

Inevitability 691

Chapter 691 Pursuer

As the blazing white flames rapidly dissipated, Lumian turned his back on “Hisoka” Twanaku and fixed his gaze on the Guardian, who was swaying unsteadily more than ten meters away. With a chuckle, he declared, “Before, I needed my team's help to defeat you. But now, I can take you down alone.”

His words were aimed squarely at Hisoka.

Collapsing to the ground, Hisoka's consciousness gradually faded as he caught Lumian's remark. He instinctively tried to clench his fists, but lacked the strength to do so.

A desperate gasp escaped his throat, his pupils dilating and losing focus.

Hisoka cursed himself for choosing Devil Transformation over Wraith Transformation when confronting Lumian Lee. If only he had opted for the latter, he could have disrupted Lumian's attempt to play the blackened bone flute with Wraith Shriek. Alas, he had no way of knowing the specifics, only able to sense the presence and source of a malicious intent. Given Lumian Lee's ability to infuse bullets, fireballs, and other attacks with electric shocks and target weaknesses with precision, Devil Transformation had seemed the more versatile choice, offering protection against various contingencies.

As for why he hadn't summoned a barrage of Sulfur Fireballs, even at the cost of mutual destruction—Hisoka sensed the considerable distance separating them. By the time he could conjure and launch ten to twenty fireballs, Lumian Lee would have already finished playing the flute. With teleportation at his disposal, Lumian could effortlessly evade the clustered assault. Moreover, spells like Language of Foulness had a limited range.

Left with no other recourse, “Hisoka” Twanaku could only resort to Emotional Shock and Desire Detonation, targeting Lumian Lee's weakness. He hoped that after both of them sustained grievous injuries, their recovery rates would be comparable, granting him an opportunity to mount a different response.

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However, despite the pain, blood loss, and abnormal look in his eyes, Lumian Lee managed to maintain his balance. Fighting through the debilitating effects, he executed a precise areof-effect bombardment enhanced with electric shocks. The effort inflicted fresh wounds upon himself and temporarily paralyzed him.

“Gasp...”

Hisoka Twanaku mustered his remaining strength to drag Lumian Lee down with him in a final, desperate gambit of losing control. But his life force had reached its limit. Darkness engulfed his vision as his consciousness slipped into oblivion, a maelstrom of indignation, resentment, and agony consuming him.

The colossal Devil's body spasmed a few times before falling still.

Hisoka's last glimmer of hope for revival was extinguished.

He was well and truly dead.

As Lumian spoke, he drew his revolver and trained it on the nearby Guardian.

Disoriented and reeling, the Guardian instinctively condensed a broadsword of light. Dropping to one knee, he plunged it into the ground before him.

The sword merged with the earth, erecting an impenetrable invisible wall.

As a gravekeeper merged with a dream projection, this Guardian had no effective defense against the Symphony of Hatred. His companions, the Spirit Warlocks and Soul Assurers, caught off guard by the attack, couldn't pull him into a dream in time to avoid the melody's direct impact. He could only rely on his own physical and spiritual fortitude to withstand the detonation of desire and emotion.

For Beyonders with dream projections, this assault posed a mortal threat.

Before the gravekeeper could regain his bearings, another incandescent white fireball wreathed in lightning struck him, triggering a violent explosion.

Fortunately, his boon as a Guardian spared him the fate of his companions, who were culled like stalks of wheat. Without it, he would have been unable to mount even a token defense on pure instinct.

Lumian's green eyes took on an iron-black cast as he stood tall and squeezed the trigger.

Bang! Bang!

Twin yellow bullets, trailing blazing white flames and silver lightning, slammed into a single point on the invisible wall.

Rumble!

The already destabilized wall shattered. The Guardian could only watch helplessly as a searing white spear enveloped in lightning hurtled towards him, piercing his chest and sending him flying.

Another Cull, another bout of digestion.

Clinging to the last shreds of consciousness, the Guardian scattered the broadsword of light into countless minuscule fragments.

These luminous shards coalesced into a hurricane that raged in all directions.

Hounded by the storm of light, the blazing white flaming spear soared twenty to thirty meters before finally coming to rest.

As the flames ebbed away, Lumian straightened his posture, clad in a white shirt, black vest, dark trousers, and a golden straw hat.

Behind him, the bright and terrifying Hurricane of Light gradually petered out, thinning the ground. The corpses of the fallen gravekeepers and "Hisoka" Twanaku lay broken and strewn about.

Reeling from the Symphony of Hatred's influence, his injuries abnormally severe, Devajo's gaze flicked from the bodies littering the ground to Lumian, who stood facing him from afar. His already pallid complexion turned even more ashen.

What in the world is happening?

Is he even human?

Devajo, in whom thoughts of vengeance had fleetingly stirred following the blow, swiftly abandoned any such notions. Igniting the sulfurous blood he had spat out with azure flames, he hastily retreated into the forest.

He wanted to escape!

In any case, he could offer no aid to the human skin the archduke had crafted through ritual. Lingering in the vicinity of the black ancient tomb would only expose him to greater peril.

Lumian paid no heed to Devajo's flight. Though weakened, his spirituality remained abundant. Transforming once more into a blazing white flaming spear, he traversed dozens, nearly a hundred meters in a blink, coming to rest beside Lugano, Amandina, and his companions.

The four Beyonders lay unconscious, spared the Symphony of Hatred's melody—the effects were minimal, a mere nightmare, but still wracked them with pain. Their contorted expressions gradually eased as they roused from their comatose state.

Seeing them open their eyes and regain their faculties, Lumian instructed, “Leave this place at once and return to Tizamo. Find somewhere to lay low.”

The conflict unfolding before the black ancient tomb was not something Lugano and the others could influence. Lumian himself dared not approach, so he intended to send his four temporary allies to safety.

He had previously consented to Camus and Rhea accompanying him, believing the former's Psychic Piercing and the latter's Lightning Arrows could synergize effectively with his own abilities to counter Hisoka's dream projection, Reaza, and the others. Amandina's power to compel others into dreams was also quite useful. Moreover, following her was the only way to approach the black ancient tomb without falling prey to the invisible figure's attacks. To his surprise, Hisoka had displayed combat prowess far exceeding Padre Cali's. With the area unsealed and devoid of preset traps, not only had Camus, Amandina, and the rest failed to render aid, they had ended up hindering each other and becoming a liability.

Reflecting on his two prior battles—the attempt to capture Hisoka alive and the confrontation with Padre Cali—Lumian grasped a fundamental principle.

At times, there was strength in numbers. But in other situations, solitude was preferable. Facing different foes under varied circumstances demanded adaptability, lest one court disaster by adhering to a fixed approach.

Lumian recalled a maxim Emperor Roselle had once shared, as explained by his sister Aurore:

In warfare, as in the flow of water, there are no constant conditions.

“We can return to Tizamo? Even me?” Lugano couldn't contain his pleasant surprise. Instinctively, he extended his remaining hand, pressing the flickering light against Lumian's wounds.

As a Doctor, Lugano was unable to treat a patient's internal organs directly. He needed to open the cavity and make contact with the injured site. It was akin to performing surgery.

Lumian nodded and replied, "Indeed, but you'll need to remain under Camus and Rhea's supervision."

He planned to linger a while longer, to see if he could aid Iveljsta Eggers, a member of the Church of The Fool's temperance faction.

It was the duty of a Tarot Club's Minor Arcana card holder.

Of course, Lumian had no intention of venturing into the area immediately fronting the black ancient tomb. He might well perish before even realizing what had struck him. His aim was to ascertain whether he could sway Reaza and the others to interact with the corresponding godhood items, or utilize the golden mask upon Hisoka's corpse to some end.

At that moment, Devajo, who had only just arrived in Tizamo that very night, had already vanished back into the forest, retracing his steps.

Mustering his dwindling strength, he started sprinting.

As he ran, Devajo abruptly halted, casting a perplexed gaze towards the path's bend, obscured by the trees.

Beneath the dim, crimson moonlight, a short figure approached.

It was a boy of seven or eight years, garbed in blue pajamas speckled with yellow stars and a matching nightcap. His plump face and the short blond hair peeking out from under the cap were smeared with cream, blood, biscuit crumbs, cake fragments, and sundry other substances. His brown eyes blazed with intense hunger and desire.

In his mouth, a vibrant, cold, and slick viper's tail writhed and shook as he gulped it down, segment by segment.

The boy's cheeks bulged as he chomped vigorously.

In the next instant, he caught sight of Devajo.

A wave of intense, terrifying malice flooded Devajo's mind.

Lugano, having secured permission, was on the verge of informing Camus, Rhea, and Amandina of their impending return to Tizamo when a petrified scream rang out from the forest.

They froze in their tracks.

Mere seconds later, a pitch-black monstrosity, towering nearly three meters tall with curved goat horns, came barreling out of the forest. It charged from the direction of Tizamo, making a beeline for the black ancient tomb, panic etched in its every movement.

That man just now? He's a Devil too... A minion of the Nois family's Demon, perhaps? Could the green-eyed figure fashioned from human skin be a manifestation of the Nois family's Demon, projected into the Dream Festival? Lumian's gaze shifted to the shadowed forest at the Devil's back, an ominous feeling washing over him.

He made a snap decision and addressed Lugano, Amandina, and the others.

“Grab hold of me!”

Lugano swiftly returned to Lumian's side, seizing his arm.

Camus, Rhea, and Amandina followed suit, startled but mimicking Lugano's action.

The five of them winked out of existence, reappearing in close proximity to Hisoka's corpse.

The instant Amandina's form finished coalescing, her eyes flew wide.

Voice quavering, she turned to Lumian and said in a deep voice, “T-that figure... it's appeared once more...”

Chapter 692 Death before Rebirth

Appeared once more? Lumian motioned for Lugano and the others to loosen their hold and inquired of Amandina, “Where is he?”

Amandina's sky-blue eyes locked onto the entrance of the black ancient tomb situated at the terminus of the motionless river.

“He's sitting cross-legged over there.”

As the words left her lips, Amandina shut her eyes and turned away. Minuscule protrusions emerged from her previously flawless and supple skin, each on the cusp of rupturing and giving rise to something unknown.

This reaction stemmed from her glimpse of the phantasmal, stagnant river and the ashen-white goat adorned with a golden mask, grappling to traverse the shallow waters.

The pallid goat's limbs, devoid of all fur, were extensively decomposed, exuding a nauseating yellow pus that swiftly encroached upon the remainder of its body.

Under the sway of the Symphony of Hatred, Reaza's wan and frigid countenance surrendered its final vestige of color.

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The decay gradually consumed the back of his hand, neck, and cheeks, lending him the appearance of a long-deceased cadaver.

This decelerated the deterioration afflicting the pale goat's body.

Concurrently, the still river conjured by the black ancient tomb grew ever more illusory, its breadth and depth visibly diminishing.

The rag doll, shrouded in a sinister Gothic gown, drifted onward once more, shadowing the retreating river of quietude.

Abruptly, it pivoted to regard the green-eyed man composed of human flesh and blood, who, coincidentally, reciprocated its gaze.

Loathing, enmity, and lunacy erupted from the sinister cloth doll's crimson eyes. Its black Gothic attire, ensnared by baleful vines, ruptured into myriad holes, scattering fabric shreds and leaving it in tatters.

The green-eyed man in the dark gray suit seemed unscathed, yet as he advanced, he imprinted two footsteps saturated with vivid red blood, the aroma of sulfur swiftly dissipating.

One stride, two strides, three strides. Each step emblazoned bright red footprints, while dark fluid seeped from his human skin.

Iveljsta Eggers at last recovered from the onslaught of emotions and cravings unleashed by the Symphony of Hatred. He cast a glance at the tattered evil cloth doll and retrieved an object from his concealed pocket—a palm-sized puppet.

The puppet appeared to have been stitched together by a young child's hand. Its limbs were askew, its legs reaching its posterior, and its visage daubed with red, yellow, and white pigments, evoking the image of a circus clown.

Iveljsta infused the misshapen puppet with his spirituality.

It shimmered into intangibility and vanished from his grasp, materializing within the dark brown eyes of the Eggers family scion before vaulting into the green orbs of the man clad in human skin.

This caused the figure in the dark gray suit to stiffen and decelerate.

Lumian dared not prolong his gaze and hastily averted his eyes.

As Amandina closed her eyes and turned away, the minute protuberances adorning her skin receded.

Intrigued, she stole a glance at the monstrosity, suspected to be a Devil, hurtling towards the green-eyed man, seemingly on the precipice of succumbing to terror. She swiftly surveyed her environment.

Her eyes then fell upon the colossal Devil's incomplete carcass sprawled on the ground and a charred bone flute that had tumbled beneath a palm tree.

“There, there's something over there,” she whispered, tugging at Lumian's sleeve.

Could it be a potent artifact discarded by a gravekeeper?

Lumian peered over and murmured to Amandina and the others, “Feign ignorance. Refrain from touching or even nearing it.”

He had purposely abandoned the Symphony of Hatred there, deferring its retrieval.

In such circumstances, wielding it anew was far more prone to endangering his allies than exploiting an adversary's vulnerability. As a Reaper, he had no need to employ the Symphony of Hatred to pierce the target.

Thus, he feigned a lack of opportunity to reclaim it, hoping an enemy would attempt to turn it against him.

If a similar scenario unfolded, Lumian and the three godhood items would be the sole survivors capable of weathering the ensuing cataclysm unleashed by the Symphony of Hatred. At that juncture, he would whisk Amandina and her companions away via teleportation. Upon later return, he anticipated discovering the enemies' lifeless husks and acquiring fresh spoils of war.

It was a trap he had laid in passing.

As Devajo, transformed into a colossal Devil, retreated to the proximity of the human-skinned man and drew near the ebbing river of silence, a short silhouette walked out from the forest trail—a boy of seven or eight years old, clad in endearing sleepwear and a nightcap. His yellow hair and countenance were begrimed, besmirched with grease, dregs, and blood.

Catching sight of the boy, Lugano experienced a piercing agony in his absent right hand.

“Man... Man... Man....” He gnashed his teeth in dread.

Observing his abnormal reaction, Camus and the others inquired in astonishment, “What's wrong?”

Tracing Lugano's line of sight, Amandina, Camus, and Rhea spotted the boy.

The former swiveled to Lumian in bewilderment, “Isn't, isn't that your godson? Why is he here? It's very dangerous!”

“No, he's not in danger.” Camus recollecting Kolobo's exaggerated reaction upon encountering Louis Berry and his godson. He recalled some of the words of his companion from the Fate pathway and said with a solemn expression, “We should be the ones in danger.”

Without waiting for Amandina and Rhea's misgivings, Camus regarded Lumian and knitted his brow.

“What do we do?”

As a godfather, you should have a way to control your godson, right?

Lumian's gaze flitted to Ludwig pursuing the Devil, then to the corpses and Hisoka's Devil form strewn on the ground. He replied with a grin, “It's not a big problem.”

There was ample food here to form an effective seal!

As to why Ludwig had trekked to the black ancient tomb, Lumian roughly had an idea.

The man and woman who had freshly arrived in Tizamo tonight and taken lodging at the Brieu Motel were likely minions of the Nois family's Demon. By some means, they maintained lucidity in this special dream. Once the Dream Festival commenced, they left the motel and hastened towards the black ancient tomb.

During this process, they passed the second floor, inducing Ludwig to catch wind of delicacies. He forsook the insipid fare and shadowed them closely, matching the pace of a seven- or eight-year-old child.

At that moment, Ludwig's brown eyes were fixed solely on Devajo, the Devil.

“Why isn't it a big problem?” Amandina wore a look of skepticism.

Lumian smiled and indicated the massive Devil who had fled in proximity to the green-eyed man.

“He's here to hunt down that monster.”

“Hunt? Him?” Amandina glanced left and right in confusion.

A seven- or eight-year-old boy in azure star-spangled sleepwear, pursuing a pitch-black Devil almost three meters in height, with curved goat horns and bat wings sprouting from his back? This is indeed a dream, right?

As he neared the green-eyed man formed of human flesh and blood and the black ancient tomb, Devajo sensed a tinge of respite. Yet, his mind remained haunted by visions of his tongue roasting, his brain scooped out by a soup spoon, and his arms and legs gnawed by the boy.

What kind of monster is this? Devajo watched in abnormal fear as the boy strode towards him.

At that juncture, Amandina, who had stolen a glance their way, exclaimed, "That figure is looking at the man in the black robe."

Iveljsta? Lumian peered over but discerned nothing amiss with Iveljsta Eggers.

Amandina averted her gaze, taking a moment to regain her composure before looking again.

She quickly explained, "He's not looking at the man in the black robe. He's looking at the Devil!"

Amandina abruptly halted, withdrawing her gaze and furrowing her brow.

"That figure seems to utter something... I don't know the language, but I understand the meaning."

"What did he say?" Lumian pressed.

Amandina dared not look towards the black tomb. She organized her thoughts and said,

"Basically, it means:

"Everyone in the world knows that crawling insects can spin cocoons. After the cocoon fractures, butterflies take wing.

"A common insect can transform into a fluttering butterfly and alter its form of life. Why?"

Unknowingly, Amandina's voice shifted, as if swayed by some influence.

She paused for a moment before answering the question in a low, cold voice, "Death before rebirth. Ascension into godhood..."

Before Amandina could finish her sentence, Devajo, in his Devil state, stiffened.

He beheld his flesh swiftly decaying, fragments sloughing off to bare ghastly white bones.

Within seconds, the Devil lost consciousness and crumbled into a mound of putrefying flesh and bones.

The remains fused as if alive, intertwining to form a human-sized cocoon.

It rapidly shattered, and a human-headed avian monster draped in white plumage emerged.

After absorbing all the flesh and blood, the monster expanded significantly, its form undergoing a transformation.

The lower portion of its head rapidly elongated and expanded, as if possessing a body of its own. The flesh at its “waist” melded with the avian body, mantled in pale-yellow feathers.

“Hahaha!” Devajo, with innumerable white feathers sprouting from his eyes, nostrils, visage, and fingertips, erupted into laughter.

He slapped the white-feathered bird body below and soared skyward, as if riding it.

Devajo ascended higher and higher, gradually turning ethereal. Then he spiraled downward and entered the black ancient tomb.

Witnessing this, Lumian glanced once more at the entrance of the black ancient tomb but still could not perceive the unseen figure Amandina had mentioned.

His heart stirred as he took two steps forward and retrieved the peculiar golden mask from Hisoka's corpse.

Chapter 693 Golden Corpse

Lumian looked at the gold mask in his hand, white and black paint covering the eyes and face. Without hesitation, he put it on.

A cold sensation quickly seeped into his skin, and the weight of the gold felt unusually real.

His mind spun as he gazed through the mask at the entrance of the black ancient tomb and the end of the still river, which had mostly receded.

This time, he finally saw a slightly indistinct figure.

The figure wore a strange rusted iron crown and a dark robe with peculiar patterns. Its skin was milky-white, and its eyes were so dark they seemed to hold the entire night. A pale-white beard fluttered around its mouth and chin.

The old man sat cross-legged, hands tucked into his sleeves. He leaned against the open door of the black ancient tomb, his expression cold and impassive, like a statue.

As Lumian looked over, the old man met his gaze. His dark eyes seemed to reflect Lumian, as if numerous phantoms had appeared.

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Splash!

Behind the old man, an even more illusory, nearly lightless water wave rippled in the void. The colossal figure in blood-stained armor roared angrily, attempting to approach.

Lumian's right palm instantly burned.

The old man in the rusted iron crown and strange robe withdrew his hands from his sleeves.

His hands had pale, dark skin that was still smooth. The backs were cracked, each crack either covered in white feathers stained with pale yellow oil or dripping with decaying yellow pus.

Upon seeing this, Lumian's thoughts vanished, and he felt as if he were descending into endless cold darkness.

A familiar burning sensation emanated from his left chest. Combined with the burning, frenzied, violent sensation in his right palm, it awakened Lumian's consciousness, allowing him to find a lifeline in the darkness.

Using this opportunity, Lumian regained the ability to think. He saw nearly black blood vessels protruding from the dark eyes that seemed to hide the entire night. They were tainted with madness that threatened to bury and end everything.

The eyes closed, and the illusory ripples and colossal figure behind the old man vanished.

Lumian's vision began to clear, and his perception of the outside world fully returned.

A sharp pain coursed through him.

Lumian glanced down at his right hand and realized disgusting bumps bulged from his wrist to the back of his hand. His hair seemed to have thickened and turned whiter.

He flipped his palm over and saw that the mark left by Blood Emperor Alista Tudor's remnant aura had completely surfaced. It was a vivid red.

Surrounding these marks was decaying flesh, seeping pus, and pale-white skin.

Lumian frowned.

Despite the Blood Emperor's remnant aura being fully activated, Amandina, Lugano, and the others around him didn't show any signs of panic or fear. He didn't sense any extremely frenzied or violent thoughts either!

Wait...

The figure in the blood-stained armor seems to be Blood Emperor Alista Tudor...

This place feels similar to the Samaritan Women's Spring... Could the figure sitting at the tomb's entrance be the Underworld Daoist mentioned by the Armored Shadow?

Why are he and the Blood Emperor appearing here again? Shouldn't they be at the source of the Samaritan Women's Spring? Are the two connected?

Did the Underworld Daoist discover the Blood Emperor's residual aura on me and conveniently seal it? Even if I fully activate it, I won't be able to unleash the crazy Red Priest's aura?

Uh, I don't know if it's because of Mr. Fool's seal or because I'm wearing Hisoka's golden mask, but the Underworld Daoist didn't directly allow me to undergo immortal ascension, nor did he force me to lose control...

Lumian quickly grasped his predicament. As the immortalized Devil entered the black ancient tomb, the situation inside changed once more.

The tomb, which had fallen silent, emitted a rustling sound, accompanied by the clang of metal colliding with stone.

The next instant, a golden figure materialized beside the Underworld Daoist at the tomb's entrance.

The figure was covered in gold, with long limbs and a golden mask streaked with white and black paint.

It belonged to the same type as the one on Lumian's face and the pale-white goat's head!

The golden-masked figure stiffened, as if its limbs were dead. Relying solely on the strength of its waist, it sat up from lying flat like a corpse.

Eyes closed, it turned its head towards the pale-white goat closest to it.

The pale-white goat's aura instantly turned ordinary, making it unable to walk on the still river. It rapidly decayed, sank, and quickly vanished.

The golden figure, eyes still closed, turned its head to the tattered, sinister cloth doll.

The eerie vines on the cloth doll's Gothic dress suddenly came alive, coiling around the doll, rendering it powerless and immobile.

The corpse's head turned to the slowly walking green-eyed man.

The green-eyed man, his eyes reflecting the ugly puppet, suddenly halted. With a bang, his body transformed into a bloody piglet.

The ugly puppet landed beside the piglet, motionless, as if it had turned into the most ordinary and common puppet.

Ludwig's eyes lit up as he jogged over.

He leaped up like a massive frog and pounced on the bloody piglet. He grabbed its head and bit down.

Amandina closed her eyes in shock.

Louis Berry's godson turned out to be such a monster?

The pig wailed fiercely. The golden-masked corpse closed its eyes, turned its head, and faced Iveljsta Eggers.

Lumian's forehead throbbed. He wanted to break through the sudden paralyzing pressure and teleport over to rescue Iveljsta, but he hesitated.

Previously, he had restricted himself from approaching the black ancient tomb. At most, he would take a glance or two. Now, he didn't want to break this self-imposed "rule." Violating it meant immense risk.

However, Iveljsta was from the Church of The Fool.

Just as Lumian made his decision, the golden corpse turned its head again, but Iveljsta remained unchanged. He was still severely injured, his aura weak.

What's going on? Why did the cold corpse in the ancient tomb spare Iveljsta? The Underworld Daoist didn't do anything to him when he looked at him... Lumian was puzzled as the corpse's golden mask faced Reaza.

After the pale-white goat vanished, Reaza summoned an undead creature to envelop him and blinked to the edge of the ancient tomb area. He was about to escape into the forest, but before he could do anything else, his body froze.

Pop, pop, pop. Huge, wet warts erupted from Reaza's face, neck, and the backs of his hands, accompanied by disgusting mucus.

The vice-captain of Port Pylos's patrol collapsed, rapidly disintegrating into countless bloody warts that squirmed in the gaps of his thin suit.

The undead creature summoned by Reaza transformed into thin human skin and gently landed.

Lumian's scalp tingled as he watched. Finally, he broke free from the paralysis caused by the corpse sitting up. He said to Lugano, Amandina, and the others, "Grab hold of me!"

He was about to teleport back to Tizamo!

At that moment, the corpse's golden-masked face turned towards him.

Lumian's body turned cold. Ignoring Camus and company, he immediately activated the black mark on his right shoulder.

Suddenly, he saw the cold corpse's face, its eyes peeking out from under the golden mask with white and black paint, open.

It was a pair of cold, icy-blue eyes.

Icy-blue eyes? Lumian was taken aback, finding them familiar.

These are...

These are Naboredisley's eyes!

Dammit, why is Naboredisley here? Why is he a cold corpse in the black ancient tomb?

What right does He have to bestow the Beyonder powers of the Prisoner pathway?

It can't be real. It's not Naboredisley, but its eyes resemble...

Amidst Lumian's thoughts, he saw a smile in the icy-blue eyes, a smile of playfulness, understanding, and certainty.

This was a stark contrast to the pained expressions in the icy-blue eyes on Hanth Island.

Suddenly, a half-withered, violently beating dark-red heart soared from the golden corpse's hand and flew out of the completely disintegrated still river.

A short figure pounced on the heart like a frog and grabbed it. It was Ludwig, his mouth filled with blood.

The smile in the golden corpse's icy-blue eyes grew more relaxed.

He nodded at Lumian and willingly fell back to His original position. He had no intention of seizing the opportunity to leave the black ancient tomb.

With a splash of illusory water, the tomb's open door gradually closed.

Seated by the door, the figure suspected to be the Underworld Daoist vanished.

Wh— Naboredisley's corpse doesn't seem willing to leave the tomb... How did He end up lying in there? Lumian couldn't figure out the reason, so he looked at Ludwig and realized the boy was holding a half-withered dark-red heart to his mouth.

Lumian wanted to stop him but lacked the ability. The surrounding corpses didn't seem to attract Ludwig as much as the half-withered heart.

Clang!

The tomb door slammed shut, causing the entire area to tremble.

Lumian and the others witnessed dream fragments one after another, and their surroundings blurred.

After a brief daze, Lumian realized he was lying in the middle of an unlit street. The crimson moon was bright in the sky, casting its light.

This was inside Tizamo.

693 Golden Corpse

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The figure in the blood-stained armor seems to be Blood Emperor Alista Tudor...

This place feels similar to the Samaritan Women's Spring... Could the figure sitting at the tomb's entrance be the Underworld Daoist mentioned by the Armored Shadow?

Why are he and the Blood Emperor appearing here again? Shouldn't they be at the source of the Samaritan Women's Spring? Are the two connected?

Did the Underworld Daoist discover the Blood Emperor's residual aura on me and conveniently seal it? Even if I fully activate it, I won't be able to unleash the crazy Red Priest's aura?

Uh, I don't know if it's because of Mr. Fool's seal or because I'm wearing Hisoka's golden mask, but the Underworld Daoist didn't directly allow me to undergo immortal ascension, nor did he force me to lose control...

Lumian quickly grasped his predicament. As the immortalized Devil entered the black ancient tomb, the situation inside changed once more.

The tomb, which had fallen silent, emitted a rustling sound, accompanied by the clang of metal colliding with stone.

The next instant, a golden figure materialized beside the Underworld Daoist at the tomb's entrance.

The figure was covered in gold, with long limbs and a golden mask streaked with white and black paint.

It belonged to the same type as the one on Lumian's face and the pale-white goat's head!

The golden-masked figure stiffened, as if its limbs were dead. Relying solely on the strength of its waist, it sat up from lying flat like a corpse.

Eyes closed, it turned its head towards the pale-white goat closest to it.

The pale-white goat's aura instantly turned ordinary, making it unable to walk on the still river. It rapidly decayed, sank, and quickly vanished.

The golden figure, eyes still closed, turned its head to the tattered, sinister cloth doll.

The eerie vines on the cloth doll's Gothic dress suddenly came alive, coiling around the doll, rendering it powerless and immobile.

The corpse's head turned to the slowly walking green-eyed man.

The green-eyed man, his eyes reflecting the ugly puppet, suddenly halted. With a bang, his body transformed into a bloody piglet.

The ugly puppet landed beside the piglet, motionless, as if it had turned into the most ordinary and common puppet.

Ludwig's eyes lit up as he jogged over.

He leaped up like a massive frog and pounced on the bloody piglet. He grabbed its head and bit down.

Amandina closed her eyes in shock.

Louis Berry's godson turned out to be such a monster?

The pig wailed fiercely. The golden-masked corpse closed its eyes, turned its head, and faced Iveljsta Eggers.

Lumian's forehead throbbed. He wanted to break through the sudden paralyzing pressure and teleport over to rescue Iveljsta, but he hesitated.

Previously, he had restricted himself from approaching the black ancient tomb. At most, he would take a glance or two. Now, he didn't want to break this self-imposed "rule." Violating it meant immense risk.

However, Iveljsta was from the Church of The Fool.

Just as Lumian made his decision, the golden corpse turned its head again, but Iveljsta remained unchanged. He was still severely injured, his aura weak.

What's going on? Why did the cold corpse in the ancient tomb spare Iveljsta? The Underworld Daoist didn't do anything to him when he looked at him... Lumian was puzzled as the corpse's golden mask faced Reaza.

After the pale-white goat vanished, Reaza summoned an undead creature to envelop him and blinked to the edge of the ancient tomb area. He was about to escape into the forest, but before he could do anything else, his body froze.

Pop, pop, pop. Huge, wet warts erupted from Reaza's face, neck, and the backs of his hands, accompanied by disgusting mucus.

The vice-captain of Port Pylos's patrol collapsed, rapidly disintegrating into countless bloody warts that squirmed in the gaps of his thin suit.

The undead creature summoned by Reaza transformed into thin human skin and gently landed.

Lumian's scalp tingled as he watched. Finally, he broke free from the paralysis caused by the corpse sitting up. He said to Lugano, Amandina, and the others, "Grab hold of me!"

He was about to teleport back to Tizamo!

At that moment, the corpse's golden-masked face turned towards him.

Lumian's body turned cold. Ignoring Camus and company, he immediately activated the black mark on his right shoulder.

Suddenly, he saw the cold corpse's face, its eyes peeking out from under the golden mask with white and black paint, open.

It was a pair of cold, icy-blue eyes.

Icy-blue eyes? Lumian was taken aback, finding them familiar.

These are...

These are Naboredisley's eyes!

Dammit, why is Naboredisley here? Why is he a cold corpse in the black ancient tomb?

What right does He have to bestow the Beyonder powers of the Prisoner pathway?

It can't be real. It's not Naboredisley, but its eyes resemble...

Amidst Lumian's thoughts, he saw a smile in the icy-blue eyes, a smile of playfulness, understanding, and certainty.

This was a stark contrast to the pained expressions in the icy-blue eyes on Hanth Island.

Suddenly, a half-withered, violently beating dark-red heart soared from the golden corpse's hand and flew out of the completely disintegrated still river.

A short figure pounced on the heart like a frog and grabbed it. It was Ludwig, his mouth filled with blood.

The smile in the golden corpse's icy-blue eyes grew more relaxed.

He nodded at Lumian and willingly fell back to His original position. He had no intention of seizing the opportunity to leave the black ancient tomb.

With a splash of illusory water, the tomb's open door gradually closed.

Seated by the door, the figure suspected to be the Underworld Daoist vanished.

Wh— Naboredisley's corpse doesn't seem willing to leave the tomb... How did He end up lying in there? Lumian couldn't figure out the reason, so he looked at Ludwig and realized the boy was holding a half-withered dark-red heart to his mouth.

Lumian wanted to stop him but lacked the ability. The surrounding corpses didn't seem to attract Ludwig as much as the half-withered heart.

Clang!

The tomb door slammed shut, causing the entire area to tremble.

Lumian and the others witnessed dream fragments one after another, and their surroundings blurred. After a brief daze, Lumian realized he was lying in the middle of an unlit street. The crimson moon was bright in the sky, casting its light.

This was inside Tizamo.

Chapter 694 A “Deal”

The Dream Festival came to an abrupt end? Lumian jolted upright, realizing he was holding the strange golden mask he had received from Hisoka.

For a moment, he couldn't tell if he was still dreaming or if the mask had somehow followed him from the dream into the waking world.

Lumian turned to look behind him.

Reaza and Maslow, who had died during the Dream Festival, were lying in the middle of the street, just starting to regain consciousness.

Taking advantage of the moment while they gathered their wits and slowly got to their feet, Lumian focused his attention on their luck.

He could see clear signs of death on both of them. Their fates were about to undergo a rapid transformation, irreversibly tainted by darkness.

Reaza's luck, in particular, was changing even more swiftly and dramatically, like a river suddenly plunging over a cliff to form a waterfall.

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At that instant, Reaza remembered what had happened to him during the Dream Festival. Uncontrollable fear washed over his pale, cold face.

Pop, pop, pop. Huge, mucus-oozing warts erupted all over his body, just as Lumian had witnessed in the dream.

Seeing Reaza's eyes turn frenzied and his body start to disintegrate, Lumian raised his free right hand, pointing it at Reaza's mouth as if it were a gun.

A condensed bullet of blazing white flame shot from Lumian's fingertip, shattering Reaza's teeth as it entered his mouth.

Boom!

Reaza's head split apart inch by inch, engulfed in roaring flames.

The vice-captain of Port Pylos's patrol team collapsed heavily, his body covered in a thin black suit made up of countless slimy warts.

Lumian turned to Maslow, who was shocked by Reaza's grotesque transformation and terrified by the death he had experienced in the dream. Calmly, Lumian asked, “Who was he working for?”

As he spoke, Lumian tucked the golden mask into his Traveler's Bag and checked to make sure the Symphony of Hatred and his other belongings were still there.

Everything was accounted for, including the food he had thrown at Ludwig.

Maslow paused for a few seconds before answering, "We're all part of the Numinous Episcopate."

Numinous Episcopate... Lumian chuckled. "Do you still believe in Death?"

Wasn't Death already dead?

Maslow considered the question for a moment before saying, "Reaza told me that Death is on the verge of returning. There have been signs recently that prayers are being answered again."

Hearing Maslow's words, Lumian nodded pensively.

"Which faction of the Numinous Episcopate do you belong to?"

As far as he knew, the Numinous Episcopate was divided into numerous factions. There were the Royals, led by the descendants of the Eggers family, who sought to restore the Balam Empire's rule; the Artificial Death faction, which had somehow recreated Death itself; and the less influential Repose and Underworld factions.

"We're from the Royal faction," Maslow admitted.

"Did you infiltrate the patrol team on purpose?" Lumian asked nonchalantly.

Maslow shook his head.

"No, Admiral Querarill has been secretly working with us."

Admiral Querarill, the de facto ruler of Matani, is closely tied to the Numinous Episcopate's Royal faction... Combined with the Church of Earth Mother and the remaining Intis faction, this must be what Franca meant by dancing on three eggs. Judging by the situation, Reaza wasn't a traitor after all... It's no wonder Admiral Querarill didn't send backup. If the Numinous Episcopate and the Church of The Fool can't handle the problem, it won't matter how many people he sends... His mind now clear, Lumian asked, "Was participating in this Dream Festival a direct order from the Royal faction's upper ranks?"

"Yes." Maslow glanced at Reaza's body, now unrecognizable as human, and said, "Apparently the order came straight from the Empress."

Empress... The Pale Empress of the Numinous Episcopate's Royal faction? Lumian instinctively scanned his surroundings.

A sudden thought struck him. He drew the straight sword he had bought in Port Santa, picked up Reaza's clothes, and quickly searched through the items he had left behind.

There was no sign of the death-corroded golden mask or the crystal-like skull.

Even though the skull had turned into a goat in the dream and the golden mask had sunk into the tranquil river, Lumian reasoned that it had still been a dream, after all. No matter how unusual it was, it was ultimately just a dream. When someone died, they died in reality, but the same might not hold true for objects. It was similar to how some of the food Ludwig had eaten in the dream had reappeared in the Traveler's Bag.

Even if the items were going to disappear, it would have to happen later. For now, they should definitely return to the real world!

However, Reaza had nothing on him.

A chill ran down Lumian's spine. Lowering his voice, he asked, "Termiboros, did you notice anything?"

Termiboros's majestic voice echoed in Lumian's ears. "Do you only now know fear?"

"Tch." Lumian felt a lingering sense of dread, but he didn't let it show. "Was the Pale Empress watching?"

Termiboros replied in a deep tone, "It's not just Her."

Her? The Pale Empress is an Angel? Lumian composed himself and turned his attention back to Maslow.

Just as Maslow was wondering why Louis Berry was talking to himself, the other party suddenly asked, "Why did Reaza kill you?"

Maslow stayed quiet, offering no response.

Lumian chuckled. "Did you betray him?"

Maslow's lips trembled, but he didn't say a word.

Lumian smiled casually and said, "It doesn't matter. If you don't want to answer, don't. You won't be alive much longer anyway."

Maslow's face turned ashen as he considered the ramifications of his death during the Dream Festival.

Lumian nodded, then added, "Go on and do whatever you want. Just don't do anything bad. It'll make you die sooner."

With that, Lumian glanced at Reaza's corpse, which was starting to produce the Beyonder characteristic. Greed welled up inside him, but he suppressed it with an Ascetic's self-control.

He decided that regardless of whether Reaza had been a traitor or not, his Beyonder characteristics should be left for Camus and the Matani patrol team.

To stop himself from giving in to greed and with a grave matter coming to mind, Lumian's expression shifted subtly. He activated the black mark on his right shoulder and teleported away.

Maslow stared at the street that had been empty a moment before and the lights that had been stirred by the explosion, looking as though his soul had left his body. With a dazed and despondent expression, he turned and walked toward the forest outside Tizamo.

In the second-floor suite of the Brieu Motel.

The instant Lugano woke up, he noticed he couldn't move his right forearm.

It's okay, it's okay. I'll be fine after a psychiatric treatment or two. The people in Tizamo can be healed by Mass without needing Beyonder effects... Lugano tried to console himself as he endured the pain in his right forearm.

Just then, he heard hurried footsteps coming from the living room outside his door.

Crack!

The door to Lugano's bedroom flew open. In the crimson moonlight pouring through the window, Ludwig appeared, dressed in blue pajamas with yellow stars and a matching nightcap. He was clutching a half-withered, blood-stained, dark red heart.

Badump! Badump!

Lugano could hear his own heart pounding, and he felt like his soul was about to abandon his body out of sheer terror.

Had Ludwig come back for seconds because he had woken up early and hadn't gotten his fill during the dream?

A moment later, Lugano saw a figure float in through the doorway.

The figure was semi-transparent, wearing an elaborate, opulent, black dress. There was no head on its neck, just a clean cut. In its hand, it held four identical blonde heads with red eyes and beautiful features.

“Return...” “It”... “To”... “Me”...

The four heads uttered different words in ancient Feysac, forming a complete sentence.

Ludwig's image was reflected in their eight crimson eyes.

“Mine!” Ludwig ran to Lugano's bed and spun around, looking like he wanted to bring the heart to his mouth, but he seemed to hesitate.

The four heads held by the translucent figure spoke one by one, “Idiot”... “Eating”... “Your”... “Own”... “Brain”...

“That”... “Is”... “My”... “Heart”...

“If”... “You”... “Don't”... “Return”...

“I”... “Will”... “Turn”... “You”... “Into”... “Pig”...

Almost at the same moment, Lumian materialized next to Ludwig, taking in the scene and hearing the corresponding words.

Lumian glanced at the strange-looking lady, then at Ludwig, who wore a resolute expression as if he would defend his food to the death. After a moment's consideration, Lumian said,

“Madam, perhaps you could try trading him other spiritually rich materials for it.”

In Ludwig's current state, Lumian didn't dare try to take the item from him by force.

The lady in the intricate black dress, holding four blonde, red-eyed heads, went silent.

After a short while, one of her heads spat out a gleaming gold coin and held it between its teeth.

A gold coin? You want to buy it with a gold coin? Ludwig doesn't care about money... Lumian was about to point this out to the lady when he suddenly realized the gold coin looked familiar.

It was a Loen gold coin, worth 1 pound.

Uh... Lumian glanced over at Ludwig.

Ludwig wavered.

After a few seconds, he finally held out his hands and gave the half-withered dark red heart to the woman's head.

The blonde, red-eyed head let go, dropping the gold coin into Ludwig's hand. Quickly, it sank its teeth into the half-withered dark red heart.

The translucent lady stepped back and vanished from Lugano's bedroom.

Ludwig hastily popped the Loen gold coin into his mouth, as if trying to hide it in his stomach. But then he seemed to think better of it and fished it back out. He wiped it off on his pajamas and carefully put it in his pocket.

Just as I thought, it's the same as Jenna's lucky gold coin... A Loen gold coin closely connected to Mr. Fool? Lumian nodded to himself, comprehension dawning.

A twinge of disappointment ran through him.

Two people close to me have gotten lucky gold coins. Why don't I have one?

Chapter 695 Kolobo's Worry

Lumian snapped out of his daze and glanced at Ludwig, who had regained his composure. Turning to Lugano, who was shrinking into a corner of the bed, he said, "We'll head back to Trier tomorrow and find a psychiatrist for you—a real, genuine one."

This decision wasn't made out of concern for Lugano, but rather something that had long been on Lumian's agenda. 007 should have already provided feedback in the early morning hours. Lumian, Franca, and the others would discuss how to handle the Mirror Person, Moran Avigny.

Moreover, Lumian intended to seize this opportunity to extract Termiboros's power and obtain a Fate Appropriator boon.

His most significant gain from the Dream Festival was the substantial digestion of the Reaper potion.

He knew the Southern Continent was filled with conflicts and combat opportunities, which would help him digest the Reaper potion. However, he never anticipated that less than two weeks after advancing, the potion's digestion progress would skyrocket, much like a mercury thermometer's column shooting up when touching a living person's armpit.

Culling Padre Cali, Hisoka's dream projection, and nearly 20 others bestowed with strength equivalent to Sequence 6 or Sequence 5 made Lumian acutely aware of life's fragility. It was like straw under a scythe, constantly collapsing with a simple cull and scattered by the wind.

Furthermore, after experiencing the acting of the first four Sequences, Lumian felt the Hunter pathway had a distinct characteristic of bringing calamity. Reapers were no exception.

With this acting, he believed the Reaper's destructive characteristics that brought calamity were more apparent.

At the same time, Lumian greatly benefited from an enemy's destruction.

As his mind raced, he summarized his first Reaper acting principle: "Culling is about destroying the target and reaping a harvest for yourself."

If I had three or four more similar culls, I wouldn't need to comprehend other acting principles and put them into practice to digest the Reaper potion. However, such good fortune is rare... Lumian sighed silently.

This required gathering more than ten Sequence 6 and Sequence 5 Beyonders with obvious flaws he could exploit without interference.

Meeting each of these conditions was challenging, let alone all of them simultaneously:

First and foremost, whether humans consumed potions or gained superpowers through boons, their pathways and Sequences differed in their flaws. They couldn't all be burdened by dream projections like the gravekeepers in the Dream Festival, where emotions and desires exploded at the slightest trigger. Even if the bestowed were deeply influenced by evil gods and had mental issues to some degree, exploding emotions and desires weren't inevitable. Some might simply have mutated personalities.

Secondly, Sequence 6 and Sequence 5 Beyonders were uncommon, especially the latter, who formed the backbone of various factions. Even without factions, they could create their own teams and dominate a region like the Pirate Admirals. Gathering more than ten to twenty such Beyonders was no easy task.

Moreover, if a major incident caused the first two conditions to be met, the Beyonders' common flaws might not be countered by Lumian and his mystical items.

Finally, during the battle, a Sequence 5 Beyonder, a key member of the various factions, might draw the attention of the corresponding demigod.

A mysticism event like the Dream Festival, with its inherent limitations and natural problems, was unusually suitable for Lumian. Perhaps there had only been one such event in the Northern and Southern Continents in nearly a millennium.

Sigh... Lumian couldn't help but sigh again.

At that moment, Lugano was thrilled to hear he could return to Trier at dawn. He quickly replied, "Alright, alright!"

Back in Trier, his boss had more trusted companions. He probably wouldn't need to take care of Ludwig anymore!

Lumian thought for a moment and glanced at the curtains emanating the crimson moonlight. Casually, he asked Lugano, "Have you saved enough for the Harvest Priest potion formula and the corresponding ingredients?"

Lugano was taken aback.

"No, I'm still a bit short of the potion formula's price."

Most of his current “savings” came from Lumian, amounting to around 15,000 verl d'or. Based on his knowledge, a Sequence 7 potion formula usually cost between 16,000 to 20,000 verl d'or.

Lumian nodded pensively.

“I'll keep an eye out for the Harvest Priest potion formula and the necessary ingredients for you. If you're short on funds, I'll help cover the difference. Consider it a share of the spoils from this adventure.”

Lugano was stunned momentarily before tears welled up in his eyes, blurring his vision.

I made the right choice!

My future truly lies with the boss!

With a hint of unease, he asked, “But that was a dream adventure. Can the gains be brought back to the real world?”

Lumian didn't elaborate. He retrieved Hisoka's golden mask from his Traveler's Bag.

It's possible... Some special items are possible? Lugano felt a sense of relief.

Lumian turned to Ludwig, who seemed to have acquired a cherished toy, and nodded slightly.

“You may go back to sleep.”

Ludwig, wearing a blue nightcap, blinked and reached out to touch his stomach.

Groan. Groan. His stomach churned violently.

Lumian laughed self-deprecatingly and took out the portion of food Ludwig had eaten in the dream, including almond pistachio cream cake, liquor-infused chocolate, éclairs, and more.

After Ludwig began his “quiet” meal, Lumian returned to his room and conjured a blazing white fireball. He unfolded the letter, picked up a fountain pen, and penned a letter to Madam Magician.

This took precedence over dealing with other matters.

As he wrote, Lumian pondered something.

If I killed all the elders of the gravekeepers, would the primitive tribe still possess the ability to attack and eliminate the dead?

Or are they still alive in the real world, waiting to drag those already dead down with them when they attack Tizamo?

Or would the deceased find another way out, like the fire that had engulfed the Twanaku family?

On the third floor of the police headquarters in Tizamo Town.

Camus snapped out of his reverie and instinctively glanced at the temporary bed opposite him. He noticed the blanket had been lifted, and Kolobo was nowhere to be found.

Am I still dreaming, still in the Dream Festival? Camus sat up cautiously and heard a sound near the door in the corner.

In the darkness, under the crimson moonlight seeping through the curtains, he saw Kolobo crouched there, curled up and trembling.

Camus lowered his voice and gently asked, "What's wrong?"

Kolobo's voice quivered as he replied, "The sky is falling! The sky is falling!"

The sky is falling? Camus found it amusing and looked at Kolobo.

"Did you misinterpret your premonition?"

How could the sky possibly fall?

Outside Tizamo, at the edge of the primitive forest.

Maslow, his face adorned with white paint, slowly advanced into the forest.

It was a terrible feeling to know about his impending yet unavoidable death.

He regretted betraying the Numinous Episcopate, but there had been no choice. Shortly after arriving in Tizamo, he had been secretly controlled by Twanaku, who had returned for a "vacation." He had become a fallen one monitoring the situation of Padre Cali and Tizamo.

Subsequently, although he knew Twanaku had been killed, the other party's dream projection appeared in his dream, telling him the matter wasn't over.

Maslow advanced step by step, yearning to return to the forest and become nourishment for a tree, just like his ancestors.

As he walked, he spotted nearly 20 people emerging from the nearby barracks.

The men seemed to sense something amiss and prepared to inspect their surroundings.

At that moment, Maslow felt the night suddenly brighten.

Subconsciously, he looked up at the sky and saw a burning boulder descending with a crimson flame tail.

In an instant, the burning boulder filled Maslow's vision.

It crashed into the area between the forest's edge and the barracks.

Rumble!

The wind and dust stirred by the meteorite swiftly filled the area, rising into the air and dissipating, obscuring the crimson moon and the starlight.

Rumble!

The entirety of Tizamo seemed to experience a violent earthquake. Buildings shook violently, and glass shattered.

Several houses with weak foundations quickly collapsed, burying their occupants.

With great difficulty, Camus regained his balance. Once the building stabilized, he rushed to the shattered window and looked out.

He saw the "sky" was gray and murky, so close he could touch it if he jumped up.

The "sky" has really fallen... For some inexplicable reason, this thought flashed through Camus's mind.

In the second-floor suite of the Brieu Motel.

Clutching the letter and fountain pen, Lumian watched the smoke and dust outside with amusement, sensing the “heavy blow” not far away.

“How direct...” he sighed sincerely.

A meteorite had descended from the sky!

From the looks of it, the catastrophe had likely eliminated most of the deceased.

Lumian turned to look at the door, which had swung open due to the building's shaking, and saw Ludwig still focused on eating.

Nothing from the pile of food had fallen to the ground.

After sending Lugano out to assist the injured, Lumian returned to his room and continued writing.

Upon completion, he immediately set up a ritual and summoned the “doll” messenger.

Just as the “doll” messenger emerged from the expanding candle flame, it suddenly shrank.

Slowly, she glanced to her left and then to her right. After confirming there was no problem, she tiptoed and cautiously approached Lumian's letter.

Lumian had never seen the “doll” messenger act like this before. He watched in confusion and amusement as she picked up the folded letter like a thief. She waved at him and quickly retreated into the candle flame.

Lumian chuckled and shook his head, no longer pondering the “doll” messenger's actions.

At the very least, it seemed harmless, and he had several things to do.

Lumian left the bedroom, entered the corridor, and went to the first floor. He grabbed the motel owner, who had come out to check on the situation after waking up, and asked, “Which room are the lady and her companion who arrived tonight staying in?”

Chapter 696: Feathers

In Twanaku's house in Tizamo Town, Amandina woke up amidst the violent shaking of the building. She stood up groggily and looked out the window. The sky had turned gray and was pressing down, completely obscuring the crimson moon and stars.

In the near-absolute darkness, Amandina turned and cast her gaze not far away. Dressed neatly, Robert rose slowly, his sluggish movements suggesting he was struggling to adapt to the lightless environment.

When the tremors in the ground and buildings finally ceased, Robert used his Spirit Vision to spot Amandina. After a moment's hesitation, he asked, “Are we awake?”

He recalled that before entering the Dream Festival, he and Amandina had used a date as an excuse to rendezvous. When they ended up in the special dream, they temporarily parted ways—one stayed put while the other went to Saint-Sien Cathedral.

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Glancing at the suddenly noisy street outside, Amandina thought for a few seconds before replying, "Probably... but I don't know what's going on."

As Robert recalled the dream encounters, both fell silent. Eventually, he asked in a deep voice, "What happened to you in the end?"

Amandina suddenly chuckled. "Nothing much."

Robert closed his mouth again. With her night vision, Amandina looked at him, smiling with mixed emotions. "Is there anything else you want to ask?"

After a long pause, Robert said, "What did you experience afterward?"

Taking in the silence of the house, Amandina finally whispered, "I saw the one who granted me powers."

"The one who granted you powers?" Robert asked, surprised.

Amandina laughed. "We didn't actually fall asleep after touching the black ancient tomb. We only truly fainted after receiving the powers."

"How is that possible..." Robert looked incredulous.

Amandina didn't try to convince him. Instead, she muttered, "Upon acquiring superpowers, one immediately falls into a coma or slumber. When they wake up, they completely grasp that power. Their spirit and flesh undergo a certain transformation..."

"Is this considered a low-level death before rebirth?"

"What are you talking about?" Robert's confusion grew.

It was completely incomprehensible!

Amandina's eyes darted around as she smiled.

"That person told me. Perhaps it's a form of guidance."

"Guidance..." Using his Spirit Vision, the only way to ascertain her condition in the darkness, Robert gazed at Amandina.

He felt his fiancée was different, as if she had grown up overnight.

Amandina wanted to recount the encounter in detail as usual, but swallowed her words.

Sighing, she said, "Aren't you going to check on Padre Cali? He might not have long to live."

Snapping out of his reverie, Robert blurted out, "He fled to the ancient tomb and was killed?"

"He's indeed dead," Amandina confirmed.

Robert's expression shifted, but he didn't inquire about the murderer's identity. After a moment's thought, Amandina said, "Before you go to Padre Cali, I need to tell you something.

"The desire you felt when you first faced him didn't come from your heart. He prayed to a Demon through a ritual and obtained the power to influence you."

Robert's eyes widened, his mouth gaped, but no sound came out.

Without further ado, Amandina strode past him towards the staircase.

Pressing down on the railing, she paused and tersely acknowledged, "Let's find an excuse to annul the engagement. I can accept other things about you, but I can't accept how my fiance allowed me to follow Louis Berry alone to find the black ancient tomb under those circumstances.

"Don't worry, I won't tell anyone about your matters. Those who knew in my dream won't tell either."

Robert spun around, his gaze fixed on the staircase as Amandina descended step by step, the darkness engulfing her spirituality's light.

Leaving Twanaku's house, Amandina stepped onto the street.

She glanced at the dark, low sky, the sporadic lights on both sides, and caught a whiff of the dusty air.

With her hand covering her nose, Amandina made her way towards the manor, her steps gradually quickening.

On the third floor of the police headquarters in Tizamo Town, just as Camus felt Kolobo's trembling subside, as if he had composed himself, painful curses echoed from the next room.

His heart stirred as he lit a candle and pushed open the slightly deformed wooden door. Inside, he saw the Feysacian, Loban, lying on the ground, clutching his knee and screaming in agony.

The member of the Tizamo patrol team had woken from the earthquake-like commotion and tried to get out of bed to find cover, but one leg strangely lost strength, accompanied by intense pain, causing him to collapse.

Before Camus could organize his thoughts, Rhea's voice echoed beside him.

"Don't worry. It's the mass hysteria mentioned in the investigations. You'll recover after going to the corresponding Mass."

Having cooperated with Camus to investigate the abnormalities in Tizamo, Loban quickly understood Rhea.

Cursing, he struggled to his feet, retrieved a military flask from under his pillow, and downed a few gulps of liquor.

After drinking until color returned to his face, Loban sighed with relief.

"I feel my knee has recovered a little. Sometimes, alcohol is more useful than Mass!"

Breathing a sigh of relief, Camus turned to Rhea, realizing his teammate's expression had turned colder.

After what just happened, her dream projection has completely vanished. Have the emotions and desires returned to her body? Will the special dreamscape still exist, and will there be a Dream Festival next year? Camus instantly made many connections.

At that moment, Rhea said to him, “Let's go out and see if we can save some people. Those who died during the Dream Festival shouldn't be the only ones injured.”

Taken aback, Camus replied, “Okay.”

Joy welled up in his heart, sensing Rhea hadn't undergone any fundamental changes due to the return of her emotions and desires.

Following the Brieu Motel owner's instructions, Lumian arrived on the fourth floor and opened the corresponding room's wooden door.

The near pitch-black darkness receded under a blazing white fireball's illumination, revealing everything to Lumian.

Some items had fallen due to the tremors, tables and chairs had shifted, and a small amount of dust had sprinkled from the ceiling. The window was tightly shut, but the glass had shattered. Apart from this, there was nothing noteworthy, and no sign of humans.

Scanning the area, Lumian found no trace of the man or woman.

Frowning, he muttered to himself, According to the original Dream Festival's rules, death in a dream doesn't equate to immediate death. Did they leave Tizamo after waking up? I planned to take care of their corpses and inherit their Beyonder characteristics...

Lumian didn't believe the man and woman couldn't leave just because the door and window were tightly shut. After all, they were two Mid-Sequence Bypassers, and one was even a Devil. Perhaps they had special abilities to resolve that problem.

As Lumian contemplated searching for traces and chasing after them to eliminate the deceased on behalf of the Dream Festival, he casually examined the room's various details. Suddenly, his pupils dilated, and his eyes froze.

He saw a feather lying quietly under the recliner by the window—a white feather stained with light-yellow oil!

Lumian's scalp tingled as he silently took two steps back into the corridor.

Like Reaza, were the man and woman already dead and had undergone an abnormality?

What about their corpses?

Disappeared?

Would humans who had ascended to godhood exhibit different behaviors after leaving the Dream Festival?

With a blazing white fireball floating behind him, Lumian scrutinized the room, filled with questions. Perhaps the man and woman's “corpses” were still here, but he couldn't see them.

Cautiously entering, he approached the recliner, sensing nothing unusual and discovering no signs of the formless object. Lumian retrieved the Mystery Prying Glasses and the Eye of Truth from his Traveler's Bag, donning them one by one.

He still couldn't see the man and woman. His vision was filled with chaotic darkness, a dark river, oily feathers, and imprisoning darkness.

Upon returning to reality, did they immediately undergo immortal ascension and leave this place? Lumian pondered for a few seconds before activating the black mark on his right shoulder, teleporting to a spot in the forest at the special dream's periphery.

As a Hunter, Lumian had memorized the correct route and environmental characteristics after Amandina led him to the black ancient tomb. After nearly fifteen minutes, he arrived at an area where numerous tree roots protruded from the ground, resembling blood vessels.

However, the place where the black stone-like ancient tomb should have stood was empty.

Does that black ancient tomb only exist in dreams and can't be encountered in reality? Lumian speculated seriously. So the Pale Empress and the other Angels can't descend personally and can only send people to participate in the Dream Festival?

As his thoughts raced, Lumian's gaze darted back and forth across the land corresponding to the black ancient tomb. It was indeed a little different from its surroundings—no intertwined tree roots protruded from the ground, and it was flat and stoneless.

Approaching thoughtfully, Lumian took out his straight sword and used it as a shovel, attempting to dig into the soil. Just as he dug a small pit, his eyelids twitched.

Buried in the dark brown soil were two white feathers stained with light-yellow oil!

Taking a slow breath, Lumian dug deeper.

Before long, a palm-sized, dark, slightly moist, and sticky soil lump came into view..

Chapter 697 Madam Magician's Explanation

As Lumian gazed at the peculiar soil, he couldn't help but recall the scene of Hela retrieving the Samaritan Women's Spring.

After a moment of contemplation, he retrieved gold bars and coins from his Traveler's Bag and ignited a blazing white fireball in his palm.

As the flames surged, the gold gradually melted under the control of his spirituality, forming a small golden box.

Lumian then used the flames as a blade to fashion a cover for the box.

Once the gold had cooled and solidified, he used the straight sword as a shovel to transfer the palm-sized clump of soil into the box before closing the lid.

After stowing away the golden box, Lumian noticed that the straight sword in his hand had become rusty and decayed.

Rather than being alarmed, Lumian was delighted. He muttered to himself, "That soil is indeed magical..."

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This was one of his gains from the Dream Festival.

Despite not obtaining the Beyonder characteristics of Reaza and Maslow, and the mysterious disappearance of the man and woman who served the Demon, Lumian had finally acquired something of value.

He continued searching the area but found no other traces. Left with no other option, he teleported back to the second floor of the Brieu Motel.

By then, much of the smoke and dust caused by the meteorite had dissipated. The crimson moon's light cast an eerie glow over Tizamo.

Lumian noticed a folded letter on the master bedroom's desk, with a thin brass-like metal sheet on top.

Madam Magician's response is swift tonight... Lumian picked up the brass plate and examined the mysterious patterns and words etched upon it, but he couldn't discern their meaning or purpose. He couldn't even sense the corresponding spirituality glow.

Shaking his head, Lumian temporarily set aside the brass sheet. With a gentle grab of his right hand, he conjured a floating incandescent white fireball.

Under its glow, he sat down and began reading Madam Magician's reply.

“There's no doubt about it. From what you've described, the corpse in the dream tomb belongs to Naboredisley.

“As for Naboredisley, there's a high likelihood that it's an alias of Devil Monarch Farbauti or a real name that can be used under certain circumstances.

“Don't you find it strange that Naboredisley, as a Devil Monarch and one of the eight ancient gods who once ruled the world, can bestow superpowers from the Prisoner pathway?

“This abnormality is quite normal for the ancient gods.

“They didn't advance according to the paths of the divine, but were born directly for some unknown reason. Their characteristics were a mix of Sequence 1 Beyonder characteristics from other pathways, or even more than one. Considering Demon Warlock Burman's situation, you can see how unhinged and violent the ancient gods were.

“There's a significant difference between ancient gods and subsequent true gods, but this doesn't mean that They are weak. They might even be stronger.

“Among them, although Farbauti is the Devil Monarch, He blends in Sequence 1 Abomination from a neighboring pathway. Therefore, His state is one of the best among the eight ancient gods. He has also become the only ancient god alive in Their original form.

“In fact, if Farbauti were to gather the ingredients of the Devil pathway as a Sequence 1 Abomination and complete the deity-ascension ritual to advance, He would be

equivalent to a true god now—a stronger true god. He wouldn't be an ancient god described by words like madness, cruelty, violence, and bloodlust.

“Of course, as the Devil Monarch, even if He had done so, He will inevitably exhibit the characteristics of I am the Abyss, the Abyss is Me, experiencing strong influence from this pathway. As for the state of a Devil, you should be well aware. Therefore, Farbauti is also one of the two or three most unhinged ancient gods. This doesn't contradict His better state.

“That's all for the ancient gods. That's not my primary purpose in writing.

“In short, the one in the dream tomb is indeed Naboredisley, the other Naboredisley in the form of an Abomination.”

Is that so... Ancient gods possess Beyonder characteristics of neighboring or non-neighboring pathways, and Naboredisley has already displayed the ability to separate different desires and emotions... Lumian no longer harbored any doubts about the cold corpse's ability to bestow Wraith powers.

After some thought, he reread Madam Magician's letter.

“You mentioned that Naboredisley took the initiative to lie back in the dream tomb and continue in a dead state. This is a very rational choice for Him.

“Furthermore, I must say it's a good death. Continue in this dead state until after the apocalypse!

“You don't need to know the exact reason. To put it simply, you can see that Naboredisley, or the Devil Monarch Farbauti, is in a terrible state. As an Abomination, His demise is more suitable than Him living. It's better for both Him and this world.

“Of course, this can't be a simple death. He chose a good place to die. This will allow His corpse to enjoy peace and tranquility, safe from the Mother Tree of Desire's harassment.

“Now, you should understand. That entity had written a story and created a coincidence, allowing you to come into contact with Naboredisley in the Feynapotter Kingdom. Then, you went to Hanth Island and the New City of Silver. His goal was to send information to Naboredisley in the dream ancient tomb, allowing Him to continue sleeping and be a corpse instead of being resurrected. Simultaneously, this also prevents various factions from trying to obtain the Sequence 1 Beyonder characteristic.

“Tsk, as expected of a remnant from ancient times. He's the protagonist who personally ended the rule of the ancient gods. The secrets and various key matters He knows perhaps exceed all of us combined.

“Apart from Him and the Evernight Goddess, who else would know about mysticism festivals like the Dream Festival, which you forget when you wake up? Who would have thought that the corpse was part of the Devil Monarch?”

“The substantial digestion of the Reaper potion, the acquisition of the golden mask, and the formation of the corroded soil should be the rewards He promised.

“Remember to give me that corroded soil. It's useless to you, but I can help you exchange it for something. It might also present an opportunity, but I can't discern what it is for now.

“And with that golden mask, you can boldly venture into the Underworld when the opportunity arises in the future. Otherwise, the living won't be able to stay in the Underworld for even a second.

“Those golden masks come from the fallen Death, the ancestor of the Eggers family. They were originally created to assist Death's direct descendants in entering and exiting the Underworld and Death's kingdom.

“Their purpose is twofold. Firstly, to protect the wearer from the corrosion of the aura of death. Secondly, to transform the wearer into an undead creature. Their bodies no longer have vital points, while their minds and consciousness can maintain their living state.

“Do you understand why Naboredisley's corpse wore the Death mask? If it didn't, it would have died completely in the dream tomb, with no possibility of revival.

“Similarly, knowing the golden mask's functions and the state of the corpse, you should understand why Hisoka put on the golden mask. It allows a corpse to mistake Hisoka for one of its kind without affecting him. It also protects Hisoka from the corrosion of the tomb's aura of death.

“The first phantom that experienced an Ascension activated the corpse's sleeping spirit under the golden mask's protection, but without awakening His consciousness. In this state, Hisoka can use His resemblance to the corpse to make the corpse mistake Him for His spirit and accept His dominance. Isn't this style familiar? That Celestial Worthy is indeed the strongest god who seeks out errors and exploits loopholes.

“By the time the second phantom that underwent Ascension entered the dream ancient tomb, the corpse's consciousness would have been basically awakened. Even if Hisoka were still alive, he wouldn't be able to complete his grand plan.

“That's the gist of the matter. The Numinous Episcopate's purpose is the ancient tomb itself, the golden mask that has endured the corresponding corrosion in the

tomb for over a millennium. The Nois family's archduke, a collaborator of the Rose School of Thought, desires Naboredisley's corpse, while the temperance faction seeks to retrieve Miss Messenger's heart. Their goals were actually different, yet they fought to the death. I have to say, it's quite humorous and ironic.

“Of course, this is mainly because they can't trust each other, and there's indeed a possibility that it's a situation where the winner takes all. Does Miss Messenger want to consume Naboredisley's Abomination body? Of course She does!”

Miss Messenger... The lady who used the lucky gold coin to buy the heart from Ludwig? Why is she called Miss Messenger? It's impossible for Her to be someone's messenger, right? She's an Angel! Uh... Mr. Fool's messenger? So that's why there's a lucky gold coin closely related to Mr. Fool... Lumian was sharp, and he quickly made a guess.

He continued reading the last part of the letter.

“I forgot to mention that wearing that golden mask also poses problems.

“As you can imagine, once you transform into an undead creature and don't have any vital points on your body, the purification of sunlight and lightning will be fatal to you. Moreover, if a living person wears that golden mask for too long, they will truly become deceased. When that time comes, once the mask is removed, their mind and consciousness will be unprotected and they will die immediately.

“Let me see what else I haven't mentioned...”

“Yes, you said that the Underworld Daoist and Naboredisley's corpse had looked at Iveljsta Eggers without doing anything to him. That gave me some ideas.

“It's highly likely that the one who helped bury Naboredisley's Abomination corpse and construct the dream grave was the ancestor of the Eggers family, the deceased Death.

“After He went mad, perhaps He interacted with the Underworld Daoist, who guarded the river and the Blood Emperor's afterimage. And for some reason, He agreed to Naboredisley's request for help, causing His Abomination corpse to slumber in a special dream.

“Therefore, be it the Underworld Daoist or Naboredisley's corpse, even if they only have their instincts left, they will still treat the Eggers family's bloodline specially.”

Chapter 698 Aftermath

Considering Madam Magician's conjecture, Lumian suddenly felt that the deceased Death, the ancestor of the Eggers family, was indeed legendary.

After becoming a true god, He seemed to have gone mad. He incited the Pale Disaster. His demise created the Berserk Sea, isolating the Northern and Southern Continents for more than a millennium. He had a connection to the mysterious Underworld Daoist. He buried the Abomination corpse of the Devil Monarch. He left behind the massive Balam Empire with numerous descendants. The golden mask He created for His descendants to enter and exit the Underworld is still being fought over to this day...

Lumian retrieved the golden mask he had obtained from Hisoka from his Traveler's Bag. He caressed its cold surface and sighed silently.

This is a true deity's creation...

With a sigh, Lumian read the last two pages of the lengthy letter.

“Back to yourself. The Underworld Daoist mark on you only seals the influence of the Blood Emperor's remnant aura on the outside world. It doesn't eliminate its existence.

“In other words, you can no longer use Alista Tudor's remnant aura to scare others. However, it can still be useful when you need to verify your corresponding 'identity.'

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“There are pros and cons to this situation. Although you've lost your potent means of intimidating others, you don't have to worry about attracting the attention of certain high-ranking individuals by using the Blood Emperor's remnant aura. Furthermore, the Underworld Daoist mark might have a special effect in the future.

“Emperor Roselle once said that since you can't resist, try to enjoy yourself.”

Lumian turned his right hand over and looked at his palm. Compared to the decay in his dream, only a small pale-white mark remained. Beneath the pale-whiteness, a faint red scarred mark could be seen.

What special use can it have? To intimidate the undead? Lumian muttered to himself in puzzlement, momentarily at a loss.

At the end of the letter, Madam Magician wrote:

“This year's Dream Festival may have ended, but the special dream and ancient tomb haven't disappeared. The Dream Festival will still happen next year.

“When the time comes, the Demon from the Nois family and His Rose School of Thought allies, who confirmed the ancient tomb's situation this year, might continue their attempts. They might even bring more targeted and powerful items, Beyonders, or projections.

“Not only do we have to stop them when the time comes, but we also have to make preparations in advance.

“Furthermore, for the special dream to still have dream projections as guardians, we can't relocate the entirety of Tizamo. Therefore, we have to do something for the people here.

“Of course, after completing the last task, the subsequent problems of the Dream Festival will have nothing to do with you unless you become an Angel by then. But isn't that too far-fetched?

“The last thing you need to do is enter that special dream with the half-finished brass charm I sent with the letter and perform the following ritual before the black ancient tomb.

“The complete process of the ritual is:

“...”

After carefully reading the ritual's description, Lumian assessed his spirituality and stowed away the half-finished brass charm.

Then, he retrieved the golden box containing the peculiar soil, unfolded the letter, and penned a reply:

“Honorable Madam Magician,

“I will follow your instructions and complete the ritual.

“This is that strange soil...”

Lumian paused and added:

“Remember to send back the box containing it.”

It was made of gold!

Recalling Lugano's promise of compensation and Ludwig's growing appetite, Lumian, who was quite wealthy, felt the need to be frugal.

He didn't need to worry about the potion formula, Beyonder ingredients, or mystical items for the time being, but he needed to provide for two people now!

Furthermore, gold played an important role in mysticism. Franca had been accumulating gold in recent months, hoping to forge a golden body for “Armored Shadow” Chen Tu.

After writing the reply, Lumian set up a ritual and summoned the “doll” messenger.

The messenger remained cautious and furtive, not uttering a word.

What did it sense? Lumian was about to inquire when he suddenly thought of a possibility.

Could it be because Miss Messenger, whom Madam Magician mentioned, had been here?

They are both messengers, so they might know each other and be related. And that person is an Angel...

Lumian shut his mouth and watched as the “doll” messenger retreated into the candlelight with the golden box.

He extinguished the candle, stowed away the ritual-related items, and returned to the living room. He sat across from Ludwig, who still had half his food left untouched.

Lumian looked at Ludwig, who wore a blue pajama hat with yellow stars, and smiled.

“Lend me something.”

Ludwig raised his head, his mouth moving as he inquired with his eyes.

Lumian maintained a friendly smile.

“The gold coin from earlier.”

Ludwig lowered his head and focused on eating a piece of beef jerky, as if he hadn't heard Lumian.

“It'll only take half an hour. Yes, half an hour. I won't cause any harm. I'll definitely return it to you as it was,” Lumian said with a sigh. “I've been providing for you for a long time, giving you food and drink...”

At this point, Lumian suddenly stopped. After a few seconds, he continued, “Isn't that worth lending me your lucky gold coin for half an hour? When have I ever lied to you?”

“Often,” Ludwig mumbled.

He looked up at Lumian for a few seconds before retrieving the Loen gold coin from his pocket.

“Twenty minutes, tops.”

“Deal!” Lumian swiftly accepted the lucky gold coin with a radiant smile.

To conserve his spirituality, he refrained from teleporting. Instead, he moved swiftly through the shadows and arrived at “Hisoka” Twanaku's house.

Robert and Amandina had already left.

Lumian found a spot and leaned against the wall. Using Cogitation, he quickly drifted off to sleep.

In the special dream, in the primitive forest.

Using the shadows in the darkness, Lumian reached the edge of the dream and found himself in the chaotic zone.

After some thought, he left the shadow and donned the golden mask crafted by Death.

Amidst the cold corrosion and heavy pressure, Lumian saw a dream fragment of a black ancient tomb and the path leading to it.

He quickly reached his destination. The corpses had vanished, leaving only the ancient tomb, resembling a black boulder, standing silently.

Lumian removed the mask and observed for a moment. Using a raised tree root as an altar, he placed candles, essential oil, herbal powder, a cauldron, and the half-finished brass charm on it. He followed the instructions in Madam Magician's letter and dealt with them one by one.

Finally, Lumian placed the lucky gold coin between the two candles corresponding to Mr. Fool.

Instead of creating a wall of spirituality, he lit the candles in the order from god to person, from left to right, and took two steps back.

Lumian gazed at the burning candle flame and recited in ancient Hermes,

“The Fool that doesn't belong to this era, the mysterious ruler above the gray fog; the King of Yellow and Black who wields good luck...”

Silently, a thin gray fog emanated from the void, enveloping the area around the black ancient tomb and the entire special dream.

Lumian's left chest heated up slightly, preventing his thoughts from slowing down, and his body showed no signs of disintegrating.

He quickly took two steps forward and ignited the corresponding essential oil extract and herbal powder. He placed the half-finished brass charm in the center of the altar.

Then, Lumian straightened up and said in Hermes, “I implore you,

“I implore you to grant this charm power.

“I implore you to allow this power to control this dream...”

After reciting all the remaining incantations and completing the remaining steps of the ritual, Lumian saw the lucky gold coin emit a hazy glow. One of the candles representing Mr. Fool darkened, and the other took on a brass hue.

Immediately after, the darkness and brass candlelight entangled with the half-finished brass charm.

The brass charm emitted a blinding light, and Lumian couldn't help but close his eyes.

By the time he adjusted and opened his eyes, the brass charm had vanished. The soil, rocks, and tree roots in front of the black ancient tomb surged, forming a tombstone-like object.

Ancient Feysac words appeared on the tombstone one after another:

“All living beings are equal before the law. Even Angels can be killed by ordinary people.

“Lost items are regarded as abandonment.

“Anything can be done during the Dream Festival, but not killing or rape.

“Murderers shall die.

“Rapists shall die.

“...”

What... What pathway's power is this? It resembles the Arbiter pathway... Killing isn't allowed for the next Dream Festival? Even an Angel can be harmed by me? Lumian hadn't expected Madam Magician's preparations.

He swiftly packed his belongings and planned to leave the area.

Finally, Lumian had an idea when he saw the “tombstone.”

With a smile, he retrieved a card from his Traveler's Bag, bent down, and placed it on the ground beneath the tombstone.

It was a tarot card depicting a man in green holding a wand against attacking wands at the foot of a mountain.

Minor Arcana card, Seven of Wands!

Lumian didn't know if the tarot cards representing him could remain in the dream or in front of the tombstone. He simply wanted to give it a try. After all, he hadn't done so since becoming a member of the Tarot Club.

Upon returning to the real world, Lumian reached into his Traveler's Bag and examined it.

As expected, the half-finished brass charm had vanished, as had the Minor Arcana card, the Seven of Wands.

The rules of the special dream are indeed a little different... Lumian nodded thoughtfully and returned the lucky gold coin to Ludwig at the Brieu Motel.

Then, Lumian stepped onto the street. In the darkness, he passed Camus, Rhea, Lugano, and the others, who were busy rescuing and treating people, and arrived at Saint-Sien Cathedral.

All the candles in the cathedral had been lit, but only Padre Cali was present.

Dressed in a white robe adorned with golden threads, he knelt before the altar and the Sacred Emblem, his head bowed in anguish.

Lumian walked in step by step and took a seat in the front row. He watched Padre Cali quietly without disturbing him.

Chapter 699 Who is to Blame?

The smoke and dust caused by the meteorite had mostly dissipated, and the commotion on the street had gradually subsided. The injured had largely escaped danger thanks to swift treatment, but some still perished, eliciting occasional cries of anguish.

Inside Saint-Sien Cathedral, Padre Cali completed his penance. He stood and turned to face Lumian, who sat silently in the front pew, observing him.

Lumian chuckled and asked casually, “Is repentance still of any use?”

Without waiting for a response, he added habitually, “You must know your fate is sealed. You won't survive more than a few days.”

Paleness showed through Padre Cali's dark-brown complexion as he calmly replied, “If repentance worked, it wouldn't be true repentance.”

This statement seemed to bring him a measure of peace.

“I repented because I wanted to, not to bargain for understanding or redemption. Looking back, I have indeed made many mistakes. I yearned for higher status and

the approval of you Northerners. That desire blinded me, and I succumbed to the Demon's temptations.”

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Lumian scoffed upon hearing this.

“Is that truly the case? Did desire actually cloud your judgment?”

Noting the padre's bewildered expression, Lumian leaned back and gazed up at the Sun Sacred Emblem.

“Did your ambition for prestige and recognition from Northerners force you to collaborate with Twanaku, compel you to become a Wraith as an Eternal Blazing Sun padre, make you receptive to the Demon's allure, or drive you to exploit those boys? No, you chose this path of your own volition.”

Padre Cali's lips quivered as if to object, but he couldn't find the words.

Lumian smiled and continued, “Many in this world still crave elevated status and the recognition of certain groups. Most of them simply work hard to contribute and combat evil with all their strength. They never consort with Demons, hoping to attain their goals through righteous means. Even in the face of repeated failure, they don't descend into the abyss.

“They share the same desires, yet they maintain self-control while you could not. Desire didn't cloud your mind—your mind chose depravity.”

Padre Cali fell silent, at a loss for words.

Lumian sighed with a smile.

“A relative once told me, ‘Intense desire fuels human progress, but it's also the demon that drags humans into the abyss. Good or bad, light or darkness—it all hinges on us, on that single thought in a pivotal moment.’”

His face growing ever paler, Padre Cali lowered his head and rasped, “I have sinned...”

Lumian pressed a hand to his chest, his expression settling.

He looked at Padre Cali and laughed self-deprecatingly.

“I too have strong desires. Everyone does. If harboring intense desire is a sin, then you are a sinner, and so am I. We are all guilty.”

Padre Cali's expression froze momentarily before he slowly turned around.

Kneeling once more before the altar, he gazed up at the immense Sun Sacred Emblem and spoke in a deep voice, “You are innocent. Desire itself is not sinful, but I am a true sinner.”

He bowed his head as his body gradually became ethereal and transparent.

Thus, Padre Cali manifested as a Wraith before the Sacred Emblem.

An icy, sinister aura emanated from him, triggering a reaction from the emblem and altar.

The entire cathedral trembled slightly. A brilliant, sunlight-like radiance seeped from the altar, emblem, stained glass, and religious murals, rapidly converging at the domed ceiling.

A dazzling golden pillar of light, accompanied by a hymnal voice, descended upon Padre Cali.

The Wraith-form padre trembled faintly but did not evade.

Under the searing holy light, his body disintegrated into ashes.

Lumian observed this scene expressionlessly, feeling neither joy nor sorrow.

As the dome's holy glow dissipated, leaving only candlelight illuminating the cathedral, Lumian remained seated in the front pew, quietly contemplating the spot where Padre Cali had been purified.

After an indeterminate span, Camus and Rhea entered the cathedral, having finished their disaster relief efforts.

Camus sighed in relief upon seeing Louis Berry in the front row.

He smiled and said, "We still lack composure, prone to panic when calamity strikes. We were so focused on aiding the injured and trapped that we never anticipated a detestable man like Padre Cali suddenly going mad and trying to drag others down with him. It's fortunate you were here."

Rhea surveyed the surroundings and asked, "Where is Padre Cali?"

Lumian stared ahead at the altar and replied plainly, "After repenting, he utilized the cathedral's accumulated spirituality and the Sacred Emblem's unique properties to purify himself."

Rhea fell silent. After a few seconds, she spread her arms and proclaimed, "Praise the Sun!"

She then took a seat in the front pew on the opposite side, clasped her hands, bowed her head, and prayed fervently.

For a moment, Camus was unsure whether to sit or remain standing.

Lumian turned to him. "Have you recovered Reaza's Beyonder characteristic?"

Camus paused before responding, "Yes."

"And Maslow's?" Lumian shifted his gaze back to the Sacred Emblem.

"Its whereabouts are unknown," Camus replied.

Lumian stated calmly, "It should be in the meteorite impact zone."

Camus was taken aback. "Was the meteorite meant to claim most of the deceased? Is the Dream Festival's power truly that immense?"

"More potent than you realize," Lumian replied, as if discussing the next day's weather. "Reaza and Maslow belong to the Numinous Episcopate's Royal faction. Admiral Querarill is aware of their identities and that Reaza came to Tizamo to fulfill a mission assigned by the Royal faction's superiors."

Camus's expression shifted as he exhaled slowly.

“Even without you mentioning this, I wouldn't have harbored any ill will towards Captain Reaza. He did save me on multiple occasions, and this time, he didn't overtly betray me but rather the patrol team. My sense of belonging to the team isn't that strong.

“Now, I'm just relieved he's not a traitor.”

Lumian smiled provocatively and said, “It benefits you as well. Port Pylos's patrol team now has a vacant vice-captain position, and your rival is already dead.”

Camus didn't rise to the bait, smiling wryly instead.

“I plan to leave Matani.

“Thanks to your generosity, I've nearly saved enough to advance to Sequence 6. It's safer and simpler to return to my family and contact the main branch than to search the outside world.

“The patrol team is a small organization, after all. Sequence 6 is the limit. To reach Sequence 5, I'd need to forge close ties with the Numinous Episcopate, Rose School of Thought, Intis Bureau 8, the Eternal Blazing Sun Church, or the Church of Earth Mother, or become Admiral Querarill's trusted aide. Given my Castiya surname, the choice is clear.”

If the Castiya royal family truly accepts you, your potential would be far greater... Lumian chuckled and said, “I thought you were leaving this place of sorrow due to a failed romance.”

Camus abruptly choked on his saliva and coughed several times.

After Rhea concluded her prayers, she departed the cathedral with Camus.

Lumian lingered in the front pew, savoring the solitude.

After a while, Amandina appeared at the entrance, clad in black hunting attire.

“Why are you alone here?” the girl muttered, her gaze darting about as if searching for something.

“Why have you come?” Lumian asked nonchalantly.

Amandina sat beside him and chuckled.

“I wanted to see if Robert would come looking for the dying Padre Cali, but surprisingly, you're the only one here.”

“Padre Cali purified himself. I doubt Robert has been here,” Lumian answered truthfully.

“Is that so...” Amandina felt a pang of disappointment. “If he had really come to confront Padre Cali, it would mean he still is a man...”

Lumian remained silent.

Amandina faced the altar and Sacred Emblem, offering a brief prayer.

Her task complete, she glanced around eagerly and asked, “Will there be another Dream Festival next year?”

“Yes.” Lumian didn't hide anything.

Joy instantly lit up Amandina's features.

“Is that black ancient tomb still there? Can I gain superpowers by touching it again?”

“Of course,” Lumian turned to her, smiling. “But the outsiders participating in next year's Dream Festival will be even stronger and more terrifying, surpassing the evil cloth doll, crystal skull, and human skin man you encountered.”

Amandina's expression fell.

“Really? In that case, I'll find an excuse to stay in Port Pylos during next year's festival and bring my parents along.”

“Have you returned to Palm Manor?” Lumian inquired.

Amandina sighed and smiled.

“I went back briefly. Not wanting to disrupt their facade of love, I left again.”

She paused, eyes sparkling with curiosity.

“Besides touching the black tomb, are there other ways for me to advance my Sequence?”

“You can buy formulas and drink potions to progress along one of three paths—Sleepless, Corpse Collector, or Warrior,” Lumian divulged the relevant mystical knowledge without reservation. After some thought, he added, “Also, it wasn't the black tomb that granted you superpowers. It was that figure...”

Lumian was suddenly perplexed.

What was the connection between Amandina, Robert, and the Underworld Daoist?

Typically, boons were bestowed upon believers by deities or angels, but Amandina and Robert had no faith in the Underworld Daoist. They weren't even aware of His existence.

Considering the conventions of various secret organizations and the customs Franca occasionally mentioned, Amandina should have addressed the Underworld Daoist as “Teacher”!

Chapter 700 Return

In the special dream, Amandina mentioned that the figure, known as the Underworld Daoist, had nodded at her... “Armored Shadow” Chen Tu is suspected to be related to the Underworld Daoist...

Franca is accumulating gold to create a golden body for Chen Tu to obtain more information... Lumian's mind raced with these thoughts.

He turned to Amandina with a smile.

“You won't only encounter that figure during the Dream Festival.”

“It's possible normally?” Amandina asked, surprised.

What kind of smarts do you have... Lumian inwardly criticized, shaking his head and smiling.

“What I mean is, it's not just in Tizamo where you can encounter that figure on a specific date.”

Amandina pondered for a few moments before grasping the underlying meaning behind Louis Berry's words.

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“Have you seen that figure elsewhere?”

“I thought you couldn't see him and could only observe through me?”

Thankfully, you're not that dense... Lumian retrieved the golden mask from his Traveler's Bag.

“I could see after putting this on.”

Without waiting for Amandina's response, Lumian added with a smile, “I did encounter that figure elsewhere.”

He used “encounter” instead of “meeting” to ensure his statement couldn't be more truthful.

He wanted to say, “I even know His name,” but didn't feel like explaining to Amandina why he used the pronoun “He” to address the Underworld Daoist respectfully.

Amandina's expression turned excited. “Where?”

“In Trier,” Lumian replied honestly.

This was the information he wanted the other party to know.

“Trier...” Amandina felt a mix of captivation and fear.

As an Intisian born and raised on the Southern Continent, she had heard countless rumors about the Capital of Joy and understood its vibrancy and prosperity. Trier had nearly become her dream paradise, but the furthest she had ventured was Port Pylos, never leaving Matani. If given the chance to visit Trier, fear was her initial reaction.

After all, she was still a girl under 18.

Lumian continued candidly, “In the future, I know someone who might interact with that figure. I hope you can provide her with some assistance—the non-combat kind.

“To that end, I can take you to Trier and help you enter the area where the figure might appear. I can also provide some protection.

“How about it? Do you want to strike such a deal?”

“I-I...” Amandina hesitated, instinctively seeking an excuse. “My parents won't allow me to leave Matani for Trier now. At the very least, I have to wait until I get a chance to attend university there.”

Lumian found it amusing and remarked, “I'm not asking you to permanently relocate to Trier. You can go on Saturday and return on Sunday.”

“Huh?” Amandina was taken aback.

She had imagined a long-distance voyage, hiking through mountains and wading across rivers, forever bidding farewell to her home.

Lumian arched an eyebrow.

“It's not like I haven't teleported you in the dream before.”

“B-but isn't that just a small area?” Amandina's eyes lit up. “Can you really teleport directly from Matani to Trier?”

Lumian nodded slightly.

“Yes, I might need to make a transit once or twice along the way, but it will still allow you to reach Trier quickly.”

“Quickly...” Amandina's interest was piqued. She yearned to experience such wonders.

However, she didn't make a decision immediately.

Lumian didn't rush her.

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“No need to decide right away. Meeting that figure again is actually quite dangerous. You should first truly come into contact with Matani's mysticism circle and learn the basics about Beyonders from Rhea. Only then should you consider accepting this deal. It might take three months, half a year, or even a year.”

Amandina breathed a sigh of relief. “Understood.”

Curious, she asked, “Is your friend a woman?”

He had used the pronoun “she.”

In our hearts and minds, she has always been one. As for how she identifies, sometimes yes, sometimes no... Lumian inwardly criticized Franca and nodded slightly.

“Yes.”

Amandina asked excitedly, “Your lover?”

Lumian chuckled.

“Of course not. Why do you always fixate on such matters?”

As Lumian spoke, he retrieved a post-it note and fountain pen from his Traveler's Bag. He scribbled a few lines and handed them to Amandina.

Amandina took it and carefully read it under the cathedral's candlelight:

“A creature wandering above the world, the penitent who awakens from the flames of pain, a messenger that belongs solely to Lumian Lee.”

“What's this?” Amandina was bewildered.

“My messenger. Set up a ritual once you've made up your mind. Use this incantation to summon my messenger and inform me of your decision,” Lumian explained simply.

Amandina grew increasingly perplexed.

“What ritual? What summoning? This isn't a conventional messenger?”

Lumian raised his eyebrows again.

“Have you never heard of a messenger in the mysticism domain? Don't you know about summoning rituals?”

Amandina smiled sheepishly and said, “I came into contact with superpowers last year and gathered some information about the pathways of the divine through Robert and a few mysticism enthusiasts. I know about rituals, but I'm not sure about the details.”

Then, her eyes lit up.

“You'll teach me, won't you? Otherwise, I wouldn't be able to summon your messenger.

“Also, is your real name not Louis Berry, but Lumian Lee?”

“Y-you took a pen and paper from that coin bag. You also took your previous items from there. What kind of mystical item is this?”

“...”

Lumian couldn't help but glance up at the golden spherical dome.

The following morning, Lumian left the Brieu Motel with Ludwig and Lugano. They passed through streets still strewn with ruins and arrived at Bunia's café.

The owner, Bunia, maintained his usual shyness and politely inquired about their needs.

Lumian ordered three cups of Cosa coffee and three servings of Matani's specialty breakfast, Ocapa.

Ocapa was made from rice, chicken, eggs, potatoes, and common local spices wrapped in leaves from the Ocapa trees. It was filling and fragrant, and one couldn't stop eating once they started.

Lumian gazed at the spread of Ocapa, picked up his cutlery, and scooped a spoonful into his mouth.

The fragrance of the leaves, the salted egg yolk, the weightiness of the rice, the tenderness of the chicken, the softness of the potatoes, and the strange rich aroma combined to create a unique texture.

As Lumian ate, he casually surveyed the pedestrians and café patrons on the street.

After the sorrow and fear of the previous night, they had become gentle again, no longer revealing excessive emotions. When they spoke to others, they always had a faint smile on their faces.

After Ludwig finished his second meal of the morning, Lumian found a secluded corner, changed into winter clothes, and disappeared from Tizamo with him and Lugano.

This time, Lumian refrained from teleporting directly to Franca, as Lugano, Ludwig, and the two Demonesses were unfamiliar with each other.

Lumian chose the rarely used entrance to Underground Trier in Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative. The trio swiftly outlined themselves on the steel steps.

Upon returning to the surface, Lumian spotted a few college students carrying carbide lamps and lanterns. They jested as they passed by the trio and entered Underground Trier.

As he turned onto the nearest main street, the first thing Lumian saw was a scantily clad man in chains. He crawled slowly along the street in a dog-like manner. If anyone dared to glance at him, he would glare back and bark twice.

In the next moment, the street artists on the corner played a rhythmic melody. Passersby more or less danced with relaxed and satisfied smiles on their faces. The man acting as a dog and trembling in the cold wind also raised his hind leg.

This was very different from the streets in the market district.

Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative was renowned for its numerous universities.

Lumian averted his gaze from the pedestrians' smiles and led Lugano and Ludwig to Anthony's nearby rented house.

It was on the fourth floor, near the end of the corridor.

Knock! Knock! Knock! Lumian knocked on the door without hesitation.

Soon, he saw Anthony, who was dressed differently from before.

In a white shirt, light gray cashmere sweater, black tweed coat, dark-red bow tie, gold-rimmed glasses, and a light-

yellow wig, his beard was cleanly shaven, and his face was no longer greasy. The black grime in his pores was gone. He had the air of a successful member of high society.

“Are you in a relationship?” Lumian jested.

Anthony replied with a smile, “I’m attending a banquet hosted by the Trier Psychiatrist Guild today.”

This was a necessary prerequisite for completing Madam Justice's mission.

Lumian entered the room and asked casually, “Have you obtained a psychiatrist license?”

Anthony nodded.

“I acquired a genuine identity and educational background. During the interview, I successfully ‘convinced’ the examiner.”

“A genuine identity? Where's its original owner?” Lumian asked thoughtfully.

Anthony glanced at Lugano and Ludwig but didn't directly answer Lumian's question.

“What can I do for you?”

Lumian understood Anthony's meaning and temporarily abandoned the question. He briefly mentioned the Dream Festival's situation and the aftereffects of Lugano losing his arm in the dream.

He didn't mention how Lugano had lost his arm.

Anthony listened attentively and looked at Lugano.

“Such hysteria is easily resolved. Do you need a faster solution, or do you want it to be slower and gentler?”

Lugano replied without hesitation, “The faster one.”

He had lost control of his right forearm!

Anthony's gaze shifted to Lugano's left side, furrowing his brow.

Lugano subconsciously turned to his left and followed suit.

At that moment, Anthony produced a dagger from nowhere and thrust it at Lugano's right forearm.

Lugano swiftly retracted his hand and blurted out, “What are you doing!?”

Anthony sheathed his dagger and replied calmly, “The treatment is over.”

“Huh?” Lugano looked at his right hand in confusion and realized that it had “retracted” to his chest without being impeded.

Lumian chuckled and said to Lugano, “Keep an eye on Ludwig. Remember to prepare food for him.”

Without waiting for Lugano's response, Lumian turned to Anthony. “Let's go find Franca and Jenna now.”

Anthony glanced at Lumian and adjusted the gold-rimmed glasses he was unaccustomed to.

“Alright.”