealment required them to find solace behind the sealed doors of an ancient tomb.

The option of becoming invisible or lurking in the shadows was risky—they weren't certain if it meant snuffing out the candle flame.

After a silent exchange of glances, Franca and Jenna chose to take a circuitous route, maintaining a safe distance from the distant candlelight.

In the oppressive stillness that felt like time itself had halted, the two Demonesses cautiously progressed westward, guided by road signs and the black lines on the cave ceiling.

As they approached a point parallel to the candle flame, Franca turned her head to peer down the corridor between the ancient tombs.

Thanks to her exceptional night vision, she identified the person clutching the burning candle.

A man in a black robe—deep black and light hues intermingled in his hair, a gentle profile, pale-white skin, and dark brown eyes, distinct from the Intisians.

Feynapotterian? Strikingly similar, yet subtly different. Why do I sense familiarity? When have I encountered this person before? Did he leave an impression in the memory recesses of the original owner of my body? Franca felt an inexplicable urge to approach and strike up a conversation.

She took a deep breath and suppressed it.

In the hushed darkness of the catacombs, approaching strangers recklessly could easily spark unnecessary conflict.

Franca had dedicated considerable time to delve into the circumstances surrounding the original body's demise and the person's life experiences. She sought to ensure there were no lingering issues that she needed to be wary about acquaintances from the past.

The man in the black robe, having observed the two Demonesses and noting their lack of intent to draw near, continued on his path, eventually disappearing behind an ancient tomb.

“He doesn't look like a college student.” Jenna averted her gaze and eliminated an option.

If the individual hadn't ventured into the fourth level of the catacombs merely driven by curiosity and excitement, it hints at a clear motive. Is he on a commissioned search for antiques, paying respects to an ancestor buried on this level, or a Beyonder delving into the mysticism and seal composition of the catacombs? Perhaps, like Jenna and myself, he pursues the revelations from the three night pillars. Franca's mind raced through various possibilities.

On the fourth level of the catacombs, two more night pillars awaited: Marianne's Night Pillar and Lius's Night Pillar.

The former, the pope of the Evernight Goddess Church in the Fourth Epoch, and the latter, the Blessed of the ancient Death. Both had met their demise during the War of the Four Emperors inside Fourth Epoch Trier.

Having shared her analysis with Jenna, Franca gestured with her right hand, the one without a candle, and reassured, “Don't worry about his motives. It won't affect our search for Krismona's shadow.”

I didn't want to bother either. You were the one considering all the possibilities... I sensed that impulse in your heart. Did you truly want to investigate that person just now? Jenna, attuned to Franca's nuances, grasped her companion's thoughts but chose to chuckle, keeping the revelation to herself.

At times, Franca could be quite prideful!

After walking along the path for nearly fifteen minutes, they reached a natural cave named Crazy Mushroom Cave.

The entrance was sealed by a dense cluster of pale-white mushrooms tinged with black.

“Why are there so many mushrooms?” Franca observed them with curiosity.

Before Jenna could respond, she continued, “Alright, alright, alright. I get it. Now's not the time for exploration and adventure.”

“Dammit, I didn't stop you. Maybe Krismona's shadow is in the mushroom cave.” Jenna, feeling stifled since entering the fourth level of the catacombs, vented her discomfort with coarse language, as if confined in a space that oppressed her.

Franca was on the verge of responding when her attention fixated on a figure standing at the corner ahead.

Clad in a simple and unadorned white robe, the figure boasted smooth black hair, exquisite facial features, and a holy aura. Her beauty transcended the surroundings of darkness, silence, and filth, as if she had emerged from the depths of human imagination,

Krismona! The name resonated simultaneously in the minds of Franca and Jenna.

They had indeed stumbled upon a shadow suspected to be a High-Sequence Beyonder—the Demoness, Krismona!

Regaining her composure, Jenna locked eyes with the figure and attempted to speak in ancient Hermes, “Hello.”

The woman's beauty was otherworldly, captivating everyone's attention. A faint smile graced the corners of her mouth.

Her allure was fully unleashed.

Entranced by that smile, Jenna and Franca found themselves lost, their minds fixated on a singular thought: Approach her, approach her...

Like moths drawn to a flame, fully aware of the dangers that lay in her beauty, yet compelled to draw near.

One step, two steps, three steps... The two Demonesses, eyes filled with fascination, advanced toward the woman in the simple white robe.

As they walked on, Jenna couldn't help but instinctively sigh and feel a sense of pity.

Why did she sigh when she has such a beautiful smile?

Had she encountered something sorrowful?

Sigh...

Jenna snapped out of her daze, realizing that the woman in the white robe might not be the same as Krismona, who had sighed and protected them. At the very least, she wasn't entirely the same!

Her vision cleared instantly, revealing the beautiful figure's soft black hair billowing. Each strand had become unusually thick, and the top had split open, resembling a snake opening its mouth.

The pitch-black snake's mouth faced Jenna and Franca, seemingly poised for their approach.

Jenna's heart skipped a beat. She swiftly grabbed Franca and whispered, "Something's amiss!"

Franca, initially taken aback, struggled for a few seconds before breaking free from her enchantment.

Coming to a sudden halt, they watched as the holy figure in the white robe stared blankly for a moment before bifurcating into a fork and vanishing into the darkness.

Phew... Franca exhaled, her fear lingering as she remarked, "Why isn't there a rule in the catacombs guidelines that prohibits communication with those who don't hold candles?"

"Perhaps ordinary humans, if they enter the fourth level, will be affected by the environment, unable to suppress their fear and leaving quickly without encountering these shadows," Jenna offered an explanation.

Franca glanced at her with frustration and said, "You managed to break free from the female ghost's charm before I did."

Jenna recounted the thoughts that had recently crossed her mind.

"But I also heard Krismona's sigh and words in Fourth Epoch Trier..." Franca raised her right hand and touched her face. "Am I really more easily enamored with beauty?"

At this point, a sudden puzzlement overcame her.

"Actually, I've always found it strange that Krismona Night Pillar stands in the catacombs.

"As for the other two night pillars, one belongs to the Church of Evernight's former pope, Marianne, and the other is named after the ancient Death's Blessed, Lius. The latter is the Death Consul, which is very compatible with the catacombs. The former should be on the neighboring pathway of Death. In other words, they are closely related to death, home, and the dead. Krismona is the Demoness of Catastrophe, clearly distinct from them.

“I can understand why there was a giant pillar representing Krismona in Fourth Epoch Trier. That's because there's a special mirror world there. It contains the Primordial Demoness's divine power left behind during the War of the Four Emperors. However, why was Krismona Night Pillar included in the catacombs' construction? Back then, an Angel who followed the Blood Emperor perished. Why did it have to be Her?”

Jenna shook her head slowly and redirected her gaze to the spot where the holy figure had vanished. She attempted to walk a distance in that direction and suddenly realized that the spot where the white-robed woman had been standing was an ancient tomb.

Unlike the other tombs on the fourth floor, its tomb door was open.

After departing Rue Aquina, home to the Solow Motel, Lumian found an empty alley and casually tossed the Lie earring to Lugano.

“Find someone skilled in crafting false identities. Change your appearance, and don't use your current look.” Lumian gestured towards the café diagonally opposite. “I'll be waiting for you there.”

“Yes, Boss.” Lugano displayed no sign of worry.

Despite being unfamiliar with this city, he had numerous acquaintances residing here.

Moreover, he was fluent in Highlander.

As Lumian observed the translator-guide completing his disguise, returning Lie, and heading toward Rue des Bars, he led Ludwig into the café, where each table was adorned with a bouquet of flowers.

The sun bore down, rendering the passersby somewhat languid.

Unfazed, Lumian, armed with his limited knowledge of Highlander words and gestures, successfully ordered two cups of Torres coffee with milk, a Santa yolk pastry with cream fashioned into a tower, roasted suckling pig, and duck stewed in pear juice.

Ludwig was pleased.

Sipping his coffee, Lumian surveyed the café. He noticed that the six or seven tables were occupied mainly by couples in their twenties, engaged in dates. There was only one middle-aged couple.

With Lumian's acute hearing, it wasn't challenging for him to catch snippets of conversations at nearby tables, even though he didn't comprehend most of it. Only a few words stood out.

“Ocean... Pray... Going aboard... Island...”

Could they be discussing the sea prayer ritual next month? Lumian mused, shifting his gaze out the window.

On the street, two young men with long swords on their backs engaged in a heated argument for some reason. Drawing their swords on the spot, they seemed poised for a duel.

## Chapter 538 Historical Origins

Clang! Clang! Clang!

Even through the glass window, Lumian heard the clash of two lads' swords outside.

He couldn't help but raise his eyebrows.

They're really fighting?

Though duels were popular in Trier, it was rare for them to wield weapons without the formalities. Normally, they'd go through the entire process: determine the type of duel—cold weapons or revolvers—sign a contract, find a recognized witness, and then borrow weapons from the café's front desk or the bar counter. Only these duels were legal, avoiding police intervention.

But wielding a longsword at the slightest disagreement was either a prelude to riot or a mob vendetta. Such lethal weapons rarely surfaced in real fights.

Port Santa, or rather, the Feynapotter Kingdom's security is so poor? Lumian was surprised by this.

From the Flying Bird to the Solow Motel, he noticed the locals' penchant for carrying blades and swords, reminiscent of scenes from classical novels.

It was actually legal!

In a maritime colony like Port Farim, openly carrying such items was unheard of. Even a dagger had to be concealed.

For him, though, this was a welcome advantage.

Fascinated, Lumian observed the desperate struggle between the two lads through the window, occasionally commenting on their combat techniques in his mind.

Suddenly, a group of people jogged over from the street.

All women, they wore black cloth hats with white patterns, black lining, and brown leather armor. Dark cloaks adorned with two crossed swords, and brass revolvers strapped to their waists completed their attire.

The woman leading the group seemed to be in her late twenties, with thick, naturally curly black hair, thick eyebrows, large eyes, and plump red lips—

quite beautiful.

Standing at over 1.7 meters tall, she drew a straight sword from her back and called out to the two men fighting on the street with a cold expression.

Lumian only understood the word “stop.”

The two lads truly ceased their actions, standing by the street and accepting the reprimand from the group of women, their imposing demeanor fading.

After a few minutes, they left separately with their swords, not being apprehended.

Lumian took a sip of his Torres coffee, perplexed by the situation.

The language barrier proved quite troublesome.

After Ludwig polished off the food on the table at a controlled speed, Lugano, now sporting an unremarkable face, returned.

Lumian wasn't in a hurry to inquire if he had found a black-market merchant who could craft fake identities. He casually asked, "Is it legal to possess cold weapons in Port Santa?"

Lugano lowered his round-rimmed black hat and dropped his voice.

"That's right. It's a local custom. The Feynapotter Kingdom government respects this tradition. Besides, it's a good thing for them to have more people die in the Gaia Province."

"Why?" Lumian inquired with interest.

Lugano covered his face with his hand, as if afraid of being followed.

Observing this, Lumian tossed him the Lie earring.

Lugano hurried to the washroom and reverted to his original appearance, albeit his facial features becoming more refined.

Only then did he relax and explain, "Have you ever heard of the Battle of the Violated Oath?"

Lumian, shaped by Aurore's rigorous education, instinctively replied, "The Battle of the Violated Oath that began in the Fifth Epoch in 738? The one where Lenburg, Masin, Segar, and other small south-central countries were separated from the north of the Feynapotter Kingdom, and the Church of the God of Knowledge and Wisdom broke off from the Church of Earth Mother?"

Lugano was taken aback.

"Yes."

He only had a rough idea. The other party had actually revealed the exact year and final outcome.

After a few seconds, Lugano lowered his voice and said, "During the Battle of the Violated Oath, the entire Gaia Province, especially those near the Dariège mountain range, attempted to gain independence but failed.

"Later, in order to guard against the natives, despite high-quality iron and coal mines just south of the Dariège Mountains, the Feynapotter Kingdom only set up smelting factories and no gun factories. There wasn't a single native in the troops stationed here; they were all assigned to other places.

"Was there once a widespread belief in the God of Knowledge and Wisdom here?" Lumian couldn't help but glance at Ludwig, who was enjoying dessert.

The key to the independence of Lenburg, Masin, Segar, and other countries in the south-central region was their mainstream faith in the God of Knowledge and Wisdom, not the Earth Mother.

"I don't know," Lugano honestly shook his head.

Undeterred, he pressed on with the matter at hand.



“You should already know that the ancient Gaia Province mainly comprised four types of people. Firstly, farmers. Secondly, fishermen from places like Port Santa. Thirdly, mountain dwellers who relied on minerals and hunting to survive. Fourthly, the herdsmen you're familiar with. The latter three are fierce, wielding swords fearlessly in conflicts.”

Lumian nodded.

That was indeed the case.

Whether fishermen, mountain dwellers, or herdsmen, they all lived in relative poverty. They battled nature's cruelty and faced various dangers beyond human settlements. They even had to be wary of those among them with ill intentions. Swords and blades were necessities, not ornaments.

Lumian had heard firsthand from the migrating herdsmen about wolf pack attacks and the brutality of bandits. It had left a deep impression on him.

Lugano downed the lemonade he had just ordered and sighed in relief.

“One of Earth Mother's three combat orders is stationed permanently in Gaia Province. They guard against us in the north and Lenburg in the northeast. Simultaneously, they aim to monitor the locals.

“Heh heh, encountering combat nuns in Gaia Province and Port Santa isn't uncommon. Their demeanors differ from other women...”

Lugano's expression shifted to one of leisure and fascination.

The team just now were the combat nuns who maintain order? Lumian realized.

He teased Lugano with a smile, “They're nuns.”

Lugano smiled enigmatically and remarked, “The nuns of the Earth Mother Church don't take vows of chastity. Instead, they pledge to have as many children as possible before a certain age. If they're interested in you, they'll be quite proactive. Sometimes, they might even push a bit. The young folks here love showcasing their bravery in front of these nuns. Their courage might catch someone's eye.”

Pledging to have numerous children before a certain age... It sounds peculiar, aligning with Earth Mother's teachings but reminiscent of another Mother. Local customs, governmental involvement, religious doctrines, and primal courtship behaviors has all woven into the folklore of this place where cold weapons rule the streets. Lumian hadn't expected such complexity behind a seemingly trivial matter.

Upon reflection, it was rather intriguing.

At that moment, Lumian suddenly understood Aurore's words from the past.

“If I return to university without life's pressures, I'd study history.”

Phew... Lumian exhaled slowly and turned to Lugano, “Any progress?”

Lugano, still lost in thoughts about combat nuns, was caught off guard and struggled to snap out of his reverie.

“You Intisians...” Lumian clicked his tongue.

Only then did Lugano grasp the question. He sheepishly smiled and said,

“I've made some. I've found a well-connected black-market merchant who can help.

“Would you like to meet them? He's also a descendant of Dariège.”

“Sure.” Lumian finished his coffee and stood up.

Trier, fourth level of the catacombs.

Jenna and Franca each gripped a burning white candle, their eyes fixed on the ancient tomb that lay open, hesitant to advance.

No one knew what lay buried inside, and the fear of something terrifying emerging lingered in the air.

In the outer world, the two Demonesses could employ divination to discern the situation. However, in the catacombs, establishing a close connection with the ordinary spirit world was nearly impossible. The outcome was evident.

After all, Lumian couldn't enter through Spirit World Traversal, but he could “teleport” within its confines.

After a brief pause, Franca passed her Mirror Substitution to Jenna and stepped forward with solemn determination. Relying on her spiritual premonition, she cautiously approached the ancient tomb.

As they drew nearer, the dim yellow candlelight revealed a heap of pale-white bones in the entrance area, adorned with light greenish-black mold spots.

Franca raised the white candle, casting its light into the depths of the tomb.

Skeletons lay scattered in disarray, occupying every inch of the ground. In the center, a tilted sarcophagus revealed a multitude of decaying bones.

Franca hesitated for a moment before declaring, “It doesn't seem dangerous.”

Only then did Jenna approach, returning the Mirror Substitution.

Franca continued her observation and remarked, “Nothing of value either.”

Gems and other items were absent among the burial articles, likely lost during the construction of the catacombs and the opening of these ancient tombs. Everything else had decayed or shattered. Even the murals on the walls bore only faint traces.

Jenna observed for a while and said uncertainly, “What about the area where these bones are pressing down?”

“Let me take a look.” Franca moved closer, allowing invisible spider silk to spread and entwine the pale-white bones at the entrance, aiding in their movement.

Suddenly, an irregular mirror fragment, seemingly coated in black paint, materialized in the flames. Jenna and Franca's eyes narrowed.

It bore a striking resemblance to the Mirror World Fragment they had obtained in Fourth Epoch Trier!

“Did a special Mirror Person once die here?” Franca mused. “Did Krismona's shadow appear here to inform us? But why did She attack us?”

Jenna shared the perplexity. After a moment of thought, she said, “Why did the special Mirror Person die here? Who owns this tomb? Or rather, which ancient family does it belong to?”

Franca stared for a moment before nodding solemnly.

“That might be our next investigation.”

Finding no anomalies, the duo stored away the mirror fragment. Utilizing the formless spider silk of the Demoness of Pleasure, they meticulously searched the entire tomb but found nothing that identified the tomb owner.

Franca sighed and said, “Well, we'll unravel it when we get back. Let's go acquire an antique tearcatcher for the employer now.”

#### Chapter 539 Information on the Sea Prayer Ritual

In Port Santa, inside a room featuring a lone card table,

Lumian and Lugano, their appearances altered and attire changed, met the black-market merchant claiming lineage to Dariège.

Seated at the head of the table, he sported a white shirt and a black vest, a glass of pale malt-colored white wine at his fingertips and a slowly burning cigar between them.

He did embody the heritage of the Dariège region with slightly sunken eye sockets, slightly curled black hair, and piercing blue eyes reminiscent of a cloudless sky over a towering mountain. His thin cheeks and thick stubble suggested a man in his thirties.

“Good afternoon, Mr. Valerio,” Lugano greeted in Highlander.

Valerio, casting a glance at his armed bodyguards, responded with a smile in Intisian, flavored with a distinct Dariège accent.

“It's been a long time since I've returned home. It's a pleasure to see you.”

“Indeed, Mr. Valerio,” Lumian replied in Intisian, his voice also tinged with a Dariège accent.

While shepherds excelled at navigating the perils of the wilderness, an inherent wariness of authorities in settled human areas lingered.

Valerio nodded subtly and inquired, “Did you come from Larnaca?”

“Yes, I just finished attending the trade fair there,” Lumian replied smoothly.

Having learned about Larnaca from the shepherds in Cordu, Lumian was well aware of the monthly trade fair that transformed the suburbs into a bustling marketplace. Shepherds from far and wide flocked to the event, seizing opportunities to trade lamb, wool, cheese, and other goods.

Valerio then delved into the topic of migration and Dariège's folklore. Lumian, well-versed in the subject from a shepherd's perspective, provided insightful answers.

In the midst of the conversation, he felt a bit disoriented. Recollections of his sister's occasional threats echoed in his mind: "If you don't study hard, I'll send you off to be a shepherd!"

Now, irony had it that he found himself playing the role of a shepherd.

After some time, Valerio nodded in satisfaction and took a puff of his cigar.

"You're quite wise. Grazing in the suburbs doesn't require identification, but settling in the city requires it. I'll get you two sets as soon as possible. In the future, if you encounter any difficulties, you can come to me. I might not be of much help, but having one more person will give you more ideas. We're all from Dariège, so we naturally have to have each other's backs."

Lumian wasn't surprised by the black-market merchant's enthusiasm.

Uniting the people of one's homeland would create an exploitable force that couldn't be ignored!

It was reminiscent of the Savoie Mob. In the beginning, the pioneers, mostly Savoyards working as laborers and attendants, paved the way for the big bosses of the Savoie Chamber of Commerce. They expanded operations, safeguarded assets, and contributed immeasurably.

As for how many Savoyards might end up living a less than honest life or end up dead on the streets, the wealthy merchants turned a blind eye.

Lumian applied the acting techniques learned from Jenna and Anthony Reid's guidance to commend Valerio's noble character.

With a smile, Valerio offered a piece of advice.

"If you want to survive here, it's best to convert to Earth Mother as soon as possible. Find a good lady to marry and have a few children as soon as possible. Only then will you avoid hidden trouble."

Is urging marriage and childbearing a tradition in the Feynapotter Kingdom? Lumian criticized and smiled bitterly.

"Without copper coins, there won't be any good girls."

This Dariège proverb echoed in the room, signifying the difficulty for the poor, especially shepherds, to attract fine ladies and start families.

"This is Feynapotter, not Dariège," Valerio remarked, taking a sip of his white wine.

"The good ladies here value robust bodies and bravery. The money can wait after you get married."

Perplexed, Lumian questioned, "Why?"

“Men like that are more suited for reproduction, and they possess the ability to impregnate good ladies,” Valerio explained with a smile. “This place is different from Dariège. The essence of many things lies in fertility and reproduction. Only by understanding this can you truly understand Feynapotter and praise the mother of all things!”

The black-market merchant rose, spreading his feet slightly and raising his hands high.

No wonder Feynapotter teems with people in the Northern Continent. Without their knack for land improvement and food cultivation, sustaining such a population would be impossible. Lumian's thoughts raced as he probed,

“Mr. Valerio, I heard there's a sea prayer ritual next month. Any chance to make some money?”

“Yes,” Valerio replied, taking a seat. “Port Santa stays relatively warm in November. When my grandfather first came, he rented a wooden box to store popsicles, gathered a pile of ice from the factory, and covered them up. Then, he waded into the crowd, selling popsicles and ice cubes, earning his first bucket of gold. You can still do it now, but the competition is fiercer. You might even need to rent a bicycle for a larger thermal wooden box to hit more ritual venues.”

“Many ritual venues?” Lumian asked.

Valerio replied with a smile, “This is a grand event for all of Port Santa. Different processes happen in various places. There's the Dance of the Sea at the port, a parade of flower boats across the city, a sea boat race, the vigil ritual in Milo Village, and the core sea sacrifice.”

“What's the sea sacrifice?” Lumian inquired curiously.

Valerio slowly shook his head.

“I don't know the specifics. All I know is that the Governor of the Sea and the Maidens of the Sea board a special boat, head to a certain area beyond the port with sacrifices from fishermen and sea merchants, and perform a unique ritual. The detailed process is known only to those who've been there.”

“The Governor of the Sea, the Maidens of the Sea?” Lumian kept picking keywords.

This perfectly aligned with the situation of a Dariège shepherd who had just arrived in Port Santa.

Valerio smiled and said, “The crucial part of the Sea Prayer Ritual is selecting a man as the Governor of the Sea and four girls as the Maidens of the Sea. They'll lead a parade through the city on a flower boat before boarding a special fishing boat at the port. Sailing during the Dance of the Sea, they signal the start of the race. Later, they circle the port, entering the oldest local fishing village, Milo, for a night.

“At 7 a.m. the next morning, they reboard the boat and head to the sea sacrificial ground with the offerings.”

The chosen Governor of the Sea and the Maidens of the Sea... A sea prayer ritual with multiple segments... Lumian repeated the key parts inwardly.

Suddenly, his heart skipped a beat as he made a connection.

This was very similar to the Lent celebration in the Dariège mountains and the Spring Elf!

Though in reality, Lent celebration didn't involve Ava's head being chopped off or blood splattering, the dream scene left a deep impression on Lumian. He instinctively associated the Lent celebration with something sinister and terrifying.

Doesn't the sea prayer ritual here resemble the Lent celebration?

Upon second thought, Lumian felt that the similarity didn't explain the issue.

This was a common process in mysticism—the creation of a specific symbol to represent the sacrificial target to achieve the desired effect.

This was evident in many folklore rituals.

“How are the Governor of the Sea and the Maidens of the Sea chosen?” Lumian asked curiously.

Could it be, like the Spring Elf, they're elected by all the residents of Port Santa?

Could one gain a high reputation and enjoy hidden benefits after the ritual?

Valerio took another drag from his cigar.

“They're chosen by the committee members of the Fisheries Guild, the oldest guild in Port Santa. They keep the specific criteria and whether they want to vote a secret. Even the official members of the Fisheries Guild don't know.”

With that, the black-market merchant grinned.

“I also aim to become the Governor of the Sea. They say it comes with many perks, but no one spills the details.”

“How have the previous Governors of the Sea fared?” Lumian was more concerned about this matter.

Valerio was taken aback. He thought for a moment before shaking his head.

“I'm not sure.

“Each Governor of the Sea serves only a one-year term. Once they step down, they seem to be relocated. Anyway, they can't stick around in Port Santa to avoid clashes with the new Governor. Heh heh, they're surely offered hefty compensation and allowed to bring their families.”

Relocated? Were they truly relocated, or did they face something else? Lumian, drawing from past experiences, couldn't help but think of something ominous and dreadful in the face of such a ritualistic folklore.

Regarding the Governor of the Sea's subsequent experiences during the sea prayer ritual, it did sound peculiar.

Lumian thought for a moment and, adopting the tone befitting his current guise, inquired, "What about the Maidens of the Sea?"

"They're a hit among sea merchants, fishing company shareholders, and fishermen and sailors. Everyone wants to wed the Maidens of the Sea, a symbol of the sea's blessing. Explore various fishing villages, the Fisheries Guild, and the homes of sea merchants, and you'll find many influential grandmothers who were once Maidens of the Sea." Valerio's face brimmed with envy, as if he too harbored dreams of marrying a Maiden of the Sea and becoming a true sea merchant.

This mirrors the hidden benefits of being a Spring Elf... Lumian suppressed the urge to raise his right hand and stroke his chin.

Knowing when to cease, he refrained from pressing further. After depositing 50 gold risot, he exited Valerio's illegal casino with Lugano.

Ludwig didn't come with them. Instead, he was stationed in a nearby family restaurant equipped with a children's entertainment facility, overseen by specialized caretakers and a provided meal.

In Feynapotter, numerous industries supported parents in raising children and alleviating stress. Intis and other countries lacked such facilities, and even if they existed, they were accessible only to the elite.

Trier, catacombs.

Franca and Jenna descended to the third level with their flickering white candles.

Feeling a bit less stifled, Franca turned her head and inquired, "What's the name of the tomb we're after?"

Jenna didn't hesitate and replied, "The Thorn and Shieldwall Tomb."

## Chapter 540 Entrustee

Pa! Franca swiftly kicked away the hand bone attempting to block her path, deftly avoiding a trip.

"Aren't you tired of this? Can't you try something different?" she cursed, turning her head to inspect the road sign beside her.

It indicated they had finally reached their destination.

Each level of the catacombs sprawled vast, evident by the multitude of remains it accommodated. The road signs at each node could only display seven or eight iconic names and nearby tombs. Franca and Jenna relied on returning to the small sacrificial square and starting anew to locate the Thorns and Shieldwall Tomb.

Unlike the fourth-level tomb, mostly sealed off and devoid of corpses and bones along the way, this place was strewn with scattered bones and decaying items, emitting a faint, uncomfortable stench.

Jenna glanced at the pile of bones outside and observed a few thin metal plates inlaid on the tomb wall. Their surfaces were blurry, showing signs of severe corrosion. Only the shieldwall and thorn symbol could be vaguely discerned. Whether there were other patterns remained impossible to tell.

“No wonder it's called the Thorns and Shieldwall Tomb.” Franca sighed.

Simultaneously, illuminated by the dim yellow candlelight, she noticed companion items arranged in a groove on the tomb's inner wall. Some were made of wood, weathered and decayed, while others were glass and porcelainware, in the form of fragments. The only intact item was a glass bottle, its surface inlaid with carved patterns resembling gold and adorned with a unique golden lid. Perhaps due to the metal's protection, the glass bottle didn't shatter, but it appeared murky and less transparent.

“It's exquisite, almost like art,” Franca commented, puzzled. “Why didn't the catacomb workers take it away?”

It seemed quite valuable!

“Perhaps it was placed in this tomb after the catacombs were completed,” Jenna speculated.

The two Demonesses didn't linger on the topic. Jenna retrieved one of the Mirror Substitutions and handed it to Franca.

With a swift leap, Franca vaulted over the seemingly silent but dangerous skeletons, gracefully landing at the entrance of the Thorns and Shieldwall Tomb.

After confirming her surroundings and receiving no warnings from her spirituality, Jenna cautiously approached the groove on the side wall along the ground, avoiding the pale-white bones.

Instinctively, she reached out with her right hand but withdrew it. An old handkerchief from her pocket was produced, shielding her palm from direct contact with the antique tearcatcher.

The tears in the tearcatcher had long dried up.

Jenna scrutinized the tearcatcher for a moment before stowing it away. She retraced her steps and leaped to Franca's side.

“You completed the commission so easily?” she whispered uncertainly.

It was a stark contrast to the disappearance of the Deep Valley Cloister's gatekeeper she had previously accepted.

Franca scoffed and replied, “What kind of difficulty do you want for a 1,000 verl d'or commission?”

Jenna summarized her experience seriously, “That's true. The challenge lies in understanding the hidden dangers in the third level of the tomb.”

Solow Motel.

As Lumian, reverting to Louis Berry, strode into the front hall, his gaze fell upon a vibrant scene. A young brown-haired girl, clad in a red dress adorned with black patterns, swayed gracefully in a corner. From time to time, she paused to refine her dance moves.



Lumian's thoughts raced as he approached the front desk. Seizing the opportunity, he inquired, "What's she doing?"

This time, he spoke in Intisian.

The grizzled boss, his cheekbones etched with sunburnt marks, appeared taken aback. Responding in Intisian with a Dariège accent, he explained, "She's my granddaughter, Isabella. She's practicing the Dance of the Sea for the performance next month."

"Dance of the Sea... Dance of the Sea for the sea prayer ritual?" Lumian hadn't anticipated this revelation. Instinctively, he smiled and remarked, "That would make many girls jealous, wouldn't it?"

The boss grinned.

"This isn't like becoming a Maiden of the Sea. Not many people will be jealous, but participating in the Dance of the Sea performance can indeed make her proud and happy for a long time."

As Lumian signaled for Lugano to guide Ludwig back to their room, he casually inquired of the boss, "Did you come from Dariège?"

"That's right. I'm a Guillaume," the boss said with a self-deprecating smile. "Otta Guillaume. When I saw your identification this morning, I thought about greeting you in Intisian, but I gave up in the end. You know, Intisians aren't the best bunch. Even among my fellow villagers, I've come across a few with questionable morals."

"How long have you been in Port Santa?" Lumian asked with genuine interest, resting his right elbow on the front desk.

Otta Sr. pondered seriously.

"Forty years, I reckon. Probably forty years. Back then, I was an assistant in a caravan. I met my wife here and decided to stay. Heh heh, she's now a nagging old lady. Always fussing about how to dress when it gets cold or reminding me to head home for dinner, leaving the motel to the assistants. She manages everything so well that I don't have to worry. How great is that? It's rare to encounter such a woman in Dariège."

Lumian endured Otta Sr.'s ramblings for a while before cutting to the chase.

"I've been invited by a friend to Port Santa to witness the sea prayer ritual."

"It's quite lively. The entire port will be in euphoria," Otta Sr. praised without hesitation.

Lumian cast a glance at Isabella, still engrossed in her practice, and casually remarked, "I heard there was an accident at last year's sea prayer ritual?"

“No?” Otta Sr. responded with a puzzled expression. “I watched the flower boat parade, the boat race, and the Dance of the Sea. There were no accidents.”

Frowning, he fell into deep thought.

“However, Sandro did mention that the number of shipwrecks has increased significantly this year. We've encountered more pirates, and our fishing gains haven't been as good as last year's... Was there really an accident at last year's sea prayer ritual? Was it the vigil ritual or the sea sacrifice? Did the old fogeys at the Fisheries Guild conceal the problem?”

“Who's Sandro?” Lumian pressed.

Otta Sr. smiled again.

“It's my child, Isabella's father. He works as a clerk in the government, and his wife is a teacher at the grammar school.”

Is Port Santa's sea prayer ritual genuinely effective? Has its protective power diminished after the April Fool's prank? Lumian's mind flashed with the information he'd gathered earlier.

Of the three peripheral April Fool's members involved in the prank, one journeyed to Torres, Gaia Province's capital, to customize a unique golden ring. Another handled the bribery of the Fisheries Guild, sending the lamb along with the golden ring as an offering to the specially prepared ship for the sea sacrifice. The third, disguised as a reporter, shadowed the Fisheries Guild committee members, observing and documenting their reactions.

The elderly's mix of shock, terror, and anger upon receiving the news was a source of long-lasting delight for the April Fool's participants.

After seeking more details about the sea prayer ritual, Lumian bid farewell to Ol' Otta and ascended to his suite upstairs.

At 4 p.m. in Trier, Quartier de l'Observatoire, near Place du Purgatoire.

After donning a hooded black robe and transforming her face into the dramatic persona of Showy Diva, Jenna followed the feedback from her contact and reached a street that specialized in funeral items.

Most Trieriens passing by appeared fairly ordinary, but a handful sported white masks, brandished blunt scythes, and adorned themselves in black robes. They posed as undead messengers from folklore, sewing white skulls and other artistic elements onto their shoulders...

Thanks to their presence and the unique atmosphere of Trier, Jenna, dressed as a warlock with a hood concealing her features, blended seamlessly into the surroundings.

She paused in a quiet corner and retrieved the exquisite tearcatcher.

Before long, someone resembling her approached and, in a gravelly voice, inquired, “How much for this tearcatcher?”

“1,000 verl d'or,” Jenna responded, her excitement bubbling.

This marked her first successfully executed commission.

“1,001 verl d'or,” countered the warlock-dressed man.

Upon the secret signal matching, Jenna insisted on charging only 1,000 verl d'or.

Once the confirmation was mutual, she handed over the tearcatcher, received the reward, and discreetly departed.

With the tearcatcher in hand, the hooded figure navigated the nearby streets, taking nearly fifteen minutes to circle back to Place du Purgatoire and approach a street bench at the edge.

A man sat there, engrossed in a newspaper.

The hooded figure presented the exquisite tearcatcher, adorned with intricate hollowed-out golden patterns, and whispered, “I've completed your commission. Will it offset the money I owe you?”

The person on the bench lowered the newspaper, looked up, revealing a clerk with curly black hair, sunken eyes, and thick lips. A crystal-like monocle adorned his right eye.

“Monsieur Monette?” the hooded figure pressed in confirmation.

Monette accepted the tearcatcher, gently tracing the golden patterns with a slow smile playing on his lips.

Solow Motel, fifth-floor suite.

Lumian spent the entire afternoon within the confines of his room at the Solow Motel. Lounging on a recliner, he swayed gently, engrossed in his ongoing study of Highlander. Now and then, he leafed through travel books detailing the customs of the Feynapotter Kingdom.

As evening approached, Lugano, who had ventured downstairs for a chat, returned to Lumian's room.

Leaning in, Lugano lowered his voice and shared, “Boss, there's a Madame looking for you.”

Madame... Lumian felt a chill run down his spine upon hearing that term, and the muscles in his back tensed.

Which “Madame” could this be?

After a brief pause, Lumian realized that Lugano was referring to an ordinary Madame, not the “Madame” of the Beyonder world.

“Which Madame, and what brings her here?” Lumian inquired calmly, sitting up and addressing his translator.

Lugano shook his head and replied, “She didn't say. Just mentioned having something to entrust to the renowned adventurer, Louis Berry.”

Lugano emphasized the term “renowned adventurer.”