

Inevitability 561

Chapter 561 Language of the Stars

Lato Guiaro struggled to keep silent, but the words burst out of him.

After a long internal battle, he finally responded, "He's the most powerful among us. Before joining the Fisheries Guild committee, he served as a deputy host on the sea sacrifice ship a whopping 11 times. He gained numerous boons and established a solid connection with the sea.

"He can fly. If he's not afraid of losing lifespan, he can temporarily take control of these waters on behalf of the Governor of the Sea. He possesses other special abilities, though they're rarely revealed. We're not entirely sure either. What we do know is that the failure of last year's sea prayer ritual significantly weakened him."

Lato paused and couldn't resist adding, "First and foremost, we are astronomers. Our expertise lies in observing the stars' transformations and calculating their patterns.

"Keep in mind that the annual sea prayer ritual doesn't have a fixed date. It could happen any day during the first week of November. This is because, to enter that special area that communicates with the sea, the stars need to be in specific positions to open the corresponding passageway.

"The date of a similar phenomenon varies from year to year. Astronomers with sufficient knowledge must predict it in advance through observation and calculation."

The idea of Fisheries Guild committee members being astronomers seems comical and absurd... Lumian didn't interrupt Lato Guiaro's narrative.

The self-proclaimed astronomer continued his explanation.

"Secondly, we are humans who worship the sea and the cosmos. We can receive revelations and guidance of fate from the changes in tides, the waves of the sea, and the trajectories of the stars, avoiding danger and making the right choices. Many times, we refer to such revelations and guidance as the Language of the Stars."

The Language of the Stars... sounds pretty dangerous. How do you know it's not something risky like Termiboros or Ludwig winking at you? Lumian resisted the urge to shake his head and sighed inwardly.

"Furthermore, we are descendants of the sea and the cosmos, serving as clergymen who offer sacrifices to them.

"We can manipulate the power of the land to completely immobilize the target or make them float.

“We can emit rays from the cosmos, causing damage to the enemy's body structure and weakening them. Without the corresponding superpowers to treat them, they will face an irreversible and agonizing death.

“We can also create a powerful magnetic effect. Combined with the power of the land, we can generate a half-real illusion. We call it the Cosmic Void.” Lato's expression gradually turned fanatical.

From a mysticism perspective, the Beyonder characteristics of the Children of the Sea involve the land and the cosmos. According to Aurore's knowledge, it encompasses gravity, radiation, and electromagnetism. Furthermore, due to gravity and electromagnetism, they also possess some illusionary and spatial abilities. Lumian, rephrasing Lato Guiaro's words for easier comprehension, couldn't help but criticize inwardly, Hey, you're the Children of the Sea, not the Children of the Stars. Why don't I see many serelated powers...

Lato took a deep breath and continued, “We are also the navigators of the sea and the cosmos. We can find the right path under any circumstances, guided by the performance of the sea and the stars. We can use this power to help others.

“Without our guidance, ships can't enter that special water even on the correct date. That's why Nolfi insisted on returning to Port Santa before setting off. Although she knew the coordinates and route of the sea sacrificial land from her mother, she would never have reached it if she didn't set off from Port Santa.

“The spawn that come to land from the seabed also rely on our abilities in this area to survive the fog, vortex, and storms without losing their way in the sea route or being swallowed by darkness.”

Navigators... Lumian suddenly recalled the strange fish he had encountered on the Flying Bird, the Mutated Bannerfish, who could control the waves.

They were also known as Death Navigators!

“Have you heard of the strange fish known as Death Navigators?” Lumian interrupted Lato Guiaro's account.

Lato hesitated for a moment before responding, “Yes, they're also spawn of the sea. We all suspect that they were transformed from the Governors of the Sea who returned to the sea.”

Transformed from the Governors of the Sea? Lumian raised his eyebrows.

Lato swallowed and explained, “They should still be fused with the sea, so future generations will be born, but their strength is inferior to theirs.

“In the past, they only roamed those waters. In recent years, for some reason, they occasionally swam out and returned. After the sea prayer ritual failed last year, this situation became even more frequent.”

Did the failure of the ritual cause the Death Navigators to go out more frequently? Did the Death Navigators lure sailors to those special waters? Were they ultimately devoured by the sea? Lumian's mind raced with questions, but he knew that Lato Guiaro couldn't answer them.

Lato returned to the main topic.

“We can still manipulate the waves to a certain extent and influence the tides, but we can't compare to Juan Oro, much less the Governor of the Sea.”

That's more like a Child of the Sea? That's why they think it's easier to bury me in the sea? Lumian pondered as he inquired about a few more details. He then lowered his right foot from his left knee and slowly stood up.

Nodding at the Knight of Swords in Lato's eyes, Lumian said to Lato Guiaro, “Last request, release Nolfi and Batna.”

With that, Lumian walked to the bedroom window.

Simultaneously, the Knight of Swords, who had possessed Lato Guiaro, vanished. The committee member of the Fisheries Guild regained control of his body.

As Lumian left, Lato Guiaro couldn't help but express his confusion, fear, and a hint of uncontrollable emotion, “I thought you'd kill me once you got the information...”

Otherwise, wouldn't it expose the fact that you have many hidden helpers, the secret of a faction behind you, and the uniqueness of your helpers?

Lumian didn't look back and continued forward.

On the way, he pressed down on his golden straw hat and smiled.

“To you, this might be important, but not to me.”

Just as Lato Guiaro was about to say something, he saw the body of the adventurer, Louis Berry, suddenly turn black and thin, transforming into a shadow that disappeared from the crimson moonlight's reach.

After staring at the darkness for a while, Lato adjusted the collar of his robe and left the master bedroom. He personally headed to the basement to release Nolfi and Batna.

Opposite the building where his family resided, beneath a row of verdant trees,

Lumian leaned leisurely against the black gas streetlamp pole, gazing at the glass windows illuminated by the light.

The disheveled, pale-faced Knight of Swords materialized behind him and asked in a deep voice, “Are you really not going to kill him?”

Lumian chuckled and said, “If we kill him, who's going to inform Juan Oro that I have powerful helpers and the support of a powerful faction lurking in the shadows?”

He couldn't just toss tarot cards at Lato Guiaro's corpse, could he?

Furthermore, the problem lay in the fact that no one knew that the adventurer, Louis Berry, was a Minor Arcana cardholder of the Tarot Club.

Upon hearing Lumian's response, the Knight of Swords pondered for a moment before vanishing into the darkness.

Before long, Batna emerged from the house where Lato Guiaro's extended family resided, clutching his rapier and revolver.

Upon seeing Lumian, they looked a little ashamed and approached him with slow steps.

“Thank you for saving us,” Nolfi, adorable in a blouse and brown pants, expressed her sincere gratitude.

Batna said, “I'm well aware of Nolfi's intentions and haven't been deceived by her. I sympathize with the tragic fate of these sea spawn and hope to help her end all of this.”

Lumian looked at Nolfi.

“What kind of tragic end will it lead to?”

The committee members of the Fisheries Guild seemed quite pleased.

Nolfi fell silent for a moment before saying, “All Maidens of the Sea and Children of the Sea eventually transform into a lizard-like humanoid monster. Perhaps earlier, perhaps later, my mother passed away because she was attacked by assassins hired by the Fisheries Guild and wanted to die as a human. Not only did she refuse treatment, but she also inflicted some damage on herself.”

In that case, the humanoid lizard at Rubiό Paco's house is a common sight in families around Port Santa. Why the need for secrecy? Lumian turned to Batna with a smile, asking, “Did you know Nolfi would transform into a humanoid lizard?”

“Yes.” Batna expressed that he didn't mind.

At that moment, Nolfi inquired, “Then do you know what a humanoid lizard looks like?”

As she spoke, the rather attractive female adventurer's eyes widened. Shimmering illusory scales appeared on her body, and her skin transformed into that of a snake.

Batna jumped in fright, taking a step back involuntarily.

Lumian continued to ask Nolfi, “Why didn't you rent a boat at a nearby port and find a sailor to sail it over? Why choose a ship rental company in Port Santa?”

Nolfi undid the phantom scales, reverting to her original appearance, frustration and embarrassment evident in her voice.

“In Port Santa, people often rent boats for fishing and sightseeing. This should be a very ordinary thing...”

Lumian sighed helplessly.

“Did you know that last year's sea prayer ritual failed? The Fisheries Guild will be on high alert this year, investigating all unstable factors. Besides, the sea prayer ritual is only a few days away. It's inevitable to start paying attention to those who rent boats to go out to sea.”

Nolfi and Batna remained silent, resembling two students.

After a moment, Nolfi asked in surprise and suspicion, "Did the sea prayer ritual fail last year?"

Lumian didn't answer immediately. He thought for a moment and said,

"You want to end the sea prayer ritual with just the two of you? What gave you the confidence?"

Nolfi pursed her lips and stated, "As long as I can enter those waters and find the palace, I have a way to destroy it and end everything."

"Palace?" Lumian's eyebrows twitched.

Nolfi nodded.

"When my mother was possessed by the sea, she saw a strange palace through her spirituality and the connection between them. It's located at the bottom of the sea. It's the palace of the sea!"

Chapter 562 Changed Plans

Palace? Lumian hadn't anticipated gaining information that Lato Guiaro lacked from Nolfi.

After a brief pause, he inquired, "What's the palace like?"

Was it an ancient relic or the abode of some natural spirit?

Could the sea prayer ritual be tapping into the palace's inner power?

Nolfi shook her head.

"My mother couldn't give a detailed description. She just mentioned that the palace is unlike any structure on land. It boasts a peculiar design, with smooth curves and a reflective metallic sheen. Overall, it's silver-gray."

Lumian envisioned the palace based on Nolfi's account, though lacking specifics, he could only conjure an approximate image.

He grinned and remarked, "If that's truly the sea palace, do you honestly believe you two can bring it down?"

"If you struggle against Lato Guiaro and his crew, how do you plan to breach the sea spawn's defenses? How will you escape the sea's fury?"

Nolfi paused for a moment before responding, "I have my ways."

She didn't elaborate on the method.

Could a Child of the Sea, likely below Sequence 7 in strength, truly destroy the sea palace? An entity capable of unleashing violent storms across the entire sea... Lumian pondered, forming a sudden hypothesis.

Was Nolfi's confidence rooted in collaboration with others? Had she not returned to Port Santa without adequate preparations?

As Lumian's mind raced, he shifted his gaze toward Batna.

Batna Comté, who had inadvertently distanced himself from Nolfi by two to three steps, had just re-sheathed his rapier and concealed his revolver.

Sensing Lumian's scrutiny, he grinned sheepishly and explained, "I'm here for support and to command the ship. You might not know, but I served as a second mate for a while before becoming an adventurer."

In other words, he implied: "I'm not sure about Nolfi's plan either. Whether she succeeds or not doesn't concern me much. I've fulfilled my duty as a lover by providing some assistance."

I can tell that you come from a good background based on your refined attire and grooming... Initially, I thought you ran away from home, enchanted by Gehrman Sparrow's adventure story, and went to sea to become an adventurer. Now, it seems your family recommended you to be a second mate to gain work experience. After a while, you resigned and chose the path of an adventurer... Lumian was unsure how to assess Batna's romanticism. Glancing at him, he commented, "Do you realize how dangerous this situation is?"

Batna cleared his throat and replied, "I thought the Children of the Seas wouldn't be too formidable. Nolfi and I have sparred before."

Lumian eyed Batna for a couple of seconds before redirecting his gaze to Nolfi.

"What are your plans moving forward?"

Without directly inquiring about hidden collaborators, Lumian circumvented the question, aiming to lower Nolfi's guard and uncover any hints from her responses.

Nolfi pursed her lips and said, "We've been exposed and targeted by the Fisheries Guild. Our original plan is no longer viable. I intend to lay low until the sea prayer ritual concludes."

"Why not just leave?" Batna interjected, expressing surprise on Lumian's "behalf."

He believed that once Nolfi's motives and identity were revealed, she would promptly abandon this operation and devise an alternative plan for a future sea prayer ritual.

Nolfi fell silent for a moment before revealing, "If the sea prayer ritual succeeds, and I'm still in Port Santa, being a Child of the Sea with a relatively pure bloodline, I should be able to gain a certain boon..."

She paused, briefly gazing at the ground.

"Although it might hasten my transformation into a humanoid lizard, it can also enhance my strength..."

A subtle sorrow lingered in her words.

Batna stared blankly, his mouth agape, but no words escaped him.

Lumian raised his hand, adjusting the golden straw hat on his head. Using a well-known line from the Adventurer series, he remarked, "This is both a blessing and a curse."

As Louis Berry prepared to depart, Nolfi once again expressed her sincere gratitude.

“I don't know how to express my gratitude. If you need any help, feel free to come to me.”

“You can find me too,” Batna chimed in.

Caught between staying with Nolfi or leaving Port Santa, he hesitated.

Lumian's gaze swept across their faces, and he suddenly smiled.

“Coincidentally, I have something for you two to do.”

Nolfi was taken aback but nodded gently.

“Just shoot.”

Having bid farewell to Nolfi and Batna, Lumian stealthily returned to Solow Motel from the shadows.

Emerging from the darkness in the corner of the master bedroom, he found the Knight of Swords standing by the curtains, silently observing him under the crimson moonlight.

Why do you always appear like a scene from a ghost story... Is this a Wraith trait or a manifestation of the potion's influence? Lumian critiqued, expressing gratitude,

“Thank you for your assistance.”

The Knight of Swords remained silent. He looked at Lumian and inquired, “After controlling Lato Guiaro, it seems you've altered your original plan?”

Lumian chuckled.

“You're quite perceptive, but I changed my mind perhaps a little earlier or later than the moment you specified.”

He responded with a hint of a charlatan's demeanor and elaborated with a smile, “How can an original plan be executed without any changes? That's not the mark of a Conspirer but an omnipotent and omniscient one.

“During the planning process, one must adjust their approach based on feedback, new information, and changes in the situation, while ensuring the true motive remains intact.”

Hence, concealing his true motives was crucial.

It was akin to the many paths between the starting point and the end, with often only one true conclusion. This point was the most vulnerable to blockages and ambushes.

The Knight of Swords listened quietly and then silently vanished by the window.

Lumian allowed himself to relax, washed up, and retired to bed, sleeping soundly until six in the morning.

Following breakfast provided by the motel, he directed Lugano to take Ludwig to the streets for some snacks.

Observing their departure through the closed door, Lumian returned to the master bedroom, where the curtains still hung. In the dimness, he pulled out the armchair from the desk and settled in.

After an indeterminate period, he suddenly noticed glimmers in the depths of the darkness.

He felt himself suspended in midair, devoid of solid ground beneath his feet or a backrest behind him.

Lumian maintained a stoic expression as he gazed into the profound void with a cosmos-like backdrop. From a distance, Juan Oro, the president of the Fisheries Guild, approached, attired in a formal suit and wielding a walking stick.

Lumian looked at the old man in silence, displaying no surprise, as if anticipating Juan Oro's arrival.

As the distance closed to a certain extent, Juan Oro's wrinkles trembled as he uttered in Intisian, "Milo Village was once obliterated, along with the sea spawn that ventured onto the land. Yet, we stand here today.

"As long as the sea endures, as long as the cosmos persists, as long as Port Santa remains a forbidden land for death, we can resurface from the sea's depths, regardless of the blows we endure or the loss of our descendants. We can rebuild Milo Village and initiate the sea prayer ritual anew.

"This is attested by the clergyman of the Earth Mother Church, their combat ascetics, and their nuns.

"If we, the Children of the Sea, are truly pushed to the edge of a precipice, we possess the courage and determination to drag the enemy into the abyss. This is because we firmly believe in our indestructible spirit and the ability to rebuild our village, preventing its extinction."

You share all this with me to convey that the Fisheries Guild and Milo Village's sea spawn are unafraid of threats, possessing both the ability and courage to face powerful enemies. Furthermore, you suggest that the corresponding legacies will endure, resurfacing from the sea in the future. It's akin to a warning, cautioning me not to go too far. Otherwise, they won't hesitate to engage in an internecine conflict... Lumian comprehended Juan Oro's veiled message and chose not to respond. He silently observed the old man, waiting for him to continue.

Juan Oro's azure eyes reflected the image of the black-haired, green-eyed adventurer Louis Berry. In a resonant voice, he questioned, "What do you and the forces supporting you desire? What is your aim? We won't tolerate the disruption of the sea prayer ritual, nor will we abandon the foundations laid in Port Santa."

Realizing that adventurer Louis Berry is not only formidable but also backed by a faction, they must perceive me as a tough adversary. If they were to confront me head-on, they might find it challenging to prevail. Hence, he's here to negotiate, seeking to exchange concessions for my withdrawal? Is he attempting to assert his bottom line and strength to dissuade me from rash

actions, leaving both sides with a way out? Lumian showed no surprise. He glanced around and remarked, "Why isn't there a chair? I prefer discussing matters while seated."

After a brief silence from Juan Oro, the armchair reappeared behind Lumian, and he resumed his original posture.

Lumian calmly gazed at Juan Oro, the Fisheries Guild president, and stated, "Would you believe me if I told you I never intended to disrupt the sea prayer ritual?"

"Never intended to disrupt the sea prayer ritual..." Juan Oro repeated, his deep wrinkles furrowing.

Lumian continued, "As long as you're willing to spare the innocent, like the fake Governor of the Sea, cooperation isn't out of the question."

"Cooperation?" Juan Oro couldn't conceal his astonishment. He scrutinized the adventurer who had forcefully intervened in the Fisheries Guild's affairs upon arriving at Port Santa. Lumian had stormed the Governor of the Sea's residence, blown up the Fisheries Guild's main building, and nearly killed his grandson. He wondered if his hearing had slowed down like the other elders.

A smile gradually spread across Lumian's face. He leaned back in his chair and snapped his fingers, igniting a crimson flame.

"Yes, cooperation."

Chapter 563 Another Attempt

Upon learning the intricacies of Louis Berry's collaboration and his unwavering commitment, Juan Oro found himself questioning the reliability of his own ears once again.

It wasn't that the other party's demands were outrageous or absurd, making it sound like some kind of jest. On the contrary, the Fisheries Guild could fulfill his desires with minimal effort, without requiring a substantial payment.

This went beyond Juan Oro's initial expectations.

Prior to meeting Louis Berry, he had mentally prepared himself for potential ruthless "extortion." After all, considering the ease with which the other party subdued Lato Guiaro and displayed strength against the Fisheries Guild, Oro had anticipated a tougher negotiation. Surprisingly, Louis Berry proved to be more amenable to discussion than Oro had envisioned.

This led Juan Oro to contemplate whether there might be some deception at play. He wondered if, in the future, Berry would abruptly turn against him during their collaboration, breaking the promises made.

Lumian observed the wrinkled old man silently, refraining from clarifying his intentions. Explaining might expose his true motives, and the timing wasn't right yet.

After careful consideration, Juan Oro let out a sigh of age.

“We can accede to your request.”

“However, throughout our collaboration, we will remain vigilant and formulate contingency plans.”

Lumian smiled, rising from the suspended armchair in the void. He extended his right hand to Juan Oro.

“Pleasure working with you.”

Juan Oro shook his hand and remarked, “You're not as crazy as you seem...”

Lumian pondered for a moment and smirked.

“Of course, I've always been a clever, rational, and polite adventurer.”

Juan Oro wasn't in the mood for idle chatter. He nodded at Louis Berry and stated, “Given your preference for discretion in our collaboration, I should depart now. Otherwise, my visit might become known to others.”

Lumian took a moment to contemplate before responding, “I'll dispatch my concealed companion to Milo Village tomorrow night. Ensure the surviving sailors from last year's ritual are brought to your main building in advance and kept under control.”

“Agreed.” Juan Oro didn't object; this was one of the terms they had agreed upon.

As the cane-wielding old man prepared to leave, Lumian called out thoughtfully,

“I'm a man of my word. I promised Giorgia I wouldn't disclose the details of the commission to anyone.

“But I have a question for you. Have any Children of the Sea from the Paco family gone missing recently or not been seen for an extended period?”

He hinted that his inquiry was linked to the Paco family's commission.

Juan Oro's expression darkened as he contemplated for more than ten seconds.

“The Paco family's Children of the Sea have made appearances recently.

“At first, I thought something had happened to Rubió's mother, Martha, that we shouldn't know about. Yet, it turns out she's still fine, just severely injured.”

No missing Children of the Sea from the Paco family? Where did the humanoid lizard come from? Lumian was alarmed.

His initial thought was that the Paco family might be involved with other Children of the Sea. His second thought was that one of the Paco family's Children of the Sea might have been replaced.

Is the impostor parading around with the original's face, while the real individual had transformed into a humanoid lizard, meeting their demise at the hands of the great adventurer?

Lumian couldn't help but associate the substitute and the frequent appearances of the person in question with a Sequence name: Faceless!

It aligned with the Lie earring's Sequence—the previous Sequence of Marionettist Loki!

Could it be that after Loki's resurrection, he infiltrated Port Santa and clandestinely replaced a key member of the Paco family? Was his goal to set a trap for me and execute something during the sea prayer ritual, continuing what he had left incomplete the previous year?

With these thoughts swirling, Lumian couldn't help but experience a blend of excitement and fear.

However, upon further consideration, he dismissed the notion.

If Loki had genuinely substituted an essential member of the Paco family, there wouldn't be any humanoid lizard sightings. He could have discreetly resolved the issue and erased all traces, avoiding such an obvious loophole!

Moreover, Rubió Paco wasn't the sole Child of the Sea in the Paco family. Martha, as a Maiden of the Sea, also wielded the residual power of the sea. How could they struggle against a humanoid lizard whose strength hadn't reached the Mid-Sequence? Why would they take the risk of exposing the secret and hiring an external adventurer, Louis Berry, to handle the situation?

With Lumian's comprehension of the sea prayer ritual and sea spawn deepening, it left him even more bewildered about the Paco family's previous decisions. He believed that crucial information was concealed within.

He turned to Juan Oro, organizing his thoughts.

“Are descendants of the same Maidens of the Sea prohibited from attacking each other?”

“There's no such restriction.” Juan Oro dismissed Lumian's speculation.

Lumian deliberately mused aloud, “Then why did the Paco family intentionally hire an outsider like me for the commission instead of utilizing their own Beyonders?”

Juan Oro maintained his serious expression.

“It's for the same reason I hired someone to monitor Paco's house. That's why I sent the Little Devil to interrogate you. That's why I needed to meet Martha.”

You call that wrinkled, old man-like monster “Little Devil”? Lumian nodded gently and asked, “The Paco family must be harboring a significant secret.”

He refrained from delving deeper and watched as Juan Oro turned away, walking off with his cane.

Soon, the Cosmic Void around him dissipated, and he “returned” to the draped master bedroom of the suite, seated in the armchair before the desk.

Lumian smiled, pivoted, grasped the curtain, and drew it open.

The morning sun flooded in, casting a radiant glow.

The next night, within the ancestral house of the Oro family in Milo Village, a structure only one floor shorter than the residence of the Governor of the Sea.

The building had undergone numerous renovations, showcasing a fusion of antiquated and modern architecture. Blackened gray stone walls stood alongside concrete pillars, and beneath the seaweed-covered roof lay red-

ringed tiles.

The door to the first-floor lounge had been shut, leaving only an elderly man with a black cane—Juan Oro—and his cherished grandson—Fernandez Oro—

alongside eight unconscious villagers of Milo Village sprawled on the ground.

Suddenly, a shadow flickered in a corner of the room, and a figure materialized.

Standing just over 1.7 meters tall, the figure possessed an ordinary face and sported a brownish-green short-sleeved shirt, loose brownish-yellow pants, strapless leather shoes with vents, and a short circular felt hat.

“Who are you?” Juan Oro inquired in Intisian.

As one of Port Santa's strongest sea merchants, he had sailed numerous times between the ages of 30 and 50. It was only natural for him to comprehend Intisian.

The man responded fluently in Highlander, “I'm Louis Berry's companion. You can call me Charname.”

It doesn't seem like the spirit-type Beyonder Lato encountered... Louis Berry has more than one companion lurking in the shadows... Juan Oro rejoiced that he had chosen negotiation first.

With these thoughts racing through his mind, he glanced at Fernandez, whose face remained pale, and understood that he wasn't entirely pleased.

It was common for young lads to be calculating about who suffered and who benefited, often forgetting their most essential motives.

“You can start questioning them,” Juan Oro instructed the man known as Charname. “Over the past year, we've employed various methods to determine if they're lying or not. We've even exploited the uniqueness of other sea spawn. All the results indicate that they've told the complete truth and concealed nothing. The failure of the sea prayer ritual has nothing to do with them.”

Charname's lips curved into a smile as he replied, “How would I know if I don't give it a shot myself?”

Approaching the unconscious sailors, he retrieved a dagger and stabbed their fingertips one by one, smearing the corresponding blood on various spots on the back of his hand.

Amidst the pain, the sailors began to awaken one after another.

In front of them, Charname produced a mirror and smiled.

“Your blood will reveal if you're lying and if you're the genuine person. If anyone deceives me, their blood will burn on the mirror, and they'll face the same fate.

“Alright, answer them one by one.”

As Charname spoke, he calmly transferred the blood from the back of his hand to the mirror, a strange sight as it seemed to seep into the glass.

The sailors glanced at Juan Oro, realizing this was another investigation into the cause of the sea prayer ritual's failure last year. Skilfully, they recounted their experiences, leaving no details omitted.

After hearing their accounts, Charname asked thoughtfully, "Were Iru and Salah responsible for transporting the lamb sacrifices?"

"Yes," all the sailors replied in unison.

Charname pressed on, "Did they both perish during the sea prayer ritual?"

The surviving sailors nodded, confirming that their two companions had been thrown overboard in the tidal wave of the failed ritual, never to surface again.

Turning to Juan Oro, Charname inquired, "Do you have any belongings from Iru and Salah? Clothes they've worn many times, toothbrushes not discarded, and the like.

"I want to try summoning their spirits. Although most of their spirits would have dissipated over the past year and can't remember effective information, the state of their spirits can reveal certain things, such as deep resentment and hatred."

Juan Oro shook his head.

"We attempted it after the sea prayer ritual. We couldn't summon their spirits. Those consumed by the raging sea would have their spirits devoured as well."

Charname chuckled and suggested, "Let's give it another shot. There's nothing to lose by trying."

Juan Oro pondered for a moment and agreed. He immediately instructed Fernandez to retrieve Iru's extracted tooth and Salah's clothes, previously used for spirit channeling.

Then, they observed as Charname set up the altar and initiated a summoning ritual.

"I!

"I summon in my name:

"The sailor of Port Santa's Milo Village, a man named Iru Adela, the owner of this tooth..."

A gust of wind blew, and the altar's candle flame took on a dark-green hue.

A blurry figure quickly materialized.

Success? He actually succeeded? Fernandez's pupils dilated as he gazed above the candle flame.

The figure vaguely resembled Iru, but it showed no signs of drowning; its skin was pale-white and swollen. Instead, its face was covered in blood, and there was an evident wound on its forehead.

The specter's eyes brimmed with pain and hatred.

Chapter 564 Individual Roles

Looking at the specter suspected to be Iru, Juan Oro's expression shifted.

Back then, even though they had missed the optimal time for spirit channeling, they still managed to learn about the deaths on the first day and found items that could accurately pinpoint the target. Utilizing the Little Devil's ability, they completed the summoning, but none of the deceased spirits appeared. This led them to believe that the human spirits that angered the sea would be devoured. No further attempts were made.

Nearly a year later, the summoning had actually succeeded!

Moreover, it appeared that Iru hadn't drowned at sea but had been shot.

This was entirely different from the backlash caused by the failure of the sea prayer ritual!

Charname used Hermes to inquire about the spirit suspected to be Iru, but the target was already in a daze and couldn't recall anything. Even his appearance had become blurry, assimilated by the environment.

Charname concluded the ritual and used Salah's clothes, worn over many years, to summon the spirit of the other deceased.

This time, nothing happened.

Charname refrained from further attempts. He extinguished the candle's flame and dispelled the wall of spirituality. In Highlander, he addressed Juan Oro, "The problem has become clearer."

Juan Oro didn't respond. Instead, he turned to his grandson, Fernandez.

"Take them out and send them home. Instruct each of them."

"Alright." Although Fernandez yearned to hear Charname's conjecture and understand the subsequent events, he didn't dare disobey his grandfather's orders. He hurriedly led the surviving sailors out of the lounge and closed the door.

After a few moments, Juan Oro shifted his gaze to Charname, whose features didn't stand out.

"Are you suggesting that the Iru who perished during the sea prayer ritual was an imposter?"

Charname asked with a smirk, "Why do you think the fake Iru is really dead? The others might have been swallowed by the sea, but not him."

Disregarding the miraculous resurrection, nobody present could prove that the fake Iru had indeed fallen into the sea.

Observing Juan Oro's silence, Charname pressed on, "The real Iru should have been assassinated by those saboteurs days or even weeks before the sea prayer ritual. No, he was more likely to have been kidnapped, killed by a gun a period after the sea prayer ritual completed; after all, the living cannot have their spirit channeled. Later, someone disguised themselves as him and lived in Milo Village for a period. Without arousing suspicion, they boarded the Governor of the Sea's wedding ship as a sailor.

“Right, is Iru the kind with no living elders, no spouse, no kids, and not residing with siblings?”

Juan Oro's eyes narrowed as he spoke, “More or less. Their grandmother passed away over a decade ago. His parents, Children of the Sea, established a separate family. After reaching adulthood, they lost control of their powers, turning into pure sea spawn. We had to send them back to the sea.”

“As expected, they picked the sailor with the least difficult disguise,” Charname remarked with a sigh.

Juan Oro frowned and said, “Yet, everyone boarding the ship undergoes a routine inspection by another sea spawn to confirm authenticity.”

Charname chuckled.

“As you said, it's a routine inspection, and in this world, many disguises require specific methods or deeper identification to uncover.”

Juan Oro nodded solemnly.

Charname kindly suggested with a hint of flaunting, “Next time, it might be wise to draw blood from everyone boarding the ship and compare it to their closest relatives. It could reveal their true bloodline.”

“That's an idea,” Juan Oro tersely acknowledged.

Over the centuries, the sea prayer ritual had encountered no issues, so they hadn't considered refining the details.

Juan Oro inquired, “What do those who disrupted the ritual want?”

“We're not certain either,” Charname shrugged, glancing towards the curtained window that led to the Governor of the Sea's residence.

Juan Oro sensed a hint in Charname's allusion to something Louis Berry had mentioned earlier. He subtly nodded and added, “When this year's sea prayer ritual succeeds, we'll release Miguel and allow him to live in Torres. By then, the failure of last year's ritual won't remain a secretive burden. There's no need for us to harm Miguel.”

“Miguel?” Charname inquired thoughtfully.

“He's the false Governor of the Sea. He used to work for the Fisheries Company, and his lineage traces back to Milo Village,” Juan Oro explained succinctly.

Charname diverted his gaze, a faint smile gracing his lips.

“He's had his year of indulgence. Fear may linger, but everything comes with a price.”

The companion of the great adventurer paused, curiosity lighting up his eyes.

“Did your ancestor come from the depths of the sea, or did ordinary fishermen suddenly gain inspiration and enlightenment, mastering the art of pleasing the sea and gaining its favor?” he inquired.

Juan Oro took a moment of silence before responding, "We don't know. Both possibilities are equally plausible. Milo Village was once eradicated by the Earth Mother Church. Many legacies were severed, and we're left clueless about our ancestors' origins.

"On a personal note, I lean towards the second theory. We're different from typical sea spawn. The children we bear initially resemble humans. It's only as they absorb more of the sea's power that they transform into humanoid lizards. Additionally, while our strength weakens, theirs does not."

Charname nodded in agreement.

"I'm inclined to think the second scenario is more likely too."

He then asked, "Have all traces of Milo Village's ancestors truly been erased? Is there no evidence left?"

Juan Oro studied Charname for a moment before revealing, "There's some residual evidence in the underground chamber of the Governor of the Sea's residence, but it's just symbols and patterns. They're meaningless and indecipherable.

"If you want to see them, wait until the vigil ritual. But aren't you concerned about the risk of exposing our collaboration by going to the Governor of the Sea's residence now?"

"Fair point." After obtaining other details, Charname abruptly receded into the shadows in the corner and vanished.

Juan Oro watched as the great adventurer's companion disappeared and released a slow sigh.

He sensed a storm brewing around Port Santa.

In the master bedroom of the fifth-floor suite at Solow Motel.

Emerging from the shadows, Charname adorned the silver Lie earring behind his left ear. His eyes swiftly transformed, becoming as clear as a lake, and his flaxen-tinted hair cascaded over his shoulders.

Franca, still radiating astonishing charm despite her male attire, tossed the earring back to Lumian. She retrieved a black rubber band from her pocket and tied her long hair into a high ponytail.

"I've discovered traces of Bard!" the Demoness of Pleasure exclaimed with joy.

"Why Bard and not the other two?" Lumian sat in an armchair in front of the desk, tightly drawn curtains behind him.

Deliberately returning to Trier and bringing Franca to Port Santa for her assistance, Lumian believed himself inferior to the Demoness of Pleasure in divination and spirit channeling. Rather than wasting the truth serum, he sought Franca's direct help. Additionally, he wanted Franca to assume the guise of his other identity, completely separating "him" from the adventurer Louis Berry. This would enable him to deceive those secretly monitoring him and potentially execute future deceptions.

Franca shared her findings from the spirit channeling today and the completed conversation.

“The fake Iru must first possess powers akin to a Faceless's, followed by adept thieving skills. Long ago, I Know Someone mentioned that Bard is a Sequence 6 Prometheus of the Marauder pathway. It's highly likely he's even stronger now.

“If others hadn't confirmed that Loki wasn't involved in last year's sea prayer ritual prank, at least not openly, he would have been the most suitable to impersonate Iru. Now, the probability of Iru being Bard is higher.

“As a Mid-Sequence Marauder Beyond, perhaps he possesses an item similar to Lie. Maybe he prayed to that Celestial Worthy, undergoing a change in physique and appearance. Additionally, he could be imbued with mystical anti-divination and anti-prophecy traits. Marauder is one of the three pathways most easily influenced by Celestial Worthy.”

Lumian listened quietly, and a smile gradually formed on his face.

“Bard's role and purpose in last year's ritual are essentially clear.

“He disguised himself as a sailor, boarded the ship, stole the genuine ceremonial ring, and replaced it with a fake one. Then, he willingly leaped into the sea, feigning his death to make his escape!”

Lumian paused briefly before continuing, “The question now is, what roles did Mad Lady and Ultraman play in this matter? So far, their presence doesn't seem to affect the final failure of the sea prayer ritual.”

Franca pursed her lips and paced back and forth.

“Mad Lady might handle receiving and communication. For instance, after Bard jumped into the sea, she could 'teleport' over and whisk him away to prevent him from being consumed by the tumultuous sea. Only a Traveler possesses such an ability.

“Ultraman is likely responsible for providing information about the sea prayer ritual and devising the corresponding plan. But that can't be all. He probably has other roles...”

Lumian leaned back in his chair, stroking his chin thoughtfully.

“I concur with your hypothesis about Mad Lady, but according to the information we have, entering those special waters requires guidance from the Children of the Sea, following a specific route. How did Mad Lady 'teleport' inside? Was she lurking on the ship? Or does Bard carry some special coordinates with him? It's certainly not a physical item; otherwise, it would have been discovered.

“As for Ultraman, I've always suspected he's a native of Port Santa with a profound understanding of the sea prayer ritual. He likely orchestrated the prank last year.”

At this point, Lumian stood up.

“My intuition suggests that if we can uncover Ultraman's actions in last year's prank and identify his role beyond being the mastermind, we can discern April Fool's true motives in this matter!”

Chapter 565 Possible Breakthrough

Franca's emotions were stirred by Lumian's words, and she responded with anticipation, “Then it's akin to catching a fox by its tail. When the time comes, we'll summon good helpers and strive to eliminate a few more key members of April Fool's!”

As she spoke, she gritted her teeth.

Despite Lumian and Franca making various guesses and deductions about Ultraman's role in last year's prank, none of them felt they had grasped the key to the mystery.

Franca exhaled and said, “Phew, there are still some important puzzle pieces missing. See if you can fish out more details.”

She needed to return to Trier.

Lumian tersely acknowledged her words and asked thoughtfully, “How's your search for the Tamara family's descendant going?”

“Nothing yet, but Madam Judgment intends to inform the other Major Arcana card holders about this. She hopes they can help keep an eye out,” Franca briefly explained her situation.

Lumian gazed at her face and said, “I have an investigative direction.”

“What?” Franca perked up.

Lumian's lips curled up.

“Investigate the other members of the Demoness Sect in Trier.

“Given the close ties between certain members of the Tamara family and the Demoness Sect, they might even be collaborating to establish the secret organization, Theosophy Order. There's a chance that one of them could directly join the Demoness Sect.

“Moreover, considering Madam Judgment's mission for you to infiltrate the Demoness Sect, discern the Primordial Demoness's current state and issues, why not investigate other Demonesses? Are you going to wait until you reach the level of a powerhouse like a Demoness of Red before gathering information? Do you believe

there will be enough Angel-level Hunter Beyonder characteristics to aid your return to your original gender at that point?"

"Why the Demoness of Red?" Franca instinctively focused on this question.

Lumian smiled.

"Have you forgotten your nickname, Madame Red Boots?"

Franca smiled awkwardly.

"Isn't that to create a persona with characteristics that can be easily changed when you're on the run? It's clearly different from the description on the wanted poster.

"Ahem, isn't it too dangerous to investigate other Demonesses under the watchful eyes of the Demoness of Black?"

Lumian raised his eyebrows and smiled meaningfully.

"Why are you investigating the Tamara family?"

"Investigating Mirror People," Franca replied subconsciously.

Lumian asked again, "And who assigned you the Mirror People investigation?"

"The Demoness of Black..." Franca immediately shut her mouth.

She then muttered to herself, "However, an intricate balance needs to be struck. The source of the intel must be fabricated nicely; otherwise, we'll still be suspected."

Lumian didn't say anything else. He grabbed Franca's shoulder and planned to send her back to Trier.

Franca glanced at the curtained window and eagerly said, "Remember to ask me for help when you visit the combat nuns in the future."

She arrived in Port Santa in the afternoon and spent a long time using the fake name—Charname—she chose herself, and the face on Lumian's fake ID to travel about. With her fluent Highlander, she quickly grasped the folklore and combat nuns' styles.

Lumian scoffed dismissively.

"Don't even think about it. You can't impregnate them."

Franca replied indignantly, "Theoretically, it's not impossible, but it's quite dangerous. Think about it, Madame Pualis."

Lumian was left speechless.

"Besides, giving birth isn't the only important thing in life..." Franca continued to search for an excuse.

Lumian exhaled silently and activated the black mark on his right shoulder.

He disappeared from the master bedroom with Franca, who was still talking.

In no time, Lumian reappeared at the exact spot he had left.

Shaking his head and teasing Franca, he eased back into the armchair.

It had to be acknowledged that bantering and joking with friends, free from the need for caution, proved helpful in relieving the pent-up emotions within him.

Having regained his composure, Lumian reclined in his chair, sorting through the information on the sea prayer ritual and various rhetoric in his mind. He sought details that might unveil traces of Ultraman's existence and confirm any overlooked issues.

As a Conspirer, Lumian didn't require jotting down key points on paper. He relied on his eyes to decipher the hints. All the information formed a colossal spiderweb in his mind, slowly weaving and transforming.

After a while, he abruptly sat upright.

A breakthrough had been unearthed that could expose the essence of the sea prayer ritual.

Lumian stood and exited the master bedroom. He spotted Ludwig devouring a crispy potato omelet at the dining table in the living room.

Seated across from the boy, Lumian smiled as he retrieved the mutated black spider's compound eye, a spiritual ingredient lacking Beyonder characteristics.

Ludwig immediately glanced up at Lumian.

“Can you eat this?” Lumian flicked the black compound eye.

Ludwig vigorously nodded.

“Yes.”

Intrigued, Lumian took out the Mystery Prying Glasses and inquired, “Can you eat this?”

“Not yet,” Ludwig honestly replied.

Not yet. In other words, perhaps in the future? Lumian stowed away the Mystery Prying Glasses and placed the mutated black spider's compound eye on the dining table before him.

“I'd like you to translate something. If you can provide the correct answer, it's yours for consumption.”

Ludwig gulped and agreed, “Okay.”

Lumian recalled Lato Guiaro's strange pronunciation and emitted a chattering sound.

Finally, he said, “That's the general idea.”

Ludwig shook his head in disappointment.

“I don't know.”

He paused briefly before adding, “But I think I've heard it somewhere. It's somewhat familiar.”

Had most of his memories and knowledge been sealed when his Body of Heart and Mind was sealed? Under Ludwig's reluctant gaze, Lumian returned the mutated black spider's compound eye to his Traveler's Bag.

Ludwig shoved a mouthful of potato omelet into his mouth and mumbled, "If you can find a creature that understands this language for me to eat, I can translate for you."

Wh... Lumian asked in surprise, "Can you acquire a certain ability or knowledge by consuming something?"

"There's a time limit, and it depends on the specific situation," Ludwig succinctly explained without elaborating.

Lumian nodded thoughtfully.

"Were you able to reveal information about the Batings Black Insect because you had consumed that kind of insect shortly before?"

Ludwig nodded. "Yes, it wanted to ambush me. It had been waiting for a long time."

That explains it. I had thought you had recovered some of your memories and knowledge. Indeed, a paralyzing attack wouldn't only target Lugano. After all, this could turn into a trap at any moment... Lumian stood up and left the dining table, returning to the master bedroom under Ludwig's pitiful gaze.

He had no means to find Ludwig a creature that understood the Language of the Sea. The Fisheries Guild members couldn't be certain if their interpretation was accurate.

After entering the master bedroom and closing the door, Lumian lowered his voice and said, "Termiboros, do you understand that language? Do you know the true meaning of that sentence?"

Termiboros's majestic voice echoed in Lumian's ears.

"In any case, it doesn't mean 'We espouse thee, O sea, as a sign of true and perpetual dominion.'"

With that, Termiboros fell silent again, showing no intention of explaining the true meaning to Lumian.

Dammit, might as well not answer! You confirmed my guess but didn't unveil the true content! Heh heh, could it be that you're just pretending to understand? Lumian cursed inwardly, feeling that Termiboros, the Angel of Inevitability, was becoming less direct and straightforward than before. He didn't comprehend the art of sophistry.

Gradually, He learned how to infuriate!

Lumian composed himself and settled back into the armchair. Unfolding the letter, he began writing to Madam Magician.

Detailing his travels, he recounted what he had observed in Port Santa. Finally, he pieced together the pronunciation and wrote down the words to the unknown language. He gave the interpretation of what the Fisheries Guild believed: "We espouse thee, O sea, as a sign of true and perpetual

dominion.” Then, he made a request: Madam, have you encountered this language before? Do you know its true meaning?”

After folding the letter, Lumian initiated a ritual and summoned the “doll” messenger.

The “doll” messenger, adorned in a light-gold dress, emerged from the candle's flame and surveyed its surroundings. In a menacing tone, it declared, “Don't let that filthy child near me!”

“He's dining outside. He won't enter without my permission.” For some reason, Lumian sensed hidden fear in the “doll” messenger's aggressive words.

The messenger nodded in satisfaction.

“Keep an eye on it! If it acts up, don't feed it!”

Using it as a substitute name... Lumian smiled and said, “If I don't feed him, something even more terrifying might happen.”

The messenger fell silent for a moment before saying,

“Then feed it more!”

With that, the doll-like messenger swiftly withdrew the folded letter into the candle flame.

Lumian concluded the ritual, extinguished the candle's flame, and gazed at the master bedroom's door. He muttered to himself, It's indeed a dangerous sealed creature...

He then retrieved the golden pocket watch from Salle de Bal Brise and opened it to take a look.

Suddenly, he transformed into a shadow, seamlessly blending into the darkness.

There was still something to attend to tonight.

In the port district, atop the Fisheries Guild's castle-like building, Lumian found Lato Guiaro waiting on the spot resembling a tower, dressed in a formal suit.

“Are you on duty tonight?” Lumian casually pressed down on his golden straw hat, as if engaging in casual conversation with a friend.

Lato, the middle-aged man, sighed and said, “Originally, no, but since you wanted to come over, that's the case. We can't let an old man like the president do it, right?”

Without further ado, Lumian conjured delayed crimson, nearly white fireballs and hurled them into various corners of the tower.

Having completed this task, he waved at Lato Guiaro and melted back into the shadows.

Lato approached the tower's entrance, clenching his fists in fear.

In just 30 seconds, the crimson, nearly white fireballs exploded simultaneously.

Rumble!

The entire tower became engulfed in flames, and Lato, stationed at the entrance, was sent flying by the shockwave.

Bright scales had already surfaced on his body to mitigate the damage.

Rumble!

In less than half an hour, everyone in Port Santa who was well-informed learned something: the Fisheries Guild had been bombed!

Chapter 566 Gathered Clues

Solow Motel.

Lumian gazed at the red flames in the port district, tuning in to the distant commotion, anticipating potential visitors.

Before long, a knock echoed on the door.

Lumian didn't wait for Lugano to wake up. He pivoted and strode to the door.

The moment he swung it open, Noelia, clad in brown leather armor and a wimple, stood before him.

Noelia's expression was as cold as ice. She abruptly raised her hand and uttered ancient Hermes words, "Imprison!"

Lumian found himself instantly immobilized. Transparent walls or a viscous liquid seemed to encase him, turning him into an insect trapped in amber.

In the next second, Noelia unsheathed a straight sword from her back.

Simultaneously, Lumian's pants tightened, as if he had grown taller and more robust. An explosive force emanated from his body.

The transparent "amber" restraining him creaked, revealing invisible cracks.

With a whoosh, Noelia clutched the hilt of her straight sword with both hands, slicing through the air, carving through the already shaky "prison," aiming for Lumian's head.

Lumian's right fist, ready to strike, collided with the side of the straight sword, a condensed crimson, almost white flame accompanying the impact.

Amidst a deep and controlled explosion, the straight sword slanted, grazing the door frame as it descended to the ground.

Taking advantage of the situation, Noelia retreated, sheathed her sword, and inquired in Intisian, "Were you the one who blew up the Fisheries Guild?"

Upon witnessing this, Lumian refrained from retaliation. His body returned to its normal state as he smiled and replied, "It doesn't matter if I blew it up. What matters is whether anyone can prove it."

He understood that Noelia had issued a warning and wasn't truly targeting him. Otherwise, she would have employed other Beyonder powers after the "Imprison" instead of slashing with her sword.

Noelia, upholding the dignity of maintaining order in Port Santa throughout the year, used a questioning tone typical for various suspects.

"Why did you go to such lengths? Why did you cause such a commotion?"

Lumian turned his head, signaling Lugano, who had awakened at the commotion, to return to sleep in the servant's room.

Walking toward the recliner in the living room, he ignored Noelia's question and smiled.

"I've discovered something."

"Like what?" Noelia entered the suite and closed the wooden door behind her.

Lumian motioned toward the divan.

"Let's have a seat and talk. I wouldn't want you accusing me of being impolite."

Noelia glanced at Lumian and grinned.

"What kind of politeness is there without greeting me by pressing your cheek against mine?"

Her demeanor was direct.

Lumian eased into the recliner and responded to the question, "For instance, last year's sea prayer ritual failed."

Noelia didn't display surprise. She sat on the edge of the divan, leaning forward slightly to avoid the straight sword on her back from jabbing her.

"What else?"

Lumian pondered for a moment and casually remarked, "Also, the sea prayer ritual is a marriage to the sea.

"Furthermore, the Governor of the Sea is the husband of the sea, and the Maidens of the Sea embody the sea in the real world.

"Whether it's the Governor of the Sea or the Maidens of the Sea, the offspring they bear are the Children of the Sea. The first one possesses the purest bloodline..."

Though Lumian was well aware that the offspring of the women the Governor of the Sea had slept with were descendants of the sea, whether they were Maidens of the Sea or not, with his profound mystical knowledge and extraordinary insights, he couldn't help but consider that the Governor of the Sea having his children on his own was also part of the equation.

Phew, as expected, the more you know, the easier it is to be corrupted. I wouldn't have thought so in the past... Lumian sighed inwardly. Noelia, in surprise and admiration, sighed.

"You've made faster progress in your investigation than I anticipated. Most of it pieced together in such a short time."

It's been quite a while. My Language Comprehension charm will expire tomorrow. I wonder how much I'll retain from this enhanced week of study... Lumian grinned and teased, "Don't tell me you think my reputation as a great adventurer was just boasting?"

"Claiming a bounty of 300,000 gold risot for the Demon Warlock certainly isn't a boast," Noelia diplomatically acknowledged, indicating she didn't underestimate someone capable of hunting down such a target.

Content, she nodded and continued, “While many Beyonders wield impressive abilities, their intelligence often falls short. They revel in belligerence and flaunt their might, but you're not one of them.

“Still, I must caution you not to push too far. Despite understanding your true motive for stirring up this commotion, we must uphold peace and order in Port Santa. Don't make things difficult for us.”

Coupled with the warning, the implication is that you shouldn't disrupt Port Santa's current situation. You're free to investigate the sea prayer ritual, but stirring up trouble with the Fisheries Guild is a no-go. What exactly does your Church of Earth Mother aim for? It seems like there's a mixed desire—both wanting and not wanting some actions to be taken... Lumian contemplated Noelia's hint, a smile playing on his lips as he spoke, “If you had been more forthcoming, I wouldn't have had to work this hard.”

Noelia offered a polite yet awkward smile.

“We lack extensive intel. All I can say is the Church allows the sea prayer ritual and the Fisheries Guild to obtain power from the sea for a reason, unrelated to our ability to solve it.

“I'm not privy to the reason—perhaps the Archbishop or our Fertility Order president could shed light.”

Lumian scoffed and said, “Then why allow my investigation of the sea prayer ritual?”

With a sigh, Noelia replied, “Do we need to know? We didn't pry into your true motives for probing the ritual, did we?”

With that, the combat nun swiftly rose from the sofa, striding purposefully towards the suite's door.

After a few steps, she halted, a thoughtful expression crossing her face.

“There are ancient traces concealed in the basement of the Governor of the Sea's residence in Milo Village. They might unveil something crucial. It's best to seize an opportunity to investigate.”

In the subterranean chamber beneath the Governor of the Sea's residence? According to Franca's account, Milo Village's ancestors had left behind symbols and patterns. Does Noelia suggest these hold vital information? Is the reason for the Church of Earth Mother knowingly allowing the occurrence of the sea prayer ritual hidden in that chamber?

If Juan Oro isn't deceptive or concealing the truth, and isn't engaging in foul play, doesn't that imply that the Earth Mother Church possesses a deeper understanding of Milo Village's ancestors than their own descendants? It makes sense. After all, they once obliterated Milo Village and eradicated the faction of those ancestors. Over the past thousand years, there has been no disruption in the legacy, maintaining a prominent position in the real world. Lumian observed Noelia's departure without pressing further.

As he returned to the master bedroom, preparing for sleep, the “doll” messenger dropped a folded piece of paper, swiftly departing without a greeting.

Ludwig isn't that repulsive, except for being a bit ravenous and devouring everything, right?

Uh, Madam Magician does tend to stay up late. She's quickest with her replies at night... Lumian muttered under his breath as he picked up the response.

Swiftly unfolding it, he scanned the contents.

“Your performance in Port Santa has been impressive thus far.

“I won't interfere or provide excessive guidance. This is a prime chance for you to further digest the Conspirer potion.

“I've roughly reconstructed that sentence and read it multiple times. It's not in any language I know presently, but what I can confirm is its lack of natural power. However, it possesses a certain energy—language can possess such energy.

“What does this imply? It means that during the sea prayer ritual, it can't serve as a sacrificial language or communicate with Beyonder items—in simpler terms, the sea.

“So why does the sea prayer ritual work? The key may lie within the ceremonial ring. There's a high chance it has a distinct appearance, peculiar patterns, strong spirituality, and embedded knowledge. The sentence relies on its pronunciation, structure, and energy to activate the ring, making it functional.

“If you can recreate the ring's state after the vigil ritual, I'm confident I can decode its specific effects and approximate meaning.”

That makes sense. When Lato Guiaro recited the words 'We espouse thee, O sea...' there were no indications of natural power being invoked. It must serve a different purpose... Lumian gained a deeper understanding of the sea sacrificial segment after reading Madam Magician's explanation.

Most of the clues seemed to await his infiltration of the Governor of the Sea's residence.

The next morning, Lugano led Ludwig through the streets, grabbing breakfast according to the boy's cravings.

Out of nowhere, someone hurriedly passed by, head lowered, and seemingly slipped, accidentally bumping into him.

Lugano smoothly shifted his body, preventing the person from making contact.

He went the extra mile, helping the individual up and hypocritically saying, “Be careful.”

The man quickly pressed something into Lugano's hand, muttered an apology, and seamlessly melted into the crowd.

Lugano glanced down at his palm, revealing a crumpled white post-it note.

Unrushed, he didn't immediately read the note. After securing breakfast for Ludwig, he returned to Solow Motel and briefed Lumian.

Lumian took the crumpled note, unfolding it with a nonchalant gesture.

In delicate handwriting, it conveyed: "After last year's ritual, the sea experienced an anomaly."

Chapter 567 Possible Leaker

The failure of the sea prayer ritual last year caused an anomaly in the sea? Lumian couldn't help but interpret it that way after going through the contents.

Studying the note in his hand, a familiar fragrance wafted to him.

After some thought, Lumian recalled the source: the Paco family's Madame Giorgia's perfume.

Were they inexperienced or intentionally leaving a trace, implying the Paco family as the source of this information? Lumian mused to himself, recalling the sudden appearance of a humanoid lizard in the Paco family, the severe injuries to Rubi3 Paco's mother Martha, and the peculiarities surrounding them.

Is the core issue the sea's abnormality? Has it weakened the Paco family's Beyonders, causing an ordinary person without sea lineage to transform into a humanoid lizard? Perhaps they don't want other sea spawn to know and were lacking the strength to handle the humanoid lizard, thus seeking foreign adventurers to resolve it? Lumian gained a new insight into the contradictions within the Paco family's commission.

Lato Guiaro and Juan Oro hadn't mentioned the sea's anomaly.

They only noted the sea's increased violence without the ritual's appeasement, the frequent departure of Death Navigators from their territory, and the declining strength of the Children of the Sea.

From their perspective, this situation seemed normal, foreseeable, and unrelated to any anomaly.

Did the anomaly solely affect the Paco family, or did Juan Oro, Lato Guiaro, and others intentionally conceal this matter? Are they guarding against each other? Lumian speculated as he watched the note consumed by crimson flames in his palm.

He leaned toward the latter possibility. If the Paco family wasn't unique, the sea's anomaly should have widespread effects, not solely targeting them.

This understanding shed light on Rubi3 Paco's disdain when speaking of the Maidens of the Sea.

Discovering the truth about the Maidens of the Sea and his true lineage likely filled him with self-loathing and contempt for the entire sea prayer ritual. He'd rather forfeit his family's inheritance than marry another Maiden of the Sea. When the sea anomaly affected the entire Paco family, these emotions reached their zenith.

Lumian's suspicion grew that Nolfi's covert ally might be Rubi3 Paco.

Regardless, given the Paco family's resources and status, they could lead a comfortable life even without the sea prayer ritual.

Lugano stood to the side, observing his employer as Lumian delved into deep thought after reading the note. A twinge of nervousness and fluster crossed Lugano's demeanor.

Is something about to unfold again?

Lumian glanced up at Lugano, his expression pensive.

“Though I haven't reached Highlander proficiency, I've mastered the daily words I need. My body language suffices for a normal life in Port Santa. Plus, the folks I'll be dealing with know Intisian.

“I can settle the remaining balance now and offer you a free 'teleport' back to Trier.”

Instinctively, Lugano shook his head.

“You can't attend to Ludwig when you're in action. If I leave now, who'll keep an eye on him?”

It's unclear who's watching whom... Lumian stared at Lugano for a brief moment, sensing, for the first time, an unsettling undertone in the interpreter's demeanor.

Despite prior attacks and potential risks, there was an inexplicable resistance to the suggestion of terminating the employment contract and taking his offer for a safe departure!

It wouldn't even cost him a verl d'or!

Considering Lugano's typical behavior and personality, Lumian assumed he would readily accept the remaining payment and leave Port Santa. Reality, however, proved otherwise.

Perhaps Lugano himself doesn't understand the rationale behind his decision. It is just an “instinctive” choice... Lumian nodded subtly, opting not to press further on settling the final payment and terminating their employment contract.

In Milo Village, within the Oro family's extensively renovated ancestral house, Juan Oro lounged by the window, puffing on a hookah, his gaze fixed on the sun dipping below the horizon, casting an orange glow. His thoughts drifted to the impending sea prayer ritual, just over a week away.

Abruptly, he turned his head, eyeing a shadow near the door.

The darkness stirred, and a man with green eyes, sporting a golden straw hat, white shirt, and black vest, emerged—the adventurer, Louis Berry.

“Why are you here again?” Juan Oro sighed, switching to Intisian.

Lumian chuckled, dragging a chair into the sun's waning rays.

“I've got another inquiry and a heads-up about a particular operation.”

Juan's eyes narrowed.

“What scheme are you plotting now?”

“Tonight, I intend to infiltrate the Governor of the Sea's residence. If I go unnoticed, I'll observe the rooms where the vigil ritual is conducted. If discovered, I'll make a swift exit. This fits my radical persona and purported motives, doesn't it? It'll deflect suspicion from our covert collaboration,” Lumian disclosed, a hint of a smile in his explanation.

Juan Oro harbored an unexplained sense of threat from Louis Berry, yet he found no tangible evidence. Despite this, Lumian's words resonated with an unsettling logic.

He drew a deep drag from his hookah in silence before he spoke.

“What are you getting at?”

Lumian smiled.

“I'm curious to see the ring that marries the sea, its intricate engravings, and the patterns it bears.

“I know you've only crafted the ring mold and haven't completed the ritual to infuse it with something special. However, after serving as deputy host 11 times and assisting even more, I'm confident you've memorized the patterns, symbols, and structure.”

Juan Oro stiffened, his tone turning icy.

“What's your motive?”

The room's afterglow, touched by the setting sun, dimmed suddenly, as if being pulled into another dimension.

Unfazed, Lumian responded, “Why all the secrecy? Haven't you heard that the ring's design, patterns, and structure have long been exposed?”

Juan Oro's eyes narrowed. “When did this happen?”

Lumian arched an eyebrow.

“Didn't my companion inform you of the true reason behind the sea prayer ritual failure?”

“He merely confirmed the fake Iru on the ship.” Juan Oro had his suspicions.

Lumian grinned, shaking his head. He began unraveling his deductions, starting with the custom-made fake ring in Torres and the orchestrated lamb sacrifice sent to the ship after a bribe.

Juan Oro held his silence, his countenance growing darker.

After a tense pause, he spoke in a hoarse tone, “Not many are privy to the intricacies of the Ring of the Sea Queen, and the fact that sea spawn seldom inspect the sacrificial offerings' entrails. Each of them, the Children of the Sea, veterans of countless core rituals, are still alive... Iru and Salah were oblivious...”

As Juan Oro's words, spoken through gritted teeth, reached Lumian's ears, a sudden realization dawned upon him.

Ultraman is affiliated with the Fisheries Guild, a Child of the Sea endowed with numerous powers and a distinct status!

There's also the possibility that he's manipulated such an individual, establishing a clandestine “partnership.”

Without such a connection, how could April Fool's possess precise details about the ceremonial ring's appearance and exploit the sea prayer ritual's "supervisory" loophole?

Even though I Know Someone mentioned that Ultraman is a Sun pathway Beyonder, it doesn't rule out his identity as a Child of the Sea. Transforming into a Child of the Sea first and then drinking the Sun pathway's potion shouldn't pose an issue. The power of the Child of the Sea resonates with the cosmos, and the Sun and the cosmos are inherently compatible. Is April Fool's true motive for disrupting the sea prayer ritual preparations related to Ultraman or his collaborator aiming to fully control the power or the palace at the bottom of the sea? Lumian's thoughts gradually clarified.

He looked at Juan Oro with a relaxed smile and remarked, "If there wasn't a mole, how could the sea prayer ritual be disrupted so easily?"

Juan Oro had harbored similar suspicions for the past year; Lumian's words were irrefutable.

After some contemplation with an unpleasant expression, Juan Oro composed himself and stated, "I have to uncover the traitor before the official sea sacrifice..."

At this point, Juan Oro turned his gaze to Lumian.

"I might need your cooperation on something when the time comes."

Oh, you're fishing too? Lumian replied with a smile, "No problem."

Juan Oro set down his hookah and left his seat.

He walked to the desk, retrieved a pen and paper, and began sketching.

Nearly ten minutes later, the old man staggered to Lumian and handed him the paper.

Lumian glanced at it and recognized six designs—representing the front, left, right, back, front, and inner parts of the Ring of the Sea Queen. Each design featured intricate and mystifying symbols and patterns.

"It's actually useless for you to obtain it. It won't have any effect," Juan Oro said in a low, raspy voice. "The corresponding sea spawn have to use their special abilities to inscribe them on the ring and corrode them for six hours to please the sea and gain her recognition."

Lumian nodded and replied, "I have no intention of replicating one."

He was obtaining it solely to send to Madam Magician for interpretation.

He then asked, "Is this the ring-making segment of the vigil ritual? Is there no other step?"

"There's another step. An assistant host will take the ring to the basement and place it in front of the patterns and symbols representing our ancestors for an hour. This is a show of respect to our ancestors, like greeting the elders before a wedding," Juan Oro explained briefly.

After a moment of contemplation, Lumian responded, "Can you also draw the patterns and symbols representing your ancestors?"

Juan Oro returned to the desk.

This time, he completed it in just two minutes.

Lumian took it and noticed scattered lines and arcs. Many details were missing from the middle, making it impossible to discern its original appearance.

“Seeing it in person might allow you to make connections easier.” Juan Oro sighed again.

Lumian nodded.

“Then I'll infiltrate the Governor of the Sea's residence tonight.”

Juan Oro tersely acknowledged his words.

“Be careful of the sea spawn there. They have their own specialties. They might not be very strong, but they can counter certain abilities of yours.”

Late at night, under the crimson moonlight, Lumian appeared near the cathedral-like building.

Chapter 568 Patterns of the “Ancestors”

Lumian swiveled his head towards the docks, his body seamlessly blending into the shadows beyond the moonlight's reach.

Following the shadowy path, he smoothly bypassed the guards at the entrance, slipping into the sacred-looking building without a sound.

In the foyer, he came to a sudden halt.

Amidst the dark “fishnets,” he spotted short figures with oddly large heads, bulging eyes, and wrinkled skin – like elders in miniature. Standing just over a meter tall, they were the “Little Devils” mentioned by Juan Oro, a species of sea spawn.

Infiltrating the shadows, these Little Devils patrolled the Governor of the Sea's residence, using their unique abilities to prevent any unauthorized entry.

Having encountered them before, Lumian knew these Little Devils weren't formidable opponents. Despite their talent for blending into shadows and creating illusions, he could dispatch a team with ease.

Yet, eliminating them discreetly posed a challenge. Lumian couldn't be certain that dealing with one group of Little Devils wouldn't stir up trouble and alert other creatures lurking in the building.

Focused, Lumian surveyed the areas untouched by shadows. In the crimson moonlight, he discerned vague figures drifting in the void, intermittently appearing and disappearing.

These were fish adorned in dark-gray armor, their bulging eyes resembling meatballs at both ends. Starlight-threaded “thin threads” peeked through the gaps in their scale-like armor.

The peculiar fish hovered in the air, scattering across different regions. Occasionally, they released bubbles carrying formless storms and impalement-inducing cracks.

Erupting bubbles created countless invisible spikes, setting perilous traps for teleporting “guests.”

At the hall intersection and various aisles, silent three-man guard teams patrolled. Their expressions betrayed nothing, but Lumian noticed slender black insects, covered in bristles, emerging from their necks and mouths.

After a brief inspection, the Batings Black Insects swiftly retracted into the guards' bodies.

The eyes of sea creature statues on the wall appeared alive, scanning the areas with a strange awareness.

Just as Juan Oro said, there are a large number of different sea spawn here. Infiltrating silently amidst the diverse sea spawn here proves to be a formidable task. Lumian, patient, opted to remain in the foyer, awaiting the right moment.

In under two minutes, a thunderous bang reverberated from the dock.

Crimson flames shot into the sky, casting an eerie glow on nearby windows, making them quiver.

Little Devils lurking in the shadows, Armored Monster Fish manipulating the surrounding void, Batings Black Insects orchestrating guards, and peculiar creatures concealed in the statues' eyes—all instinctively shifted their focus to the glass window near the dock.

Lumian sprang into action.

He orchestrated the disturbance with a delayed explosion!

Seizing the opportunity, he stealthily navigated through the shadows surrounding the Little Devils and skirted the region patrolled by the Armored Monster Fish.

Before other sea spawn could react, he pinpointed the room at the far end of the hall, relying on Juan Oro's intel.

A dim light emitted from the black mark on his right shoulder as he swiftly reached the door of the target room. In a blink, he transformed into a shadow, slipping through the crack.

Inside, Lumian discovered intricate patterns and symbols etched on the floor, ceiling, and walls, reminiscent of magnified versions of Juan Oro's hand-drawn sacrificial ring pattern.

Besides that, nothing else caught his eye.

Lumian deduced, During the vigil ritual, some sea spawn enter this place, condense the patterns from every direction, and carve them into the ring mold. Then, they infuse them with special energy. Quickly scanning the area, he stepped out of the shadows, activating a black mark on his chest.

Nearly invisible water ripples danced on the surrounding walls, then subsided.

Bottle of Fiction!

Lumian “enclosed” the two connected rooms into the Bottle of Fiction. The entry requirement: ordinary humans.

He positioned himself near the opening of the Bottle of Fiction, deliberately creating loud footsteps as he hid by the door.

Almost instantly, certain sea spawn picked up on the disturbance.

Recalling the explosion at the docks and the towering flames, they realized they had fallen into a diversion.

Summoning the Armored Monster Fish, Batings Black Insects, Little Devils, and their cohorts, they ordered an investigation into the ring-making ritual venue for potential infiltrators.

Despite attempts to rush in through the door, the sea spawn inexplicably found themselves back in the hall.

The Armored Monster Fish, discerning the issue, released bubbles with a formless storm toward the entrance of the Bottle of Fiction.

As before they surged towards him, aiming to breach the room, Lumian, now a shadow creature, slipped through the crack at the base of the wooden door, quietly exiting the Bottle of Fiction and returning to the hall.

His ploy successfully diverted the sea spawn's attention, creating a chance for him to change positions.

Naturally, he needed to employ effective tactics a few more times!

Anticipating the enemy's disbelief in encountering the same trick repeatedly within a short span, Lumian knew they would assume there were alternative plans.

Of course, on the third attempt, heightened vigilance would set in. Everything they saw would seem like a distraction. When the moment arrived, Lumian could flip the strategy.

Seizing the moment when the sea spawn fixated on the Bottle of Fiction, Lumian deftly avoided the gathering of Little Devils. He circled the Armored Monster Fish, reaching a corner of the hall, and once again utilized Spirit World Traversal.

This time, Lumian's destination was the staircase leading to the basement.

The guards, lured into the hall, left the area unmonitored.

As Lumian's silhouette appeared at the staircase entrance, he swiftly transformed into a shadow, slipping into the basement through the darkness.

No guards or sea spawn patrolled this seemingly unimportant area, an area that was merely a testament to the villagers of Milo Village's reverence for their ancestors.

In his shadow creature form, Lumian possessed "natural" night vision. Even without a fireball, he could vaguely discern the dark basement.

Despite its dampness due to proximity to the sea, the absence of a moldy odor was thanks to the various Beyonder powers within the building.

At the center stood a decrepit stone platform, reminiscent of an altar for ancestor worship. Surrounding it were signs of destruction, leaving only disjointed lines, arcs, and indistinct patterns.

Do these fragmented symbols and patterns constitute the coat of arms of Milo Village's ancestors? Or do they possess mystical effects? Lumian scrutinized them repeatedly, struggling to reconstruct the undamaged version in his mind.

Yet, he sensed that since Noelia of the Fertility Order had alluded to the revealing nature of these symbols and patterns, he might extract valuable information.

What kind of information could it be? Maintaining his shadow creature form, Lumian extended into the darkness, surveying his surroundings.

Frowning, he whispered, Could it be that the Church of Earth Mother, fully capable of obliterating this place, deliberately left traces? Does this imply that the sea prayer ritual holds some influence over them too?

Lumian directed his gaze at the stone platform, the sacrificial offering to the ancestors, recalling Juan Oro's details about the ring-making ritual.

After crafting the Ring of the Sea Queen, it would rest here for an hour as a mark of respect to their ancestors.

Was it placed on this partially collapsed altar? Approaching the grayish-black stone platform, Lumian observed no dust accumulation. All remaining lines converged on an empty space at the center of the circle.

His heart stirred as he retrieved a Louis d'or, placing it in the center of the altar.

Nothing happened.

Undeterred, Lumian replaced the Louis d'or with gold risot, Mystery Prying Glasses, Flog boxing gloves, and various other items.

Yet, still no anomaly.

Persistence drove him. Lumian pulled out the silver Lie earring from his pocket and positioned it on an empty space on the stone platform.

In the next moment, a surreal sensation enveloped Lumian.

Within the stone platform, illusory lines and arcs materialized, intertwining with remnants to form two distinct patterns:

One pattern featured layers of doors sketched with simple strokes, while the other resembled a clock divided into twelve sectors, albeit having a single hand.

Lumian observed keenly, sensing something adhering to the Lie earring.

In an instant, the lines from the stone platform dimmed, retracted, and returned to their original positions. Normalcy resumed.

Are these the patterns representing Milo Village's ancestors? Or did they gain knowledge from the initial revelations? Lumian sensed sea spawn surging toward the basement. After muttering to himself, he seized the Lie earring and “teleported” away.

In the master bedroom of the suite at Solow Motel.

As Lumian's figure manifested, he settled down and began writing to Madam Magician. Unfazed by checking the changes in the Lie earring, he intended to send it to his Major Arcana card holder for inspection.

Recreating the patterns, symbols, structure, and various scenes from the Governor of the Sea's residence, Lumian neatly folded several letters, arranged a ritual, and summoned the “doll” messenger.

Then, he patiently awaited the reply.

Chapter 569 Language Interpretation

The crimson moonlight seeped through the not-so-thick curtains, casting its glow on the desk, already yellowed by the gas wall lamp's illumination, emphasizing its presence.

Lumian perused his freshly acquired Highlander textbook, patiently waiting for over half an hour before finally receiving a reply from Madam Magician via the “doll” messenger.

The letter was concise and spanned only two pages.

“Let's start with the basics.

“Combining the patterns, symbols, and structure of the ring—although I can't precisely decipher the meaning of that sentence—I can identify its composition and the practical application of various short sentences.

“It breaks down into three segments:

“The first part serves to precisely locate the ring, facilitating the subsequent activation of special characteristics and the infusion of energy contained in the language.

“The second part involves injecting the energy carried by the words into the ring through resonance and other forms, activating a magic circle formed by patterns and symbols. Consider the sacrificial ring as a charm. The second paragraph is akin to its designated special activation incantation. It doesn't necessitate invoking supernatural powers but requires prior guidance.

“In the third part, I suspect it's a ciphertext attached to the ring. In simpler terms, once the ceremonial ring is fully activated through the first two parts, it records and carries the final ciphertext into the sea to transmit it to something.

“Are you following so far? The ceremonial ring is like a special key, functional only after activation. Furthermore, it necessitates the corresponding password to open the 'doors' of the target.

“Heh heh, the actual meaning of 'We espouse thee, O sea, as a sign of true and perpetual dominion' is roughly akin to 'a key to unlock the passageway. The password is XXXXXXXXX.' Naturally, if translated directly, it'll differ significantly, but that should capture the essence.”

Lumian couldn't resist a smirk.

Recalling the solemn recitation by the previous Governors of the Sea, envisioning the act of marrying the sea, anyone familiar with the corresponding language would likely burst into laughter.

What sea, what espousal, what dominion! After all the complexity, it boiled down to unlocking and opening a passageway—a simple password entry!

Contemplating sharing this interpretation with Juan Oro, Lato Guiaro, and the others, Lumian pondered their likely reactions.

No, they wouldn't believe it. A millennium or two of misunderstanding had morphed into faith, perseverance, and legacy. Admitting a mistake wasn't something they'd easily embrace.

Regardless, the result would be the same. Interpretation or translation, it didn't matter how they perceived it!

Collecting himself, Lumian turned to the second page of the letter, eager to continue reading.

“Next is the more complicated part.

“The two patterns you witnessed in the Governor of the Sea's basement have a profound history, stretching back to the early Fourth Epoch.

“They serve as symbols of mysticism and the coat of arms of ancient nobles. One of them is linked to an acquaintance—no, a familiar Angel, Amon!

“The pattern resembling a clock signifies the Worm of Time. It stands as the Amon family's coat of arms.”

Worm of Time? The Amons' coat of arms? Why is it Him again! Lumian's eyes narrowed, feeling as though he was still entrenched in the Amons.

What connection did Milo Village's ancestors, Port Santa's sea prayer ritual, and the distinctiveness of those waters share with the Amons?

On the surface, no apparent link existed!

As Lumian's thoughts raced, he suddenly sensed a connection between the sea prayer ritual and the former King of Angels of the Marauder pathway.

Reflecting on the key members involved in the April Fool's ritual prank, Bard, a Beyonder of the Marauder pathway, and Mad Lady, belonging to the neighboring Apprentice pathway, even prayed to The Celestial Worthy of Heaven and Earth—a being with profound influence over the Marauder pathway.

While this didn't directly point to the Amons, the gathering of Marauder-related individuals suggested a reasonable association between the sea prayer ritual and the Marauder pathway.

Lumian exhaled, lowering his head to read further insights from Madam Magician.

“The layers of doors come from the Abraham family. Yes, the Abraham family, one of the five nobles of the Tudor Empire. I previously mentioned that in the Tudor Empire, only five families hold the hereditary duke title: Abraham, Amon, Antigonus, Jacob, and Tamara. Among them, the Abrahams control the Apprentice pathway.

Remember, Apprentices often represent seals.

“Therefore, it's plausible to believe that the sea prayer ritual predates previous estimates, tracing back to before the demise of the Fourth Epoch's Tudor Empire. Encountering matters related to the Tudor Empire sure isn't a coincidence for you, is it?”

“Do you now grasp the essence of the sea prayer ritual? Further explanations may not be necessary, correct?”

“I'm starting to suspect that Milo Village's ancestors misunderstood the initial sentence's meaning, leading to the expansion of the sea sacrifice and vigil from the revelation. This resulted in an absurd sea marriage ritual spanning a millennium or two. It could very well be a manifestation of that individual's mischievous nature, reveling in playing a joke on everyone, indifferent to the fate of others.”

“See, this is what a prank should be. Those April Fool's folks could learn a thing or two.”

“If you have more questions or haven't clarified certain aspects, feel free to write and ask.”

“By the way, Lie now possesses a temporary ability lasting half a month. It can absorb a specific amount of power from a target, though this power won't endure long. For ordinary people, it might persist for half a year or a year. However, for you, it won't last more than a week due to the conflict with your powers.”

Lumian averted his gaze from the letter, his thoughts in disarray.

Madam Magician suggests that the uniqueness of those waters originated from the ancestor of the Abraham family and a certain Amon? The core of the sea prayer ritual was personally devised by these two Angel-level figures. They guided the ancestors of Milo Village in Port Santa and left behind a revelation, compelling them to perform the ritual annually?

Due to Amon's mischievous nature, the ancestors of Milo Village misunderstood the true meaning of that sentence, thinking they were meant to marry the sea. Consequently, the core of the sea prayer ritual became increasingly complex, expanding into more segments over the years. It transformed into an extensive prank that persisted for over a millennium?

Having comprehended Madam Magician's hypothesis, Lumian reconsidered the essence of the sea prayer ritual.

Appeasing the special entity concealed at the bottom of the sea—perhaps that palace?

Apprentice represents a seal... Marauder is stealing...

Stealing...

Lumian suddenly glanced down at his left chest.

He grasped the essence of the sea prayer ritual!

Finding a husband for the sea, pacifying its violence, genuinely pleasing it, and obtaining corresponding boons were all absurd reasons concocted by Milo Village's ancestors after being misled!

The essence of the sea prayer ritual was to steal boons!

The “palace” at the bottom of the sea had been sealed by the Apprentice pathway, but the ancestor of the Abraham family worried that, over time, the seal's power would wane, allowing the “palace” to gradually regain strength. To counter this, he enlisted Amon to devise a ritual for regularly siphoning off the restored power of the palace each year, preventing it from breaking through the seal.

Consequently, after each sea prayer ritual, the sea area would become tranquil, free from excessive storms. The previous year's failed ritual had allowed the palace to accumulate a certain degree of strength. Consequently, the sea experienced abnormality, leading to an increased number of shipwrecks, and Death Navigators departed the special sea area more frequently.

The reason for only entering the sea when the stars aligned and following a specific route to reach the destination was that only then would a complex passageway appear in the outer seal!

Lumian stood up and took a few steps forward.

Having unraveled the essence of the sea prayer ritual, he comprehended the Earth Mother Church's motive for perpetuating it.

Initially, the clergyman of the Earth Mother Church, lacking thorough investigations, destroyed Milo Village, putting an end to the sea prayer ritual. However, at the bottom of the building, they discovered the coat of arms representing the two nobles of the Tudor Empire, halting the final step in time. Later, they realized they needed to dispatch demigod-level Saints to deal with the unique waters each year. High-end forces were required to guard it for an extended period, making it quite troublesome. Consequently, when the sea prayer ritual resurfaced, they tacitly agreed to the reconstruction of Milo Village.

In most cases, the sea prayer ritual didn't adversely affect the innocent or disrupt local order. Every Governor of the Sea possessed a certain amount of the sea's bloodline, and while the Maidens of the Sea would eventually transform into humanoid lizards in their old age, they could alter their fates and enjoy power and wealth for 30 to 40 years or even longer.

For Maidens of the Sea seeking free love, the Church of Earth Mother likely tacitly consented or even aided their escape, as the chances of success were otherwise quite low.

So, why did the Fertility Order encourage me to investigate the sea prayer ritual? Why did Noelia provide some information while withholding crucial details? Lumian's confusion swiftly dissipated.

The real entity fishing behind the scenes was not the Fisheries Guild but the Church of Earth Mother!

The failure of last year's sea prayer ritual had alarmed the Church of Earth Mother, fearing a similar problem this year. Observing Louis Berry's inclination to investigate the sea prayer ritual, they encouraged him to do so, allowing potential saboteurs hidden in the shadows to contact him, surface, and capture them all at once!

Phew. Lumian exhaled, redirecting his focus to April Fool's.

Now, he was certain that April Fool's intended to break the seal around those special waters.

Last year marked the first step towards breaking the seal, but it hadn't progressed to the point where the underwater "palace" could breach it. This year, they would undoubtedly create a similar situation once again. Otherwise, if the sea prayer ritual succeeded, their pranks from last year would be in vain!

The question now was, what would the key members of April Fool's do? How could they seize the benefits represented by the palace and evade the corresponding dangers? Lumian stared at the gas wall lamp emitting a yellowish glow, sinking into deep thought.

More than a week quickly elapsed, and in the blink of an eye, the day of the sea prayer ritual arrived.

After completing his breakfast, Lumian heard the melodic tunes of various musical instruments wafting in from the street outside.

With a smile, he wiped his mouth with a napkin and strolled toward the window, welcoming the bright sunlight pouring in.

Chapter 570 Festival

On Aquina Street, a two-story ceremonial boat crafted from wood, cardboard, and adorned with ribbons rolled forward, propelled by four sleek horses.

This intricate vessel mimicked the Governor of the Sea's boat, designed to economize materials and size, allowing horses to guide it through the city.

Eight men and eight women, dressed vibrantly, stood on both upper and lower levels of the flower boat. They sang and danced, their joy infecting the spectators on both sides of the street.

Port Santa's premier folk orchestra surrounded the ceremonial boat, playing rhythmic drumbeats and a variety of instruments such as clarinets, oboes, flutes, and strings.

The onlookers on the roadside were in high spirits, alternating between singing and following the ceremonial boat, hoping to catch a refreshing spray from the water droplets scattered by the sixteen men and women.

Observing the scene from the fifth floor of the Solow Motel, Lumian sensed that the sea prayer ritual had evolved beyond a mere sacrificial ceremony. Excluding its core aspects, it had transformed into a city-wide folklore festival.

Despite many residents of Port Santa being devout followers of the Earth Mother and not attributing spiritual significance to the sea, they embraced the festivities, dancing and celebrating on this special day.

As the flower boat concluded its tour of Aquina Street, Lumian turned to Lugano and remarked, "Take good care of Ludwig today. No matter which celebration you attend, ensure he's with you."

“Yes, Boss,” Lugano replied, influenced by the cheerful atmosphere of the sea prayer ritual, his emotions lifted.

Without wasting any time, Lumian snatched his golden straw hat, exited the suite, and descended the stairs.

In the lobby, his gaze fell upon Otta Guillaume, the Solow Motel owner, doling out cash to the lady at the front desk and the two attendants—two risot each.

“Is this a holiday bonus?” Lumian inquired in Intisian.

Otta Sr. chuckled and replied, “No bonus, just their compensation. They're on duty at the motel today, keeping an eye on the place. They'll miss out on the sea prayer ritual and other celebrations.

“I'm heading to the docks to see my little cabbage dance!”

“I'll be there too,” Lumian said with a smile, embracing the festive ambiance once again.

If the sea prayer ritual lacked mystic elements, Lumian would have fully immersed himself in the festive atmosphere, reminiscent of the few years of Lent he experienced in Cordu.

Exiting the motel, Lumian leisurely strolled towards the harbor, taking note of Port Santa's residents bedecked in their most glamorous and festive attire. At a glance, the streets appeared to be awash with a sea of colors.

His attire—a white shirt, black vest, and dark pants—made him stand out like a foreigner amidst the lively crowd.

Lumian adorned the golden straw hat, injecting a splash of color into his appearance.

The rhythmic chime of bicycle bells accompanied the passing of wooden crate-laden bicycles. Vendors energetically peddled popsicles of various flavors to eager citizens anticipating the sea dance and boat race.

Observing the two segments with a relaxed demeanor, Lumian savored the festivities. He patiently waited until the two-story festival boat, carrying the Governor of the Sea and the Maidens of the Sea, embarked on its journey to Milo Village before departing the port.

Choosing to abstain from other citizen-organized celebrations, Lumian sought refuge in a public washroom within the nearest department store, slipping into a cubicle.

Triggering the black mark on his right shoulder, Lumian materialized in a concealed corner of Milo Village.

Shifting into a shadow creature, he seamlessly infiltrated the Oro family's blend of ancient and modern architecture, arriving at Juan Oro's bedroom.

The president of the Fisheries Guild awaited Lumian's arrival, and upon seeing the figure of the adventurer, Louis Berry, emerge from the darkness, Juan Oro, with deep wrinkles, gestured towards the unconscious Milo villagers on the floor.

“These are two of the four deputy hosts for the vigil and the sea sacrificial ritual. Choose one to assume his form.”

This condition was pivotal for Lumian's collaboration with Juan Oro. He sought continuous participation in the core sections of the sea prayer ritual.

Initially hesitant due to the inability to deceive other sea spawn and introduce a stranger onto the ship, Juan Oro only agreed to allow Lumian to infiltrate the Governor of the Sea's residence before the vigil ritual, observing it discreetly.

However, with Ultraman under suspicion as a key figure in the Fisheries Guild, Lumian seized the opportunity when Juan Oro required cooperation and assistance, showcasing the abilities of the Lie earring. Thus, Lumian devised a plan to disguise himself as a specific deputy host and gain access to the ship.

After studying one of the deputy hosts for a few moments, Lumian adorned a silver earring. He replicated the appearance of the chosen deputy host, seamlessly blending into his guise.

In no time, except for his clothing, there was no discernible difference between Lumian and the deputy host.

“It's my turn,” Juan Oro said in a deep Intisian voice.

He decided to take on the guise of another deputy host and personally board the ship to avert any potential mishaps.

Concerned about Louis Berry's involvement in the sea sacrifice and wary of lurking enemies employing unknown methods to cause trouble, Juan Oro believed that everything would converge during the sea sacrifice segment. Boarding the boat covertly would enable him to address unforeseen circumstances in time, delivering a strategic “surprise.”

Juan Oro harbored suspicions that Louis Berry might be an accomplice of last year's saboteurs, his prior actions serving as a ploy to deceive them and allow him to openly disrupt the ritual at a crucial moment.

Lumian casually tossed the Lie earring to Juan Oro, who proceeded to change into a dark-blue robe embroidered with various sea elements.

Upon donning the silver earring, Juan Oro experienced a remarkable control over every detail of his body.

Attempting to adjust the wrinkles on his face, he observed himself becoming ten to twenty years younger in the mirror.

Despite his potent and diverse Beyonder powers, the president of the Fisheries Guild couldn't help but marvel.

“How magical.”

After completing his disguise, Lumian pointed at the unconscious deputy host.

“Who's responsible for keeping an eye on them and preventing their appearance before the sea prayer ritual?”

“My wife,” Juan Oro replied, already prepared.

She, a former Maidens of the Sea and the current Matriarch of the Oro family, possessed considerable strength. While she hadn't participated in any ring-making rituals, she was a trusted individual who wouldn't divulge secrets.

Lumian redirected the conversation, inquiring, "As the president of the Fisheries Guild, won't you be suspected if you don't wait for news of the successful sea prayer ritual with the other committee members?"

"No, I don't go every year. I can also wait for news at home, and my wife will pretend to be me," Juan Oro stated, pointing at Lie on his left ear and removing it.

After confirming the details, Lumian inquired further, "Have you investigated any of those who nearly died and came back to life, or have their personalities undergone a significant change?"

These individuals were key members of the Fisheries Guild familiar with the specific design of the Ring of the Sea Queen and the complete details of the sea prayer ritual.

According to Franca, every member of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society was a soul from another world, having "resurrected" in recently deceased human bodies. This information could help identify who might be Ultraman.

Juan Oro slowly shook his head.

"No, at least not in my memory. Time was tight, so I couldn't investigate them one by one."

The rejuvenated elder, now appearing in his prime, continued, "Remember, your name is Brian now. My name is Jorge. If you don't understand what others are saying later, it's fine. I'll hint at you. When you need to answer questions, I'll help you."

"Alright." Lumian maintained the pretense of not knowing Highlander.

In reality, having extensively studied under the effects of the Language Comprehension charm, he had already mastered more words and grammar. While still unable to fully comprehend others' words, he could grasp key words, tense, and the active and passive voice, allowing him to roughly understand the meaning. Expressing himself with short sentences and simple structures presented no challenge.

Clad in the dark-blue robe of a deputy host, Lumian entered the Governor of the Sea's residence, guided by Juan Oro, who no longer staggered. Passing through a hall adorned with sea creature statues, they reached the room where the Governor of the Sea maintained his vigil.

The current Governor of the Sea, Simon of the Guiaro family, was from a branch with a thin bloodline, unqualified to reside in the ancestral house.

At that moment, Simon sat cross-legged on the cold floor, suppressing his excitement. With half-closed eyes, he felt the moist air enveloping him.

Although Lumian refrained from activating his Spirit Vision, he sensed various sea spawn bustling in the shadows, the void, and the statues.

Juan Oro led Lumian out of the room, guiding him to the most secluded part of the building. Opening the wooden door to the servants' quarters, Juan Oro addressed the fake Governor of the Sea, Miguel, lying on the bed.

“Once the sea prayer ritual succeeds, you can leave, but you must depart Port Santa with the wealth you've amassed over the past year.”

Miguel sat up excitedly. “Alright, alright!”

Though their conversation occurred in Highlander, Lumian grasped the essence.

After this exchange, Juan Oro translated the conversation for Lumian, emphasizing, “You can verify if I'm lying based on Miguel's expression.”

Lumian silently pondered, thinking, So what if you're not lying? What you said might not be done... He then returned to the hall, assuming a cross-

legged position opposite the other two deputy hosts.

As time passed, midnight arrived, marking the completion of the Ring of the Sea Queen. One of the deputy hosts retrieved it and guided it to the basement in the dim moonlight.

The moment had come to pay homage to their ancestors.

Lumian observed the scene in silence and suddenly had a thought.