

Inevitability 631

Chapter 631 Devilology

The steeple's base was paved with black stone bricks, and a colossal pillar rose proudly. Lumian felt like a visitor in a giant's kingdom as he strode through the expansive and dimly lit space. The occasional tall residents who effortlessly towered over him only heightened this impression.

Guided by the signs on the wall, he ascended to the third floor, revealing rows of imposing bookshelves.

The custodian of the library, an elderly man draped in a linen robe, oversaw the space.

Even seated, he matched Lumian's height, and his slightly gray skin bore the marks of age.

Engrossed in a goatskin-bound book, the library administrator paid no heed to Lumian's entrance, his gaze firmly fixed on the text.

Lumian, not rushing to seek permission for his exploration, entered the library and followed the guidelines posted on each row of bookshelves leading to the section housing mythical books.

He ran his finger over the weathered leather-bound book and another with freshly copied pages, choosing a tome that chronicled creation myths.

Before the bookshelf, Lumian casually flipped through its pages, only to stuff the book back.

He couldn't comprehend it!

The words were in Jotun!

This ancient language, associated with the Beyonder race of giants, possessed the ability to manipulate the forces of nature. Ranked alongside Dragonese, Elvish, and ancient Hermes, Jotun held significant importance in mysticism.

Although Lumian had mastered ancient Hermes and Hermes, Jotun remained a language he recognized but hadn't fully mastered. He could barely decipher the title of the ancient book but couldn't comprehend its contents.

A sweep of his gaze revealed a corresponding copy of the ancient book, this time written in ancient Feysac—a human language devoid of supernatural influence.

Joy surged within Lumian as he retrieved the soft-covered book and settled into the reading area near the window.

Throughout the entire process, no one intervened or issued a warning.

He strolled past the section dedicated to Beyonder creatures, and his keen eyes snagged a book titled “Devilology.”

In the reading area, he chose a spot shielded from direct sunlight yet bathed in ample illumination. Seated, he delved into the pages of “Devilology.”

As he read, Lumian's eyes widened, and his mouth hung slightly ajar.

He murmured to himself,

Each piece of information was invaluable!

The “Devilology” book meticulously outlined the traits and behaviors of creatures from various species after transforming into Devils. It also provided detailed analyses of Devils with distinct personalities within the same species.

For those potentially facing Beyonders of the Devil pathway in combat, the value of this book rivaled that of a potent Grade 2 Sealed Artifact or its corresponding mystical item.

giants and giants here are Devil Hunters? Perhaps, in ancient times, when Devils were more active, they shared information with other factions? Lumian grew more alarmed as he read on.

Midway through, he massaged his throbbing temples, sensing a rapid depletion of his spirituality.

Lumian temporarily closed “Devilology,” intending to explore the creation myths of the New City of Silver and take a well-deserved break.

From the very outset, the creation myth read:

“The omnipotent and omniscient god created everything before slipping into a profound slumber.

“Among the mythical races He brought into being, Giant King Aurmir, Dragon of Imagination Ankewelt, Elf King Soniathrym, Vampire Ancestor Lilith, Devil King Farbauti, Phoenix Ancestor Gregrace, Mutant King Kvastir, and King of Demonic Wolves Flegrea emerged as potent and crazy beings. They partitioned the authority left by the Lord, transforming into ancient deities governing the sky, land, sea, reality, the spirit world, and the astral realm...”

Abruptly, a dull-skinned, slightly gray finger tapped a specific spot on the page.

An aged, raspy voice echoed.

“Do not utter this name in any Beyonder language.”

Lumian looked up, surprised to find the library administrator, previously immersed in his books, standing beside him seemingly out of nowhere.

As a Hunter, Lumian remained oblivious!

Partly due to the lingering dizziness from reading “Devilology,” it showcased the library administrator's proficiency in concealing both breath and movement, given his towering stature of more than three meters.

Lumian redirected his attention to the name indicated by the library administrator.

“Devil Monarch Farbauti.”

Without awaiting Lumian's inquiry, the library administrator, bearing giant-like traits, shifted his finger a few centimeters and remarked, “It's advisable to avoid pronouncing this name in any Beyonder language as well.”

Lumian followed the motion of the finger, silently noting the corresponding name in his mind.

“Vampire Ancestor Lilith.”

“Why am I not allowed to read about it?” Lumian expressed his ignorance without reservation.

The library administrator spoke in a deep voice, “The Devil Monarch is still alive. This formidable ancient deity remains among the living.

“And the Vampire Ancestor is suspected to be alive as well. In recent times, an individual in the city experienced disturbances after uttering the name 'Lilith' in Jotun. Although their life wasn't at risk, they endured prolonged suffering.”

The library administrator, towering at more than three meters, turned to the last page and pointed.

Lumian read the description:

“The omnipotent and omniscient god stirred from slumber, rising from the earth to vanquish the ancient deities and reclaim His authorities.

“Note: In the present era, the omnipotent and omniscient god is also known as the Ancient Sun God...”

“The Vampire Ancestor's is acceptable, but it's advisable to refrain from attempting the Devil Monarch's. You must exercise caution even in writing it,” responded the colossal library administrator. “We are uncertain if the Devil Monarch possesses any special abilities.”

“Have you encountered this name before? I came across a Demon who identified itself as this. Much like the others, it cannot be spoken or written, only thought.”

The library administrator accepted the note with a hand capable of engulfing Lumian's head. His gaze swept over the name “Naboredisley.”

He lapsed into deep contemplation. After a minute or two, he silently retrieved a copy from a concealed location within the bookshelf.

The book's title read: “A Summary of Rumors and Hearsay Before the Cataclysm (1)”

“As anticipated, it's right here.”

Lumian fixed his gaze and read silently.

“After the Devil Monarch Farbauti led the Devils back to the Abyss, occasional rumors persisted of Demons enticing humans.

“The Demons operated under the following names:

“Beelbubli, Almos, Samael, Lilatan, and Naboredisley.

“A high-ranking Demon Hunter speculated that these names conceal the aliases of Devil Monarch Farbauti...”

The library administrator responded calmly, “The Chief has already informed us that you are Mr. Fool's Blessed.”

“Very well.” Lumian found it amusing.

Apparently, not every foreigner could access this library.

The library administrator offered no further warnings. He took the book chronicling pre-Cataclysm rumors and departed from Lumian's vicinity.

Lumian continued to alternate between reading “Devilology” and “Creation Tales,” taking breaks as needed.

As evening approached, he barely concluded both books and departed from the Twin Towers.

Releasing his compressed spirituality, Lumian teleported back to the Berries in Port Hanth.

Surveying the still-bright sky, Lumian confirmed that the investigation into Hanth Island's Demon legends had reached its conclusion.

The matter delved into complexities beyond his reach.

He no longer hesitated about his next steps and plans.

Since he hadn't fully digested the Conspirer potion, he resolved to head to West Balam and seek out Hisoka. There, he would hunt to digest the potion and complete the advancement ritual!

Chapter 632 Conspiracy

Late at night, in Trier, Angoulême de François sat in front of a small analyzer and a radio transceiver, attentively listening to the clicks and observing as a “translated” telegram was produced by a mechanical typewriter.

The signature above simply read Hidden Blade.

Having exchanged a few messages, Angoulême remained composed. He picked up the telegram and swiftly skimmed through its contents.

“Um, when you're protecting high-ranking government officials and members of parliament daily, do you tail them even during personal moments like affairs or trips to the washroom?”

A wry smile formed on Angoulême's face. He contemplated responding to Hidden Blade with, “What occupies your thoughts all day?” However, in the blink of an eye, his eyes narrowed as he tapped away on the mechanical typewriter.

“Tell me, what crime do you intend to commit? Which high-ranking government official or member of parliament is your target for assassination?”

Dammit! Franca, seated in the master bedroom of her apartment, squirmed uncomfortably.

Why did it feel like she was undergoing police interrogation?

She dryly chuckled to herself and replied on the mechanical typewriter.

“I'm just curious. Following them would be awkward, and not doing so might expose a security vulnerability easily exploitable by others.”

She refused to acknowledge any plans involving the Minister of Industry in the current government. After a while, 007 sent a new telegram.

“I rarely undertake such missions. Initially, I dealt with Beyonders incidents and battled cultists. Later, I got promoted and no longer had to participate in daily protection operations.

“Based on my knowledge and limited experience, we have to follow the protectee wherever they go. If they choose to have an affair, at least one of us will discreetly stand by the coat rack, keeping a watchful eye. If time allows, we'll investigate and confirm the identity and background of the target in advance. If the protectee enters the washroom, one of us waits by their side, guarding against potential threats from sewers, ventilation pipes, and shadows.

“However, there's an exception. If the protectee strongly requests and writes an exemption, we can respect their privacy. After all, we're not their parents obligated to protect their every move. If they perish, someone else will take their place. It's not easy to find a three-legged toad, but those aspiring to be high-ranking government officials and members of parliament can fill Avenue du Boulevard. Moreover, such officials and MPs don't often possess exceptional foresight and wisdom. What matters is the position they hold, not the individual.

“Very few high-ranking officials and MPs choose to write exemptions for privacy, but they tend to do so when discussing confidential matters with their team.”

007, did you work overtime so much that you harbor resentment? Franca chuckled inwardly.

She felt that 007 wasn't as laid back as she would have liked. If it were the two members from Loen, they would likely say, “It's fine if most high-ranking officials who don't deal with real matters or MPs who only give speeches are dead. Even curly-haired baboons in their positions would perform better. At least the baboons wouldn't smack their heads to formulate policies or work for personal gain. They wouldn't boast about their wisdom and desire to show off. They'd simply enjoy bananas and play happily. That's the least harmful thing for the entire country.”

Franca read 007's telegram again and turned to Jenna, who was sitting by the bed.

“The protective measures are tight, and there are no loopholes to exploit.”

“Yes, that's the case with the Purifiers. The Machinery Hivemind and Bureau 8 should be similar.”

Franca, Jenna, and Anthony had been gathering information for a while and had devised several plans, but they still found it unsafe and uncertain. Hence, they consulted 007, seeking clarification on the security situation around Moran Avigny.

Being a Cabinet Minister of a country, Moran Avigny was not an easy target for assassination.

Moreover, Franca and the others' primary goal wasn't assassination. Even if they considered it, they had to factor in the time required for spirit channeling, making it even more troublesome.

Listening to Franca's summary of 007's response, Jenna pondered for a moment and said, "If it were any other Demoness, they might choose to sacrifice their established legitimate identity by seducing Moran Avigny and pretending to be shy to make the minister get an exemption from the protectors. However, I don't think that's feasible. Moran Avigny is likely a Mirror Person, and Mirror People have a close relationship with the Demoness pathway. They might be especially wary of a Demoness approaching them."

Franca had initially hesitated to involve Jenna in the operation against Moran Avigny because the Demoness of Black Clarice would secretly monitor and provide assistance at critical moments. It would be risky if she discovered Jenna using the Demoness pathway's abilities.

However, Jenna insisted on participating. Her reasoning was:

After Franca admitted to Clarice that she hadn't experienced pleasure for a long time, the Demoness of Black would likely suspect her relationship with Franca. After all, Franca had approached Browns Sauron under the guise of attending a female orgy.

Therefore, Jenna wanted to showcase a Vampire's abilities and combat style in front of the Demoness of Black. The mystical item she currently possessed would allow her to disguise herself effectively and maintain sufficient combat strength. The prerequisite was that she had to conceal the Arrow of the Bloodthirsty well and hide it under her clothes. As for Mirror Substitution, she could explain it away with Franca since Anthony had one too.

Franca had muttered, "Demonesses can also have pure love," but as she finished speaking, she awkwardly changed the topic and tacitly allowed Jenna to participate.

"Hmm." Franca, sitting cross-legged, nodded slightly and said, "Moran Avigny's strength is unknown. He might be very formidable. If we attempt to seduce him, we risk becoming his prey if he's vigilant, possibly even losing our lives. Sigh, I'd better write to Lumian and see what he thinks."

Franca chuckled self-deprecatingly.

"Ever since he left Trier, my brain seems to have gone on vacation."

She was mocking her past laziness, acknowledging that she often delegated the primary responsibility of thinking to Lumian while playing a supporting role.

Jenna chuckled and said, "You're really good at self-deprecating. That's what I admire most about you. You're open-minded and cheerful."

Franca chuckled.

"Teasing can liven up the atmosphere and foster closer relationships, but sometimes, if you can't gauge others' acceptance, teasing can easily turn into mockery. It's safer to make a self-deprecating remark."

As the two Demonesses conversed, a telegram clattered in. It was still from 007.

Franca's eyes lit up as she read the telegram.

The telegram read:

“Hidden Blade, if you disclose your target and provide sufficient reason, I might be able to offer assistance and discreetly cooperate with your actions.”

Wow, what a bro! Franca praised inwardly as her fingers swiftly moved over the mechanical typewriter.

“Here's the deal. I currently possess ample evidence to believe that the Minister of Industry, Moran Avigny, is a Mirror Person who has infiltrated Trier and assumed the original owner's identity for decades. Haha, I didn't reveal this earlier because I needed to acquire crucial information from Moran Avigny. If he's captured by you, I can't guarantee that you'll gain access to pertinent information, so I plan to take action myself.”

“Phew... There's hope!” Franca turned around and joyfully raised her right index and middle fingers to Jenna.

Before long, 007 responded:

“Gather the results of your previous investigations and Moran Avigny's information promptly and place it at the designated contact point. I'll verify it first and find an opportune moment. Await my further instructions.”

Franca's face lit up with joy. She pursed her lips and sent a brief telegram:

“It's highly likely that a demigod of the Demoness Sect will be involved in this operation. Exercise caution.”

Jenna read it quietly and asked thoughtfully, “Are we still seeking Lumian's opinion?”

“Yes,” Franca replied without hesitation. “As the saying goes, 'three smelly cobblers are as good as Roselle.' With more people brainstorming, we may uncover better solutions.”

“What kind of proverb is that? Why haven't I heard it before...” Jenna suspected that Franca was making it up.

The crimson moon remained unseen, with only the stars casting a faint glow.

Seated in the Berries' first-class suite, Lumian perused Dutanese textbooks when his messenger, Penitent Baynfel, abruptly materialized before him.

Baynfel, draped in a black clergyman's robe, resembling a charred corpse, handed over the letter.

Lumian caught it, inhaling the lingering fragrance on the paper.

Franca's letter... Jenna even held and read it... Lumian made a casual judgment as he observed his messenger curiously.

He had a persistent feeling that Penitent Baynfel harbored many untold stories, but every attempt to engage in conversation was met with stoic silence.

After Baynfel traversed into the spirit world, Lumian unfolded the letter, reclined in his chair, and leisurely read.

With 007's help, this shouldn't be difficult. Lumian smiled suddenly and whispered to himself, If it doesn't work out, they can force the bait. Focus on the Mirror Person's wariness of Demonesses and the potential strength they possess to lure him. When Moran Avigny believes the target is a bait from the Demoness Sect, with a demigod hiding behind her, planning to take the poison pill and retreat to deliver a bomb, he'll find himself facing one or two Angels, three to five demigods... However, this way, Franca's Demoness Sect mission will be finished...

Lumian's thoughts raced as he crafted and discarded one plan after another.

Tomorrow, the Berries would depart from the Berserk Sea, sailing into the Southern Continent's waters.

When the time came, the ship wouldn't need to navigate complex twists and turns to avoid storms, maelstroms, and mystical phenomena. It could head directly for its destination port in West Balam.

Suddenly, Lumian sensed something and stood up.

Approaching the window, he peered out. In the darkness not far away, an ancient three-masted sailboat sailed silently.

There were no lights on the ship, and no one strolled on the deck.

Chapter 633 West Balam

Lumian had heard from Lugano that ships deviating from the safe sea route might mysteriously disappear. In a few years, they would occasionally appear at night—with no lights or people.

This seemed to be the case now.

In the past, Lumian might have teleported over out of curiosity, taking advantage of the three-masted sailboat's reentry into a safe sea route to assess its internal condition. However, after encountering the Demon legends on Hanth Island, he felt that less curiosity was better. As long as the uninhabited ship traveling in the darkness didn't exhibit signs of attack or an imminent danger, he could treat it as a unique spectacle of the Berserk Sea and simply observe.

The brown ship gradually distanced itself, leaving only the billowing sails in its wake.

Abruptly, Lumian, utilizing his exceptional vision, spotted a face silently staring out of an open hole in the cabin's uppermost window.

The face, shriveled and pale-white, clung tightly to the bones, devoid of flesh and blood. Flaxen-colored hair cascaded like withered weeds. The eyeballs were absent, leaving only a void of deep darkness.

It resembled the head of a desiccated corpse, yet its lips were surprisingly vibrant, as if recently adorned with lipstick.

Lumian instinctively sensed the face belonged to a woman. At least, she had been a woman when alive.

He refrained from raising his right hand for a warm greeting. Instead, he quietly observed as the ancient three-masted sailboat sailed beyond the safe sea route and into the dark night. The desiccated face, with blood-red lips and pitch-black eyes, blended into the darkness.

Only then did Lumian wave his hand and offer a faint smile.

“Goodbye! You won't be missed!”

He then helped Franca and the others to devise a plan to confront Moran Avigny. Ultimately, he opted to await further information from 007 before finalizing their strategy.

Conspirer wasn't a visionary, known for conjuring conspiracies out of thin air; they required substantial information as a foundation.

When Lumian awoke at dawn, the Berries emerged from the dense, death-carrying fog of the Berserk Sea.

Before him stretched a clear blue sea, bathed in the intense sunlight of the high sky.

The next day, the Berries bypassed Behrens Harbor at the northernmost tip of West Balam. Instead, they continued southwest, reaching Port Pylos by 4 p.m.

Situated in Matani, the port was under the rule of Admiral Querarill.

Originally a colony of the Intis Republic, Port Pylos saw Intis colonists withdraw after the war a few years ago. Subsequently, various factions from the Feynapotter Kingdom, maintaining a favorable relationship with Admiral Querarill, took control.

Lumian's target, Hisoka, was yet to surface in Port Pylos, but Lumian knew that the two pranks he had engaged in were in Matani. One occurred in Tizamo Town, at the outskirts of Port Pylos, closest to the forest, and the other in Devise, the southernmost gold mine city in Matani.

As Lumian unbuttoned the second button on his linen shirt, he remarked to Lugano in a self-deprecating tone,

“I feel like I'm shunned by winter and have been living in a scorching environment.”

Having arrived in Port Santa during late autumn, which was relatively hot and sunny, Lumian moved on to Port Colla as Port Santa began to cool. His journey continued through what his sister called the tropics, devoid of winter and maintaining a temperature of at least around 20 degrees Celsius.

While Trier was already in midwinter, the Southern Continent was experiencing the height of summer.

This made Lumian's specially prepared black tweed coat and Gehrman-styled trench coat impractical.

“Because we've been traveling south all autumn,” Lugano declared authoritatively on matters of weather and seasons.

Lumian donned a golden straw hat and strolled down the gangway to the port, hand in hand with Ludwig.

He boldly embodied the traits of the adventurer Louis Berry.

Initially, Lumian had contemplated altering his strategy, adopting a new identity to discreetly investigate the two pranks in Matani and uncover Hisoka without drawing attention. However, after Franca vividly detailed Hisoka's usual characteristics to Anthony Reid, the Hypnotist's profiling revealed an exceptionally aggressive trait, ranking among the top.

As a result, Lumian reconsidered and returned to his role of casting out “bait.”

Yet, he couldn't shake the feeling that success was a slim possibility. The sea sacrificial ritual and Loki's survival had likely provided Hisoka with a comprehensive understanding of the factions backing him. April Fool's, with its former display of resources and energy, seemed ill-equipped to challenge the might of the Tarot Club. And Lumian wasn't solely relying on the Tarot Club for support.

If he were in Hisoka's shoes, Lumian would opt for patience. He'd wait a month or two, allowing the vengeful enemy to grow restless and make mistakes. When the formidable forces behind him could no longer guarantee protection, he'd launch a surprise attack.

For now, let's not devise a plan. I'll consider it when I find clues, Lumian muttered to himself. Leaving the port alongside a throng of passengers, he reached the public carriage stop.

Numerous rental carriages and pitch-black or vermilion coffins were parked nearby.

Coffins? Despite having read many travelog books on West Balam's customs, Lumian found it absurd to witness coffins lining the roadside.

Before the invasion of the Northern Continent, before East and West Balam's division, the Balam Empire revered Death—

the Emperor of the Underworld from the War of the Four Emperors. Thus, the locals valued and loved coffins, considering them objects that brought peace, tranquility, and the blessing of Death. When traveling, they would lie inside, carried by people or pulled by horses and single-horned goats.

Of course, this form of transportation was reserved for those of a certain wealth level. Ordinary people couldn't even afford lying in a coffin.

After a momentary daze, Lumian addressed Lugano and Ludwig with interest, “Do you want to take the coffin? I plan to give it a try.”

“I-I'll pass,” Lugano replied, finding the idea of lying in a coffin unsettling.

Ludwig shifted his attention to the nearby street vendors.

The aroma of corn and potatoes intertwined, enticing every passerby and prompting increased saliva production.

“How lame,” Lumian teased with a smile. Approaching the four locals with disheveled black hair and dark brown skin, he raised his right hand and pointed at the pitch-black coffin beneath the shade of a tree.

“How much?” Lugano inquired in fluent Dutanese before Lumian could.

“How much?” Lugano inquired in fluent Dutanese before Lumian could.

His linguistic talent was evident. Less than a month had passed since their departure from Port Santa to their arrival at Port Pylos, and he could already communicate with people in Dutanese. Of course, his proficiency was limited to basic words and short sentences.

A half-naked local in linen pants replied in Dutanese,

“Nearby, 40 coppet; faraway, 1 verl d'or.”

Recognizing the foreigner's inquiry, he refrained from quoting the price in the local currency, Delexi, the Intisian term for copper coins.

Quite affordable. This coffin, carried by four people, should be considerably cheaper than the one carried by eight... Lumian mused, appreciating the direct use of verl d'or and coppet. It showcased the recent Intisian influence in the former colony, lost only a few years ago. Lumian's grasp of Dutanese surpassed Lugano's, thanks to the mid-level Language Comprehension charm he had used on the ship.

Learning Dutanese in this manner proved more efficient.

Regarding charm consumption, Lumian harbored no concerns. In his view, items served a purpose, and there was no concept of waste as long as they proved useful. He couldn't align with those miserly individuals who hoarded their wealth throughout life, only for it to benefit others after their demise. If he urgently needed Language Comprehension charms, he could acquire them from the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society. If their gathering didn't align with his schedule, teleporting to various cities in Lenburg would allow him to purchase them from the Church of Knowledge.

“Sure,” Lumian nodded at Lugano and said, “Let's go to Hotel Orella.”

After Lugano paid 1 verl d'or, the local who had quoted the price lifted the thin coffin lid, revealing the interior covered with thick dark-red cloth and a stiff neck pillow.

Excitedly, Lumian removed his golden straw hat and lay down, immediately feeling a cooling sensation enveloping his body.

In the hot season, the coffin effectively dispelled the humidity.

Is it the coffin's wood or the sun-screening black paint, or perhaps the shade of the tree? It feels like stepping into a morgue in the summer—surprisingly comfortable... Lumian observed the thin coffin lid closing, witnessing the shadows rapidly expanding until they dominated his world.

Outside, the voices became muffled in his ears.

The coffin was lifted, swaying slightly as it moved forward.

Within Lumian's view, everything was dark, and his surroundings exuded a sinister, cold ambiance. For some reason, it felt like he was walking toward death, touching it.

Setting aside the psychological discomfort, it isn't bad. The only downside is the tendency to easily fall asleep... Lumian evaluated the mode of transportation in a good mood. It's unsuitable for mixed-gender rides, which could be more awkward. Heh heh, I wonder if the "romantic" Intisians have ever engaged in an affair under such circumstances?

Nearly half an hour later, the coffin halted in front of Hotel Orella.

Lumian stepped out, finding himself in front of a small, man-made valley.

Rows of grayish-black stone rooms encircled the inner wall of the "deep valley" until reaching the bottom.

This was Port Pylos's most renowned Hotel Orella.

Originally belonging to a Balam royal family descendant, Orella Eggers, it had been constructed with the intent of approaching death. Later, it fell into the hands of Intis colonists.

Upon the Feynapotterians' arrival, they perceived it as a symbol of entering the earth and returning to the land, prompting its transformation into a sizable hotel.

Chapter 634 Fresh Off The Boat

In the well-lit lobby of Hotel Orella, aboveground, Lugano effortlessly balanced Ludwig, munching on a burrito, in one hand and clutched his suitcase in the other. His eyes darted around uneasily. From his adventurous beginnings to trailing Lumian south, he'd never lodged in a place proudly declaring itself a "hotel" instead of a "motel."

He'd only encountered Trier's renowned Grand Champs-Élysée in newspapers and magazines, learning that its construction cost a whopping 21 million verl d'or. With 800 rooms and 65 functional halls, even the most basic accommodations demanded 12 verl d'or per day in the off-season. A stark contrast to Lugano's usual frugal 3.5 verl d'or weekly motel stays.

The bustling metropolis of Trier had left an indelible mark on Lugano, urging him to rise above and recommend himself to Lumian.

Accumulating wealth, obtaining potion ingredients, and advancing to Doctor became his priorities.

He aspired to join the ranks of high society!

Only when he became a Doctor did he grasp the vastness of the Beyonder world. He had barely scratched its surface.

The male receptionist, sporting curly black hair, dark brown skin, and a keen countenance, addressed Lugano in fluent Intisian.

"Would you prefer a suite or a standard room? Are you inclined towards a coffin bed or a conventional one?"

Lugano glanced at his employer.

Lumian toyed with a caramel-colored East Balam cigarette wrapped in roasted tobacco leaves, bringing it to his nose for a gentle sniff. He savored the blend of tobacco leaves, internal spices, and assorted herbs.

The aroma was mildly invigorating and redolent, tempting one to inhale deeply.

“A suite. Standard, and closer to ground level.” Lumian had sampled rental coffins for transportation and had no plans to continue sleeping in them.

It wasn't a traumatic experience, but it did alter his perception of his surroundings. In case of an attack, it could impede his initial response.

Lugano sighed in relief upon hearing Lumian's decision and conveyed the employer's request to the male receptionist.

“8 verl d'or a day. Three days' payment in advance,” the native male receptionist stated the price.

After Lugano completed the payment, the receptionist, with a nod to his colleagues, said obsequiously, “I'll escort you down.”

Three mechanical elevators stood at the back of the hall. Lumian and his group entered the middle door, pulling the brass handle to B3.

Chains tightened, gears clamped, and various metal parts started to operate with resonating sounds. In the distance, it resembled the roar of a boiler, and white steam billowed out.

As the mechanical elevator descended, the native receptionist glanced at Ludwig and smiled at Lumian.

“Settling down in Port Pylos, are you?”

“If you need info on local grammar schools and rentals in different communities, feel free to approach me.”

In his view, anyone bringing a seven- or eight-year-old child to the Southern Continent was likely moving, not merely traveling. After all, the child was too young for perilous long-distance journeys.

Moving meant finding a house—renting or buying—and choosing a good school. These were all opportunities to make money!

At the mention of “school,” Ludwig, munching on a roasted corn cob, suddenly stopped chewing, as if the food had lost its fragrance.

Lumian wasn't oblivious to the native receptionist's thoughts but didn't mind. Instead, he admired the man's shrewdness.

He grinned and remarked, “I'll take a look first. We haven't confirmed if we would stay in Port Pylos.”

At that moment, the mechanical elevator halted at B3.

Entering the room on the right, with a stone fence on one side and the cold valley aisle on the other, Lumian addressed the native receptionist, “Do you know Tizamo Town?”

The native receptionist, aiding Lugano with the suitcase, slightly bent and led the way.

“I do. Many gentlemen head to Tizamo on weekends for forest hunting.

“There are secret temples and mausoleums left behind by former nobles in the forest. If you want to have fun, don't venture too deep. The primitive tribes there are barbaric and savage.”

Lumian nodded, not probing further. Upon reaching Suite 7 and entering the living room, he casually tossed a verl d'or silver coin to the native receptionist.

“What's your name?”

The receptionist, pleasantly surprised, responded, “You can call me Ron.”

Lumian chuckled.

“I might have to trouble you often in the future. For example, what's the name of the nearest and better bars? Where is it?”

Ron touched the silver coin and smiled.

“It's my honor to assist you.

“Head to the Man-Eating Flower Bar. Intisian is used for communication there. It's on the street behind our hotel.”

Lumian instructed Lugano and left the room with Ron, waiting for one of the mechanical elevators.

Inside, a man with a deathly pale face and vacant eyes stood.

The man's face was deathly pale, and his eyes were vacant. He wore a wrinkled shirt and pants.

Lumian glanced at him without a word.

Amidst the tightening of the chain and the relatively stable elevation, the mechanical lift returned to the ground.

Once the vacant-eyed man exited the lift and distanced himself from them, Ron leaned closer to Lumian and whispered, “I wanted to remind you to pretend not to see that customer.”

“Who is he?” Lumian asked casually.

Ron glanced around and lowered his voice.

“He resides in a suite at B18, a servant of Mr. Iveljsta.

“That gentleman's servants don't seem normal.”

Of course, it's not normal. They are walking corpses... Lumian criticized.

He had already observed the servant and realized his fate was dark and that of a deceased.

Lumian wasn't surprised to encounter such a situation in a country that once worshipped Death.

Having already seen the Blood Emperor's afterimage, encountering a zombie was hardly shocking.

In the sweltering evening, Lumian bypassed the artificial deep valley where Hotel Orella stood and entered a street with an unpronounceable name. He spotted a bar adorned with an exaggerated Man-Eating Flower.

Donning a golden straw hat, he lit the East Balam cigarette purchased from the hotel lobby and placed it between his lips.

Cough, cough, cough!

Lumian quickly coughed, emitting white smoke from his nose.

His intention was to showcase his experience as an experienced adventurer by smoking East Balam cigarettes, but he hadn't anticipated their potency. As someone who rarely smoked, he found it unbearable.

In Cordu, various cheap alcohols abounded, but cigarettes were scarce. Lumian had only witnessed Pons Bénet, Louis Lund, and a few others indulging in smoking.

After extinguishing the East Balam cigarette and tossing it into the trash can, Lumian entered the bar and skillfully approached the counter. He pulled up a barstool and settled in.

Sensing the lingering smoke in his mouth, he opted for something milder. He tapped the counter and spoke in Intisian, "A glass of kilju, the regular kind."

"Ten licks," replied the bartender, a local man in a white shirt and black vest, his Intisian tinged with a distinct accent.

Lumian settled the bill and awaited the bartender's pour. He discreetly surveyed the area, noticing nobody paying him any heed except for a dozen wanted posters adorning the bar's wall.

Thoughtfully accepting the amber-colored kilju, he adjusted his golden straw hat and addressed the bartender with a smile, "Do you know who I am?"

The bartender glanced at him and smiled back.

"Every now and then, a self-proclaimed renowned adventurer poses that question, but I'm sorry, I don't know you."

From the looks of it, the adventurer Louis Berry's exploits in hunting the Demon Warlock are primarily known in the Fog Sea. My rising fame was tied to activities within the Church of Earth Mother's sphere of influence. Louis Berry's reputation waned upon entering the Berserk Sea, and few in West Balam are familiar with him... If Hisoka isn't stationed at the docks every day, he likely doesn't know about my arrival in Port Pylos... Lumian refrained from erupting in rage at the bartender's words. He sipped his kilju, contemplating the situation.

Noticing Lumian's silence, the bartender casually smiled and remarked, "You just arrived in the Southern Continent, right?"

"Yes, I left the Berserk Sea this morning." Lumian seamlessly assumed the role of a regular at Ol' Tavern, recounting his story with a smile. "Encountered a ghost ship in the Berserk Sea, danced with dried corpses under the moon, and repelled a Demon's

attack. Praise the Mother of All Things. You might never understand how magical and dangerous the Berserk Sea is..."

The bartender wiped the glass's inner wall and interrupted Lumian.

"I know. After all, that's where Death disappeared."

"Where Death disappeared?" Lumian asked in surprise.

While he had speculated about the dangers of the Berserk Sea and abnormal weather being linked to a deity's demise, he hadn't expected such an easy answer.

The bartender regarded Lumian with an expression that implied, "You're actually a rookie."

"Have you never heard of the legend of treasures at sea?"

"At the top is Death's Key. It's said that at the end of the Fourth Epoch, Death, who had lost the Pale-White War, stirred violent waves to obstruct the returning enemy to Balam, creating insurmountable obstacles that severed the Northern and Southern Continents. However, He ultimately didn't return to His throne and vanished. Only those with the special key can find Him, discover the treasures He left behind, and gain His boon."

The bartender's tone was complicated.

Lumian fell silent.

He had embarked on the sea seeking revenge and held little interest in treasure legends. He hadn't anticipated missing such crucial information.

Just then, the heavy wooden door of the bar creaked open.

The once-noisy bar hushed in an instant.

Sensing the shift in atmosphere, Lumian turned his body, fixing his gaze upon the door.

Chapter 635 Man-Eating Flower

At the entrance of the Man-Eating Flower bar, a figure strode in.

A woman, neither towering nor petite, clad in a conservative, deep-black dress, caught everyone's attention. Her eyebrows were meticulously drawn, her skin thickly powdered, and her cheeks adorned with noticeable blush. Her lips shone gorgeously, and the area around her eyes sparkled with gem-like hues.

Despite the woman's excessive makeup and unconventional style, her captivating brown eyes, high nose bridge, luscious lips, and curvaceous figure emitted a potent charm.

Male patrons in the bar shifted their gazes to the door, momentarily silent. Only when the woman acknowledged a few customers with an aloof nod did the atmosphere spring to life. Some attempted conversation, while others raised their voices at their companions, trying to make an impression on her.

Without lingering, the woman navigated through the crowd and settled on the opposite side of the bar counter.

Unique. If Franca were here, she'd surely strike up a conversation... Lumian felt a twinge of regret for his companion and averted his gaze. He smiled at the bartender and commented,

“That lady seems quite popular.”

The bartender wiped away the expression reserved for new adventurers and replied sternly,

“She's my boss.”

Boss... Lumian suddenly recalled the bar's name and asked thoughtfully,

“Man-Eating Flower?”

“It's her,” the bartender lowered his voice and approached the beautifully made-up woman of indeterminate age. He poured her a glass of some unknown brand of Black Rand.

After the bartender returned, Lumian asked curiously,

“Why does she have the nickname 'Man-Eating Flower?’

“She seems very popular.”

The bartender instinctively turned his head, observing his boss as she focused on her drink and surveyed the patrons nearby. Leaning in, he whispered,

“In Port Pylos, women of her caliber often relish the pursuit and adulation of men but keep them at arm's length. Our boss, however, is different. If she takes a liking to you, she'll extend an invitation for a memorable night. Sometimes, we can hear her passion echoing through the halls upstairs...”

The bartender paused, a mix of nostalgia and desire evident on his face.

Pleasure? Lumian subtly frowned and inquired with a smile, “Have you ever been the object of her affections?”

The bartender fell silent.

For a moment, Lumian wondered if the other would smash his head with the cup in hand.

Changing the subject, Lumian asked, “Aren't there brash men who try to force themselves on your boss?”

The bartender sighed and replied, “Remember the name of our bar.”

Man-Eating Flower... Is that what it means? Lumian grasped the meaning.

The bartender elaborated, “Those who tried to force themselves on our boss ended up badly. Some were severely injured or thrown down the stairs. Others simply vanished.

“Even those who caught her eye would be pale the next day, legs unsteady. They couldn't walk properly.”

“That's why she's called 'Man-Eating Flower.' She embraces it. Eventually, she named the bar after it.”

This is a departure from the Demonesses of Pleasure's style... But each demoness has her own unique approach. Franca, a Demoness of Pleasure, stands out from the rest... Lumian's curiosity sated, he didn't delve further into the bar owner. Instead, he retrieved an ordinary deck of poker cards from his Traveler's Bag and asked, “Have you come across anyone using poker cards as a weapon recently?”

According to Anthony Reid's analysis of Hisoka, a key member of April Fool's, Hisoka had a strong inclination towards self-expression. After successfully creating the poker card with the ability to change its face, possessing Frost and Cut characteristics, it was clear he wouldn't limit its use to mere April Fool's pranks. When engaged in combat or carrying out acts of violence, he wouldn't hesitate to employ the mystical item to end his target's life.

This information presented a promising lead for investigation.

Regarding the two pranks orchestrated by Hisoka, they revolved around Matani and were linked to relatively confidential or significant local affairs. Individuals who weren't locals or lacked prolonged residence wouldn't spontaneously choose this area unless they also possessed ample information to support their actions.

Lumian reasonably suspected that Hisoka's original sphere of activity centered on Matani and its neighboring regions.

This rationale prompted his journey to Matani, despite believing that Hisoka had likely heeded Loki's warning and evaded capture, concealing himself.

Understanding Hisoka's past was crucial to deciphering his present and ending his future!

The native bartender scoffed at Lumian's inquiry.

“Do you think I'd have that information?”

“Consult the patrol team. Whether they choose to answer is another matter.”

Patrol team... Lumian didn't mind and nodded slightly.

Established by Admiral Querarill, the ruler of Matani, the among Beyonders.

In this state, following the withdrawal of most Intis colonial forces, the Church of the Eternal Blazing Sun, the Church of God of Steam and Machinery, and the new Cathedral of the Church of Earth Mother lacked official authority to enforce the law.

While these churches maintained Beyonder teams in their cathedrals across different cities, their jurisdiction was limited to self-defense and safeguarding believers within the cathedral. They couldn't address matters akin to their usual spheres of influence or eliminate potential hidden dangers.

Admiral Querarill entrusted the corresponding authority to the newly formed patrol team.

Some of the patrol team's Beyonders were veterans from Admiral Querarill's army, while others were remnants of the former Balam Empire or former adventurers and bounty hunters.

What a simple name... Lumian pondered for a moment as he glanced at the few wanted posters on the wall.

“Admiral Querarill doesn't want adventurers turning Matani into a hunting paradise? He doesn't want them brawling on the streets under the guise of pursuing targets on wanted posters?”

The bartender shot Lumian a surprised look.

“You're quite sharp for an adventurer.

“In Matani, the wanted status is earned through crimes committed here. No one cares about your actions elsewhere.”

As expected of one of the adventure paradises... Lumian lifted the kilju and finished it.

Just as he was about to switch to a glass of West Balam-

specific liquor to savor its distinct flavors, he felt a gaze upon him.

It was the owner of the Man-Eating Flower bar, the woman in the black dress with exquisite makeup.

Lumian nodded calmly and shifted his focus back to the bartender.

While this Man-Eating Flower was undoubtedly attractive, she couldn't match a Demoness in terms of feminine allure. Additionally, Lumian wasn't fond of heavy makeup.

At that moment, the woman rose from her seat and sauntered over to Lumian. She curled her lips and remarked, “I can sense that you're like me, a living volcano, but it hasn't erupted yet. You're still enduring and waiting in pain.

“Tonight, are you willing to feel my passion?”

Lumian raised his right hand and stroked his face.

You're taken with me just like that?

Come to think of it, I've been a hit with the ladies since my youth. Being a Hunter, I've often found myself surrounded by all sorts of beauties... Could this be the subtle influence of the True Men pathway? It doesn't add up. According to The Adventurer series and recent sea rumors, Mr. Fool's Oracle, Danitz, is also from the Hunter pathway, yet his romantic endeavors were fruitless, and he doesn't boast any notable female companions...

Lumian muttered internally and stood up. He offered a smile and inquired, “How should I address you?”

“Bellotia.” The woman's smile relaxed, making Lumian feel that she might appear even more stunning without her heavy makeup.

Lumian took off his golden straw hat, pressed it to his chest, and bowed slightly.

“Madam Bellotia, I appreciate your invitation, but there's someone else I hold dear.”

As he spoke, he disregarded Bellotia's slightly stiffened expression and made his way past the Man-Eating Flower, heading for the bar's entrance with composed demeanor.

Bellotia didn't stop him. Like numerous patrons in the bar, she observed as he swung open the sturdy wooden door and stepped out.

As the wooden door thudded shut behind him, Lumian sneered and muttered to himself, I can resist even the charm of a Demoness of Pleasure. Why take the risk with a woman of unknown origins?

Using someone I like as an excuse is already preserving your dignity. If you still seek revenge, I won't hold back...

Having left the bar early, Lumian wandered through the nearby streets, exploring secluded alleys in hopes of stumbling upon incidents or criminals to gather information.

After turning a few corners, he suddenly heard a clanging sound emanating from a dark and deserted alley.

Silently, Lumian approached and delved into the alley. There, he witnessed an intense battle between two men.

One, with evident native characteristics, appeared in his twenties. His face was pallid, and he wielded a sharp but hefty dagger in his right hand. His left palm was slightly open, and a dark shadow hovered in it, creating a chilling atmosphere.

The other, in his early thirties, had ordinary facial features and an expressionless demeanor. Short, black hair framed his face, and his dark-green eyes were encircled by white.

Clad in a plain white shirt and black pants, he wielded longer, sharper weapons resembling scalpels in each hand.

At this moment, the two engaged in a fierce battle, their weapons clashing rapidly, resonating with metallic clangs.

Observing the skirmish, Lumian recognized that these weren't ordinary individuals. They both bore Beyonders characteristics.

Halting his advance, Lumian nonchalantly stood with his hands in his pockets, his right foot propped up against the wall. He unabashedly observed the close-quarters combat between these Beyonders.

Chapter 636 Catharsis

In just over ten seconds, the two Beyonders locked in combat sensed an observer and instinctively distanced themselves, fixing their gaze on Lumian.

Casually leaning against the alley wall, Lumian chuckled and remarked, "Go on, keep fighting. Don't mind me."

With a heavy dagger in hand, the young native, his left palm slightly open, eyed the black-haired, green-eyed, handsome, golden straw hat-donning Lumian with vigilance.

Who is this?

What is he up to?

The short-haired man, armed with two odd-shaped scalpels, was equally vigilant.

He, too, eyed Lumian and the vigilant young native. Suddenly, he crouched, arms hanging loose, and black, sulfurous smoke enveloped him completely.

Lumian's smile didn't waver; his right eyebrow arched in mild interest.

Unfazed, the young native extended his slightly open left hand, releasing a shadow that expanded into a distorted "black cloud."

This "black cloud" merged with the sulfurous smoke, swiftly clearing the alley. The crimson moon once again illuminated the scene.

However, the short-haired man, with dark-green eyes and an emotionless expression, had vanished.

Ran off? The young native was shocked, angry, and vexed.

As he sought clues, he instinctively turned his head to where Lumian had been.

No one stood before the wall.

When did he leave? Why didn't I sense it at all? the young native, holding the heavy dagger, pondered in bewilderment, uncertain whether to pursue his target.

Relying on his spell-like abilities, Bram skillfully escaped the alley, stowing away the two odd-shaped scalpels. He navigated the dark, unlit paths, frequently changing directions in an attempt to lose his imaginary pursuer.

In the process, he pried open a shoemaker's shop on the street, donned a pair of ill-fitting leather shoes, and discreetly handled any signs of his intrusion.

After circling three times, Bram returned to the alley, entering a simple apartment nearby, constructed from black stones and brown wood.

Bram opened his room and entered, closing the wooden door behind him.

He finally breathed a sigh of relief.

Then, he withdrew a transparent glass bottle from the grayish-white cloth bag hanging from his waist. The bottle held a nearly colorless liquid, faintly tinged with red. Suspended within, a blood-colored, well-defined mouth hung open, frozen in intense pain and fear.

As if admiring a masterpiece, Bram stared entranced at the glass bottle in his grasp.

After a moment, he averted his gaze, moved to the side of the room, and opened a cupboard.

Within the cupboard, seven or eight similar glass bottles awaited, each containing a unique lip. The hues varied, some slightly upturned, others in a pouting stance.

Bram positioned his newly acquired spoils in an empty spot, then used sticky blood-colored paint to draw an ominous symbol.

With the task complete, his fingers gently explored different lips through the glass bottles, as if assessing each piece in an art exhibition.

"How twisted."

A mocking sigh suddenly resonated in Bram's ears.

Startled, he whirled around, focusing on the source of the voice. A golden straw hat-donning young man with black hair and green eyes sat in an armchair by the table, the top two buttons of his white shirt now casually undone.

Him?

Bram's pupils dilated as he recognized the man who had witnessed his clash with the Numinous Episcopate member.

The person who had witnessed his battle with the Numinous Episcopate member!

When did he tail me?

How did he pinpoint my location without detection...

Lumian smiled and cordially responded to the other's unspoken queries,

“Hasn't anyone informed you that the preservative in those glass bottles is quite noticeable?

“Moreover, you reek of blood after killing someone.”

Bram's heart tightened.

“Are you a Hunter?”

As he spoke, he moved slowly and quietly.

“You seem to know a lot,” Lumian replied calmly. “So, why collect those lips, preserve them, and carry them with you? That doesn't sound like the work of a seasoned Serial Killer. I get it. You have the urge and the necessity to gather trophies. Is it for your own satisfaction or part of a ritual? Heh heh, desire can be destructive. Even the most Coldblooded are prone to errors, despite their calculated demeanor, often wagering that they won't be caught if they overlook the details.”

Observing the twisted murderer summon black, sulfurous smoke, Lumian deduced that he was a Sequence 7 Serial Killer following the Criminal pathway.

In the Devilology book of the New City of Silver, it was noted that upon reaching Sequence 8 Coldblooded, also known as the Unwinged Angel, individuals underwent inhuman changes, acquiring two or three Devil spell-like abilities, varying from person to person. Some wielded poisonous flames, while others inflicted damaging curses. The creation of black smoke was one such ability.

Combining the target's actions in battle, Lumian concluded he was merely a Sequence 7 Serial Killer.

Bram's brow twitched at Lumian's mockery and sarcasm.

Maintaining his cool, he advanced and murmured, “Did you come here just to converse? What is it you seek from me?”

As soon as he finished speaking, dense black smoke billowed from the Serial Killer, carrying a pungent sulfuric aroma.

Within the shroud of the dark smoke, Bram's eyes deepened as he unleashed another Devil spell. His body morphed, adopting the color of a chameleon, seamlessly blending with the spreading smoke.

Swift and silent, he approached the door, opened it with precision, and lunged outside.

Bram's vision distorted, and amidst the lingering black smoke, he glimpsed the green-eyed man in the armchair, grinning at him.

Suddenly, he found himself back in the room.

Contrary to his previous orientation, he now faced away from the door.

Bottle of Fiction!

Upon infiltrating the room, Lumian's initial action wasn't a pose but the creation of a Bottle of Fiction, one that prevented Beyonders from exiting!

Unfazed by the sudden wave of disappointment and frustration, Bram darted to the side within the obscurity of the black smoke obscuring his vision. Rolling to the bedside, he retrieved a six-barrel machine gun.

Raising the machine gun, he aimed it at Lumian and unleashed a barrage of bullets.

Amidst the rapid gunfire, Lumian disappeared from the armchair, the furniture torn apart by the storm of metal projectiles.

Gone? As this realization hit Bram, he instinctively glanced upward and witnessed the man in the golden straw hat descending from the ceiling. Surrounding him were numerous crimson, almost white, flaming ravens.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh! Fire Ravens assailed Bram before Lumian's arrival.

Caught within the encirclement, Bram reluctantly abandoned the six-barrel machine gun. Attempting to evade the impending explosion, he sought refuge under the bed.

However, the crimson, nearly white Fire Ravens dissipated on their own. Lumian landed before him, adorned with a grayish-

white lightning brooch. He smiled and said, "Didn't you just ask me what I wanted? What I want is simple. I haven't vented for too long. I'm in dire need of a humanoid sandbag."

As he finished speaking, Lumian swung his fist at the retreating Bram.

Instinctively, Bram raised his right arm to block.

With a resounding bang, a silver-white bolt of lightning surged from Lumian's fist into Bram's arm, coursing through his entire body.

Bram shuddered. Despite his inhuman transformation, a momentary paralysis gripped him.

Lumian's other fist followed suit, crashing into Bram's side profile.

Bang!

The Serial Killer's head tilted, and a spray of teeth accompanied by blood scattered.

Once more, silver-white lightning enveloped Bram's head.

Bam! Bam! Bam! Lumian unleashed a barrage of punches, turning the encounter into a tempest, making Bram feel like he was caught in a thunderstorm. The electric shocks made any form of retaliation or defense nearly impossible.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Lumian's expression remained icy as he relentlessly struck Bram's face, chest, arms, and head. The Criminal Pathway Beyonder's chest caved, ribs cracked, face swelled, and skull fractured. Charred marks covered his upper body after the brutal assault.

After the relentless beating, Lumian clenched his fists and raised his arm.

He crashed into Bram's left shoulder.

Bang!

Bram's left shoulder crumpled entirely.

Collapsed on the ground, twisted and gasping, Bram's breath weakened.

“That's it? It's fine. I can get my servant to treat you before continuing,” Lumian remarked, wearing a devilish smile that Bram recognized all too well.

Without awaiting Bram's fearful response, Lumian removed the Fury of the Sea brooch, stowing it back into his Traveler's Bag. In a gentle tone, he inquired, “Tell me, which family are you from?”

Bram, undergoing the initial stages of dehumanization with a robust physique, realized Lumian had purposely avoided vital points in his attacks, leaving him far from unconsciousness. His mind still functioned, and thoughts raced before settling on Lumian's smile.

After a momentary silence, Bram weakly replied, “I'm a member of the Andariel family.”

Chapter 637 Unexpected Information

Andariel, one of the three Devil families... Lumian recognized the last name from Madam Magician and asked with a warm smile, “What brings you to Port Pylos?”

If it weren't for the lineage running in Devil families for generations, with descendants naturally inclined towards the Criminal pathway, and the other option of the Prisoner pathway seemingly trouble-free, Bram Andariel couldn't shake the suspicion that the man before him carried the last name Nois or Beria. Why did he exude more of a Devil vibe than Bram himself?

Struggling, he lifted his right hand, wiping his swollen and cracked face, cleaning up the blood and flinging it to the ground.

With the task completed, Bram responded, “Firstly, it's to gather information about Matani for the family. Secondly, it's to find an opportunity to act as a Serial Killer. Do you know what acting is?”

He cooperated with Lumian by speaking in Intisian.

Lumian nonchalantly stood before Bram, who was curled up on the ground, and remarked with a smile,

“Your acting is subpar. You don't seem to be a criminal with a high IQ.

“Why would the Andariel family gather information about Matani?”

Bram had no intention of concealing the truth for the family.

“We're cooperating with the Rose School of Thought. They want information on this place.”

The Rose School of Thought setting its sights on Matani? That's right. Matani, seemingly detached from any Northern Continent nation, holds ties to the Feynapotter Kingdom, but their influence is lacking. With Admiral Querarill's sway, even if the Rose School of Thought and the Andariel family dispatch only a handful of agents, resisting may prove challenging... Lumian perceived the stark contrast between the Southern and Northern Continents.

Whether in Trier, the Feynapotter Kingdom, or the maritime colonies, Lumian encountered criminal acts and mystical disasters driven by the pursuit of strength and faith. Encroachments on factions or cities were rare, but West Balam presented a different scenario on his first day.

If maritime disorder resulted from chaos, the Southern Continent teemed with factional conflicts, overt or covert, causing widespread chaos.

Lumian, observing Bram's wound clotting, questioned further, “What intel does the Rose School of Thought seek?”

Bram, reflecting, responded, “They want all kinds of information—cathedral locations, military camp details, patrol team compositions, port throughput, daily prices, and the locals' lives.”

Are they preparing to rule this place in the future? Lumian inquired, puzzled.

“To whom will you hand over the information you gathered? Where?”

“It will be written and placed in the study of an empty house at 17 Aleg Street. My uncle, Devajo Andariel, will be responsible for retrieving it. We don't usually contact each other, and I don't know where he lives or under what identity,” Bram explained in detail. “After becoming a Devil, his special ability is to completely skin humans and perform complicated processes to create Beyonder items with usage or time limitations. No matter who it is, as long as he wears the human skin as clothes, he can transform into the other person and complete the corresponding disguise.”

As Bram spoke, he wiped the blood off his body and flung it to the ground, as if obsessed with cleanliness.

This was mentioned in Devilology... Lumian nodded thoughtfully.

He pondered for a moment and asked, “Are there any traces of other Devils in Matani?”

Perhaps Bram and his uncle weren't the only ones sent by the Rose School of Thought to gather information.

Bram shook his head.

“Not recently.

“However, during my investigation, I stumbled upon a string of serial murders around Port Pylos about four years back.

“The victims lay dissected, the scene steeped in blood and marked by the aftermath of a fierce battle. Moreover, the seven casualties were no ordinary individuals; they were Beyonders, ranging from Sequence 7 to Sequence 8.”

Listening intently, Lumian felt a surge of intrigue.

As per Franca's explanation, the name “Hisoka” stemmed from a literary work hailing from the original world of transmigrators like themselves. One of the character's defining traits was an insatiable appetite for combat and the thrill of extinguishing formidable adversaries, reveling in the ecstasy and carnage of claiming lives. If the target was sufficiently potent, he'd patiently await their growth, perhaps even offer a nudge.

Hisoka, a key member in April Fool's, adopted this moniker as his code name, driven by an unmistakable urge for self-expression, mirroring this characteristic.

Hisoka is a Beyonder of the Devil pathway. Moreover, his targets are Beyonders while he was at the Serial Killer stage. Unlike other Serial Killers, he doesn't prey on the weak or ordinary people. If he had been a Serial Killer four years ago, he would likely be at least a Sequence 6 by now. There's a strong chance he's a Sequence 5... Yes, he's concealed his identity very effectively. No one in the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society knows his true pathway... Lumian listened attentively to Bram's account without interruption. He eagerly pondered the possibility that Hisoka was a Devil or even a Desire Apostle in his mind.

The curled-up Bram glanced up at him, propping his bloody palm on the ground, and straightening his body slightly.

“This seems like the work of a Serial Killer. Moreover, he's exceedingly confident in his strength and intellect, daring to target Beyonders. However, I noticed some discrepancies.”

“What discrepancies?” Lumian concealed his joy behind a gentle smile.

Bram shifted his palm to support himself.

“Serial Killers' victims often exhibit degraded behaviors. For instance, those I've selected typically share a common trait: they enjoy inflicting verbal harm and curses upon others for extended periods. Thus, I'd remove their lips and preserve them. However, the seven slain Beyonders had varying identities, backgrounds, and behaviors, lacking the typical degeneracy.”

“Perhaps he's merely a Beyonder with a fascination for serial killing, not necessarily acting out the Devil pathway,”

Lumian mused, masking his interest with a teasing tone. He added playfully, “Were you subjected to constant verbal violence as a child?”

And the Coldblooded and Serial Killer potions amplified corresponding resentments and psychological traumas?

Bram fell silent, his body gradually stretching out, no longer curled up.

Only then did Lumian steer the conversation back to the serial murder case from four years ago.

“Do you have detailed information about the seven Beyonders who were killed?”

“Did you identify any suspects during the initial investigation?”

Bram shook his head slowly.

“I only had read the summary provided by the patrol team, not the full investigation files.

“Most of the patrol team members were seasoned Beyonders who had encountered Mutants and Devils before. Their judgment should be reliable.”

Patrol team... Lumian grinned at Bram and remarked, “Is there any other information you deem crucial to share with me? If not, let's proceed.”

“Yes, of course.” Bram straightened his back abruptly.

In the next moment, he spat out foul words in a language Lumian had never heard before.

Devil Language!

As the Devil words reverberated, the blood, bloodstains, and bloody handprints that Bram had left on the ground were enveloped in a faint light.

A mystical connection seemed to form between them, linking them based on their location, creating sinister symbols and patterns.

In the room's far cupboard, glass bottles filled with lips and colorless liquid trembled suddenly, as if rocked by an earthquake.

This marked the initiation of a ritual to summon the projection of an Abyssal Devil!

Serial Killers executed serial murders not solely for the thrill but also to appease the Abyssal Devils. Once the killing spree concluded, Serial Killers could proceed to the final step of the ritual, summoning the projection of the corresponding Abyssal Devil. This granted them the assistance needed to fulfill their desires.

Though Bram's string of murders wasn't entirely finished and fell short by a few targets, he had met the minimum threshold. It satisfied the basic quantitative requirements, allowing him to expedite the ritual.

Understandably, this shortcut wouldn't yield the same effectiveness as the standard procedure. Yet, in the face of urgency and danger, Bram paid little heed.

He cooperated willingly, divulging information to divert the enemy's focus from his subtle actions. For instance, allowing blood to drip onto the ground in a specific pattern and pressing his blood-stained palm in a particular location. These marks replaced conspicuous evil and degenerate symbols with subtler, blood-stained alternatives.

With the preparations complete, Bram could utilize the Devil Language's "activate" to trigger the ritual, pleasing a high-level Devil and summoning its projection to confront the enemy!

Lumian silently observed Bram Andariel's "handiwork," feeling the room steeped in malevolence and tainted by corruption.

He raised his right hand, snapping his fingers.

Bram, coldly observing him while anticipating the ritual's protection, suddenly heard a rumbling emanate from within his body.

In confusion, he lowered his head and scrutinized his form. Crimson flames erupted from within, inflicting the agony of violent waves tearing through his internal organs, bones, and flesh.

Darkness gripped Bram's consciousness, accompanied by searing pain.

The last sight before losing consciousness: A black-haired young man with green eyes, sporting a golden straw hat, curved his lips, maintaining a warm smile. It was as though he watched a clown diligently tumble into a trap.

Rumble!

The ritual concluded prematurely. An explosion originating from Bram's body tore him into multiple fragments.

Fire Infusion and Delayed Explosion!

As Lumian adorned the Fury of the Sea brooch and ruthlessly assailed Bram, he not only released pent-up emotions but also covertly infused flames into Bram's body, triggering a Delayed Explosion.

This precaution aimed to avert any mishaps.

Moreover, there was no intention of granting forgiveness or negotiating a deal to spare Bram. Thus, there existed no psychological barrier to implanting a controlled time bomb within his body, ready to be activated.

Rumble!

Corpse fragments scattered across the room, some plastering the walls. Yet, this tumultuous event remained contained within the confines of the Bottle of Fiction.

Chapter 638 Possible Enemy

"My father bore the last name Andariel, cut down by a curse unleashed by a Devil's projection during a ritual gone awry.

“Inheriting his mantle, I became a Beyonder. My mother remains a mystery, perhaps just another name etched into my father's ledger of victims...

Upon the murky surface of a dark mirror, Bram Andariel's blood-drained visage recounted his origins with an impassive mask.

Franca, “invited” by Lumian, faced a full-body mirror, employing her unique magic mirror spirit channeling technique to delve into the Andariel family and the Rose School of Thought.

Regrettably, Bram lingered on the fringes of the secret organization and his Devilish family. His insights were scant. Moreover, to divert Lumian's scrutiny and covertly finalize the ritual preparations, he divulged truths without deceit.

With Spirit Channeling reaching its threshold, Franca posed a final query.

“Who leads the Andariel family now?”

Bram's increasingly translucent and sinister countenance contorted abruptly.

“He—he's dead.

“He became a sacrifice!”

Sacrifice... such theatricality? Before Franca could delve deeper, Bram's figure waned swiftly, dissipating into nothingness.

As the Demoness of Pleasure concluded the ritual, she clicked her tongue and addressed Lumian, “The Andariel family's state is dire. Even the patriarch can be offered as a sacrifice. Are they fully controlled by the Rose School of Thought?”

In light of the temperance faction's alignment with the Church of The Fool within the Rose School of Thought, Franca glossed over distinctions between factions. After all, the Rose School likely teemed with adherents of indulgence.

Lumian responded contemplatively, “The situation in the Abyss isn't quite right either...”

Whether Naboredisley was the pseudonym of Devil Monarch Farbauti or not, the plight of the blood-colored Demon deep within Hanth Island mirrored the Abyss's troubles to some extent.

With a scoff, Lumian remarked, “We're accustomed to damning others to hell and the Abyss. We believed it to be the worst place. Who knew the Abyss itself could decay? It's falling into its own abyss.”

“A hellish jest indeed.” Franca glanced at the pristine night sky, less tainted by industrial pollution. The crimson moon of the Southern Continent appeared clearer and brighter.

She steered the conversation back on track.

“If Hisoka truly is from the Devil pathway, his actions make sense.

“The Research Society was lax. Minimal filters or restrictions on its members...”

Franca and Lumian were aware that the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society operated in a way that there were no Devil pathway Beyonders, but nobody knew the truth. Membership didn't entail self-declaration of pathways or proof. Sequences were discerned through interactions at gatherings. Hisoka remained an enigma, his pathways and Sequence elusive even to key April Fool's members.

“Hisoka has always been a loner. He rarely participates in other April Fool's pranks. Is he afraid of being discovered as a Devil?” Lumian contemplated, adding, “He was most inclined to collaborate with Mad Lady, an unabashed lunatic who couldn't care less. She might even relish the prospect of testing if a Devil's blood runs cold...”

I sense a subtle mockery, insinuating my penchant for experimentation... Yet, despite being a Coldblooded, the remnant blood of the Serial Killer Bram retained a hint of warmth. Does Coldblooded mainly denote emotional detachment rather than literal coldness? Or could it be the Southern Continent's summer, heating up the blood of cold-blooded creatures... Franca's musings drifted.

Franca then cautioned Lumian, “If Hisoka is truly a Devil, he'll sense your malice the moment you uncover a key clue. He can decide whether to strike or flee, shifting to another country to hide.

“Dammit! Pursuing a Devil is a real hassle. When we can't beat him, he strikes first. When we can, he's nowhere to be found.”

“We could use a Demon Hunter in times like these,” Lumian half-jokingly remarked.

From Devilology, Lumian knew that Sequence 4 of the Warrior pathway was the Demon Hunter—an expert in hunting Devils. They were natural adversaries to Devils, Desire Apostles, and even Demons.

One of the Demon Hunters' crucial skills was concealing their actions and intentions, making it impossible for targets capable of sensing danger to detect them!

Franca concurred succinctly, “Now I see why Madam Magician sent you the spirit world's coordinates, instructing you to visit the New City of Silver and find Mr. Sun to eliminate the remaining corruption. It's dominated by the Warrior pathway and boasts many Demon Hunters.

“Though enlisting a Demon Hunter throughout the entire process might strain our resources.”

That was a genuine demigod!

While dealing with Hisoka was Lumian's personal grudge, Major Arcana card holders would also take notice, given Hisoka's potential alignment with that Celestial Worthy.

Lumian chuckled.

“No need for a Demon Hunter to intervene directly. I wonder if they can craft charms, potions, or items concealing malice. If so, we can spend a hefty sum through the Tarot Club's connections to acquire them or engage in item exchange.”

“Start inquiring soon,” Franca advised. “If Hisoka is a Desire Apostle, be cautious. You carry too many random items, and some mystical items have adverse effects on emotions and desires. He could detonate them, injuring you instantly...”

As she spoke, Franca's lips trembled before she sealed them shut.

Lumian nodded solemnly, refraining from boasting about his Ascetic abilities.

Having recently endured an explosion of emotions and desires, he understood it was beyond the endurance of an Ascetic, causing physical damage to the brain.

Franca then said, “The one chasing the Serial Killer was from the Numinous Episcopate, not a regular patrol member. The currents in Matani run deep.”

The Numinous Episcopate, a clandestine organization in the Southern Continent, was rumored to trace its origins to the former royal descendants of the Balam Empire and Beyonders unwilling to forsake Death as their faith. Their ultimate aim was to restore Death to His throne, ruling East and West Balam once more.

Lumian strolled to the window, gazing at the street. He grinned and commented,

“This is the chaotic Southern Continent.

“Actually, what piques my interest is why the Rose School of Thought is collecting information about the daily lives of Port Pylos residents. It seems like they want to govern this place.

“That's not their usual style.”

Lumian had limited knowledge of the Rose School of Thought's past. All he knew was their recent spree of sacrifices, leaving bloodshed wherever they occupied. Running a city or port for extended periods didn't align with their usual behavior.

“Nothing is certain.” Franca's mind was working overtime recently. After a moment's reflection, she added, “Regardless of the Rose School of Thought's motives, considering the sacrifices they've conducted in recent years, they should have gained substantial boons from the Mother Tree of Desire. Now, with Devil family members in the mix, encountering a significant Rose School of Thought member may mean dealing with a dual Bearer of potions and boons. Perhaps a Zombie Recipient, Wraith Tree Spirit, or Sex Addict Apostle? Similar to a Hunter Monk like you.”

Franca, always more adept at nicknames and unconventional thoughts than Lumian, playfully referred to Beyonders who were both Zombies and Recipients as Zombie Recipients.

Her primary intention was to caution Lumian that certain Rose School of Thought members might exploit abilities like those of the Sex Addict to provoke his desires. Later, in their Desire Apostle form, they could detonate those desires, providing end-to-end service.

It would be a formidable challenge. In Lumian's condition, facing such Beyonders posed considerable danger.

Lumian chuckled, somewhat self-deprecatingly.

Why do I feel like a powder keg, ready to explode with the slightest touch?

“Nevertheless, I don't intend to meddle in the Rose School of Thought's affairs. I'll write to Madam Magician and report the traces of the Rose School of Thought in Port Pylos. Someone will investigate and handle it. Aren't Mr. Star and Mr. Moon among the Major Arcana card holders overseeing the Rose School of Thought?

“My sole focus is Hisoka. At least, we can be sure that even if he's of the Devil pathway, he likely has no connection to the Andariel family. Otherwise, the Rose School of Thought wouldn't have dispatched Bram and company for reconnaissance. Bram wouldn't have been oblivious if a family member had been active here.”

Franca hesitated for a moment before adding, “Hmm, just be careful.”

Having escorted Franca back to Trier, Lumian stowed away Bram's Serial Killer Beyonder characteristic.

It took the form of a sharp-edged, prismatic ice cube, enveloping faint wisps of thin black gas.

Upon reaching Hotel Orella, Lumian approached the trio of mechanical elevators, pulled the handle, and stood patiently.

With a creak, the double doors opened simultaneously.

Lumian's silhouette, elongated by the crystal chandelier behind him, was mirrored in the mechanical lift.

Beside him stood a slender human shadow.

Chapter 639 Bribe

Lumian stood before the open mechanical elevator door, casting a glance at the slender shadow beside him. With raised eyebrows, he calmly turned his head, noting the sudden presence diagonally behind him.

The figure appeared as a tall, thin man draped in a complex, layered black robe. His face bore a pale-white complexion, as though untouched by sunlight for an extended period. Atop his black hair sat a fluffy black hat, its edge adorned with a gently swaying white feather.

Lumian retracted his gaze and entered the mechanical elevator. The tall, thin man with dark brown eyes following suit in silence.

Gripping the brass handle within with his right hand, Lumian selected the desired floor, pressing it down to B3, a definitive click echoing in response.

After Lumian selected his intended floor, the lanky man mimicked his action, opting for B18.

As they awaited descent, the distant sound of steam hissing reached their ears. Gears whirred to life, chains tightened, and the luxurious mechanical elevator began its gradual descent.

Throughout the journey, both remained eerily silent, the atmosphere thick with unspoken tension.

Upon arrival at B3, Lumian departed without a backward glance, heading towards Suite 7 with purpose.

As the metal chains continued their retreat behind him, Lumian muttered thoughtfully to himself, Monsieur Iveljsta?

Iveljsta, residing in B18, harbored lifeless servants.

The peculiar appearance of Iveljsta and the condition of his servants led Lumian to suspect his association with a Wraith, a Sequence 5 Wraith of the Prisoner pathway.

The Prisoner pathway, controlled by the Rose School of Thought, held sway over temperance and indulgence factions, both intertwined with the secret organization. It seemed unlikely for a Wraith not to be affiliated with the Rose School of Thought.

Could it be a rare rogue Wraith, or perhaps the vanguard of the Rose School of Thought targeting Port Pylos? Lumian couldn't discount the possibility of a temperance faction member. Yet, in the past few minutes, he discerned no evidence of Iveljsta's protracted indulgence... Lumian resolved to detail his observations in Madam Magician's letter.

Whether something was good or bad would be determined by professionals!

Returning to Suite 7, Lumian noticed Ludwig seated at the dining table, indulging in a feast from a ceramic soup pot with a silver spoon.

Atop the dish, a layer of cheese infused with egg juice charred in spots. Through the substantial hole Ludwig had carved, Lumian glimpsed a medley of pork, beef, fish, shrimp, shells, potatoes, and tomatoes stewed together. The rich aroma of spices mingled with the meats' essence permeated the living and dining rooms, casting a spell that stirred his appetite.

Ludwig continued to eat in silence as Lugano stood up and asked, "Would you like some? This is the local Eseo. Different chefs choose different ingredients, and the taste will vary."

Ludwig, without uttering a word, simply turned his head at Lugano before resuming his meal, quickening his pace.

Taking a seat beside Ludwig, Lumian smiled at the cheese-filled boy and said, "I was going to bring you a better supper, but I thought better of it."

Confused, Lugano inquired, "What supper?"

"You don't want to know," Lumian responded with a Devil-like smile.

The supper he alluded to was Serial Killer Bram's corpse.

Originally intending to bring a few pieces back for Ludwig to sample and discern any "nutrients" and information, Lumian reconsidered, aware of Bram's limited knowledge about the Andariel family's peculiarities. Thus, he abandoned the idea of feeding Ludwig out of prudence.

From Lumian's observations, Ludwig could derive some strength from eating, releasing the seal. However, consuming a Sequence 7 Beyonder corpse might trigger a significant change. Lumian feared his own strength might not suffice to manage potential complications; Ludwig could potentially turn the tables and consume him as a delicacy.

Ludwig's silver spoon paused briefly before he remarked, "If you didn't bring it, why did you mention it?"

Oh, having a little tantrum? Lumian chuckled inwardly and said, "It's to inform you that we've reached an adventurer's paradise, a land of chaos. You'll have ample opportunities for fine dining in the future."

The implication was clear: do well, and I'll remember to reward you with delicacies.

Ludwig, spooning a soft potato stew into his mouth, responded vaguely, "I'm not going to school."

Does this mean that as long as he doesn't go to school, everything else is negotiable? Of course, the prerequisite is that I have to pay with enough delicacies... Satisfied, Lumian rose and made his way to the washroom adjoining the master bedroom, where he washed up.

The brass faucet delivered warm water at a comfortable temperature.

Lumian soaked a towel, relishing the refreshing steam that enveloped his face, invigorating him.

Hotel Orella's utilization of a steam engine to power its mechanical elevators and machinery ensured continuous hot water, a notable feature of its service.

The following morning, Lumian, sporting a golden straw hat, appeared on Cania Street beside Port Pylos's Resurrection Square.

Once the ruling center for Intis colonists in Matani, the area bore remnants of its history with road signs and shop names in the Intisian language. Lumian effortlessly traced the path beneath the Intis parasol trees, arriving at a four-story beige house showcasing Intis's opulent architectural style.

Signs adorned in Dutanese, Intisian, Highlander, Loen, and Feysac languages marked the building: "Port Pylos Patrol Team."

Below the sign, five lines had the same meaning: "Only deals with paranormal events."

Fully taking into account the needs of adventurers from different countries to report a case... Lumian playfully remarked as he entered the beige establishment.

Within the hall, devoid of occupants, Lumian found a receptionist casually perusing the day's local tabloid from a lounging position.

The native, in his thirties with dark brown skin and black hair, possessed a slender face and dark brown eyes.

Approaching, Lumian addressed him in Intisian, "I want to report a case."

The native glanced up, rising unsteadily. He opened a partition behind him, uttering a few incomprehensible words in Dutanese.

Lumian could barely understand him speaking in Dutanese.

"Someone who understands Intisian or Highlander..."

This won't do. Since you don't understand foreign languages, don't waste time reading the newspaper. Study diligently... Maintaining a genial smile, he patiently awaited other patrol team members to appear.

Within a mere minute or two, a young man with fluffy brown hair, appearing as if he had fallen asleep without washing his hair the night before, swung open the door from the depths of the hall.

Dressed in a white shirt and an unbuttoned yellow vest, he strolled towards Lumian, one hand casually tucked into his pocket. In fluent Intisian, he inquired, “What case are you filing?”

Lumian assessed the young man, unmistakably hailing from the Northern Continent, cigarette in hand, and brownish-

yellow eyes. With a reserved smile, Lumian responded, “I found a killer.”

Amused, the well-defined young man gestured towards the door.

“For killers, go to the police on the opposite street.”

Opposite the patrol team stood Port Pylos's police headquarters.

Maintaining his composure, Lumian reiterated, “He's a serial killer.”

Serial killer... The young man with the cigarette muttered to himself, a shift in his demeanor indicating a sudden seriousness.

“How do you know?”

“I found many severed lips in his house—human lips,” Lumian disclosed with a reserved smile.

“Cut off lips?” The young man, yet to fasten his yellow vest, pressed with urgency, “Where's his home?”

After a brief pause, Lumian replied, “I can't spell the street name, but I can take you to the scene. It's on a street near the Man-Eating Flower bar.”

Forcing himself to calm down, the young man took a drag on his cigarette, asking, “What about the killer? Did you see his face?”

“He's dead,” Lumian truthfully responded.

Taken aback for a moment, the brown-haired young man queried, “How did he die?”

Lumian's reserved smile transformed into a more open one.

“I killed him.”

The young man's expression froze in disbelief.

He scrutinized Lumian for a few seconds before inquiring, “Are you an adventurer here to collect the bounty?”

Bram's serial murders had prompted a local wanted poster issued by Admiral Querarill. However, the poster lacked a corresponding name or appearance, featuring only a case description due to the suspect's unidentified status.

Smiling, Lumian replied, “Sort of, but you can also claim it.”

The young man furrowed his brow.

“What do you mean?”

“The bounty can be yours,” Lumian stated, making his intention to bribe clear.

The young man cast a glance at Lumian.

“What would you like in exchange?”

“I want the dossier on a serial murder case from four years ago and the relevant items you gathered,” Lumian disclosed openly.

There might be something among them that Ludwig could consume.

The young man fell into contemplative silence, assessing the pros and cons.

Eventually, he scratched his brown hair and said, “I can show you the case dossier and related items, but you can't take them away. You can only copy them.

“Also, I need to confirm if it's a Serial Killer at the scene.”

“Alright,” Lumian agreed, extending his right hand with a smile. “Happy working with you.”

The young man shook Lumian's hand.

“Nice working with you. You can call me Camus. What about you?”

Lumian smiled once more.

“Louis Berry.”

As Camus entered the door deep in the hall, preparing to gather two teammates, he pondered, Louis Berry... Why does this name sound familiar...

Chapter 640 Commonality

On the street adorned with the words “Chilिकासco” in Dutanese, Lumian led Camus and the rest of the patrol team into the apartment crafted from dark black stones and brown wood.

The moment he swung open the door to Bram's room, a blend of charred scent and the tang of blood wafted through the air.

Corpse fragments lay strewn across the floor, the walls tainted with a mixture of blood and flesh. Handprints, crimson and searing marks adorned every surface.

Camus's eyes widened, as if thrust back into the midst of a serial killing.

Yet, this was a level of devastation beyond even that.

Turning to Lumian, Camus, despite already anticipating the grim answer, habitually inquired, “Where's that person's body?”

Lumian gestured towards the scattered remains and minced meat, responding with a grim smile, “All of these.”

Camus fell into a momentary silence before signaling his two stunned teammates to examine the scene.

He had promised to share a portion of the bounty with them, making them witnesses to his “merits.”

Camus hadn't ventured alone, wary that this might be a trap set by Louis Berry, an assassination attempt by the Rose School of Thought, or other secret organizations targeting the patrol team.

In the Southern Continent, vigilance was a necessity!

Approaching a cupboard, Camus fixated his gaze on lips soaked in preservatives, the tragic fate of the victims replaying in his mind.

After a moment of silence, Louis Berry spoke calmly, “Bram is a member of the Devil family, Andariel. He was instructed by the Rose School of Thought to gather information in Port Pylos and carry out the serial murders. His uncle, Devajo, was supposed to be his contact, but they never actually met. Instead, he left the information he collected in the study of an empty house at 17 Aleg Street...”

Wh— Camus and the others were initially startled, then deeply puzzled.

How does Louis Berry possess such detailed knowledge?

Camus couldn't help but glance at the scattered corpse pieces, the blood-soaked walls, the handprints on the ground, and the various charred marks.

Eventually, his gaze settled on Lumian's face.

Lumian responded with a warm smile curling his lips.

Camus and his two companions exchanged glances, refraining from questioning whether Louis Berry obtained the information through spirit channeling, torture, or if he had discerned Bram's motives from the start. Louis's pursuit of the serial murderer wasn't solely due to a criminal act.

“This intel is crucial,” Camus nodded, gesturing towards the severely damaged six-barrel machine gun in the room. “We need to secure Bram's weapon.”

“No problem,” Lumian replied casually.

Being a Pyromaniac, firearms held little appeal for him. Fireballs proved far more potent than the rapid fire of a six-barrel machine gun—just not as swift.

Beside Resurrection Square, on Cania Street, on the second floor of the patrol team's four-story building.

Camus placed the dossier and related items on the table in front of Lumian, emphasizing, “You can only read and record. Taking it away or damaging it is not an option.”

Lumian nodded subtly, taking one of the envelopes, unwinding the thread a few times, and carefully opening it.

Rather than hastily perusing the contents, he first extracted the dossier, giving it a thorough read.

The dense dossier meticulously outlined the identities, origins, possible pathways, Sequences, locations of death, the scene's conditions, and the varied speculations and investigations conducted by the patrol team.

It was clear the patrol team had been diligent in their investigations, especially when new victims kept emerging. Daily operations varied until the serial murders appeared to cease, leading to a slackening of efforts. They gradually reduced the frequency of case studies and large-scale visit trips. After six months, investigations reached a standstill, concluding the dossier.

In the final report, the vice-captain overseeing the matter concluded: "This is a classic serial murder case committed by the Devil pathway. Though Serial Killers seldom target only seven individuals, as more victims enhance the ritual's efficacy, this time, all victims are Beyonders, including Mid-Sequence Beyonders. Even with just seven deaths, they are more favored by Devils, pleasing them more than 14 or even 20 ordinary people.

"The main question in this mystic case is that, aside from being Beyonders, there's no common thread among the seven victims. This sets it apart from previous serial murders.

"We hypothesize that the seven victims were active Beyonders in West Balam, likely having committed some form of killing in the past. It can be seen as a manifestation of depravity..."

Lumian read it meticulously, concurring with the theory that seven Beyonders surpassed 14 ordinary individuals in Devil-pleasing rituals.

This wasn't new information to him. After all, ordinary people were only the third-best sacrifice, while creatures with Beyond characteristics ranked second.

Similar situations arose in specific "acts," particularly those requiring feedback. It was akin to deciphering an Angel's conspiracy, allowing Lumian to assimilate a potion more effectively than an ordinary person's intrigue.

Having grasped a general understanding of the entire serial murder case, Lumian delved into gathering information about the seven Beyonders. Synthesizing Anthony's psychological profile of Hisoka, Franca's archetype summary and her speculations about the actor, he scoured for potential commonalities.

Among the Beyonders were both men and women, one under Admiral Querarill, while another was a Death believer residing in Port Pylos. Foreign adventurers, an Intis Republic spy stationed in Matani, a peripheral member of the Rose School of Thought, and a local clergyman of the God of Steam and Machinery Church were also among the list.

Judging by their identities and backgrounds, they seemingly had nothing in common.

Yet, for Lumian, who read with subjective conjectures, subtle details held significance.

All seven victims were young, with the oldest in his early thirties, widely praised for combat talent and outstanding intelligence. Lumian mused to himself,

Are the targets Beyonders who are young, filled with potential, and have already reached a certain level of maturity? Even the two who weren't particularly young bore the label of being famous, powerful, with limitless potential... Lumian gained a rough understanding of Hisoka's selection criteria.

If Franca were present, she might have noted that it matched the characteristics of the original archetype.

However, Lumian believed Hisoka would adhere to the archetype when it suited him, not letting it dictate his true motives. Mad Lady's evaluation of Hisoka as not being pure enough further supported Lumian's perspective.

Considering the selection criteria, Lumian thought, Louis Berry fits Hisoka's homicidal fetish. He clicked his tongue and retrieved items related to the case from the official envelopes.

Most were the victim's belongings, but there were also seven thin aluminum foils stained with blackish-brown substances that didn't belong to this group.

Described in the case file, they were wrappings for the local chocolate, left at each crime scene. It was suspected that the murderer would peel off the thin foil after success, indulging in a piece of chocolate before dissecting the corpse.

As the murderer used a gloved hand to extract and consume the chocolate, no corresponding traces were left on the thin foil. Such chocolates were common in Matani, making tracking difficult.

Lumian studied the thin aluminum foil before smiling at Camus, who supervised him.

“Can I take two or three?”

Camus, with his brown hair, furrowed his brow.

“If you want to use divination or other Beyonder methods, you can do it here.”

“Just two. It won't hinder your future investigations,” Lumian said enticingly. “If you agree to help, I'll give you an additional reward. For example, a very useful summoning incantation for a spirit world creature.”

Camus fell silent briefly before agreeing, “Deal.”

More than fifteen minutes later, Camus, having brought Lumian out to purchase chocolate-like items, observed with a bewildered expression as a rabbit-shaped spirit world creature adeptly copied the dossiers with a fountain pen.

After nearly a minute, Camus shifted his gaze to Lumian, leisurely sitting on the side, peeling off the thin aluminum foil and savoring a piece of dark-brown chocolate. He inquired in a deep voice, “Is this the very useful spirit world creature you mentioned?”

Lumian, chewing on the fragrant chocolate, responded with a smile, “Yes, it's one of the Rabbits of Knowledge. It can help you evade the labor of copying.”

What do I need such a copying tool for!? Camus bellowed inwardly, but he restrained himself as he recalled the bounty for the serial murders and the grisly scene of Bram's demise.

Lumian added with a smile, “When you prefer to keep the origin of your words hidden, summon the Rabbit of Knowledge for assistance.

“Moreover, this is a growth-oriented spirit world creature. It evolves based on the knowledge it receives. Of course, it's ideal if you can secure a contract with the spirit

world creature. Otherwise, each summoned Rabbit of Knowledge might differ, making nurturing impossible.”

“Growth-oriented...” Camus echoed the term, his expression gradually softening.

Back at Hotel Orella, Lumian retrieved the two old aluminum foils from his pocket and handed one to Ludwig.

“Try eating these,” he suggested with a smile.