

Inevitability 851

Chapter 851 A Marvelous Experience

Lumian let go of her hand, pressed his left chest, silently praised Mr. Fool, then led Amandina towards the bottom of the slope through the grayish-white fog.

The further Amandina walked, the more uncomfortable she became with her current state. The icy coldness emanating from within made her feel as if she had already died and become a corpse, while it seemed like another version of herself inside her body was trying to tear its way out.

“Shall we... go back?” she hesitantly said to Lumian.

“We're almost at our destination,” Lumian pointed in the direction where the faint, illusory sound of water could barely be heard, then added, “If you really decide to go back now, I can fulfill your request.”

Amandina hesitated for a few seconds. “We're already at the edge...”

Wouldn't it be a waste to go back now?

Lumian chuckled. “Don't worry, if it really gets to the point where we can't bear it, I'll definitely run faster than you.”

“You saying that makes me even more worried...” Amandina replied softly.

Lumian continued forward, thinking for a moment before saying, “When I tell you to close your eyes, close them. When I tell you to open them, open them immediately.”

“Alright.” In such an environment, Amandina could only choose to trust Lumian.

Soon, the gray fog in front of them became very thin, revealing a spring the size of a pond.

Pale-white water flowed in the spring, surrounded by deep, dark objects of indescribable color.

Amandina saw a wet, seaweed-like black hair floating in the water, and at the bottom, there seemed to be multiple faint figures hidden, struggling as if they had just drowned and were trying to crawl out.

At the same time, she noticed a lady wandering beside the spring water, wearing a white robe, with black hair, exquisitely perfect features, and a holy aura that seemed out of place in the catacombs.

Amandina was immediately attracted, and if it weren't for the lady's blank and cold gaze, lacking necessary charm, and if the spring water hadn't suddenly retracted into a pitch-black hole that light couldn't penetrate, she might have been unable to pull herself away.

Lumian also saw Krismona's figure, and several thoughts flashed through his mind, I could bring Jenna here to meet Amandina directly, without having to wait until an advancement every time...

The Krismona here is more like a wandering ghost, bound to the area around the Samaritan Women's Spring. Whether she can communicate normally, whether she would indiscriminately attack approaching Demonesses, whether this would cause any abnormalities, is still unknown...

I need to find a way to confirm before bringing Jenna in...

Seeing that Krismona's shadow didn't even glance at him, Lumian turned his head to Amandina and said, "You can close your eyes now."

"Okay." Amandina felt a certain fear and obediently closed her eyes.

Lumian then took two steps forward, reaching the edge of the Samaritan Women's Spring.

The next second, Amandina heard the sound of gushing spring water and felt a violent, frenzied aura descend upon her.

She couldn't help but tremble, her knees weakening.

At the same time, she had hallucinations, believing that multiple figures were approaching her, each extremely terrifying-the kind that would cause nightmares if seen and lead to a tragic death if encountered.

Amandina cried out in fear, "Let's go back! I want to go back!"

As she screamed, the violent and frenzied aura subsided, and the multiple figures in her hallucination retreated.

She heard Lumian's deep voice in her ear. "You can open your eyes now."

Amandina broke free from the extreme fear, relaxing a little.

She didn't hesitate and opened her eyes.

She saw that familiar figure, wearing a strange, rust-spotted iron crown, skin as crystalline as jade, with a white beard gently floating, already quite elderly.

At this moment, the old man's figure was sitting cross-legged at the deep hole, which was violently shaking as if some unknown entity was trying to squeeze out.

Amandina's gaze fell on those deep eyes that seemed like the night sky.

Her thoughts suddenly became blurred, as if she saw a rotting, pus-oozing hand with strange feathers reaching out and pressing on her head.

She also heard an old, blank, cold, and hollow voice ringing in her ear.

But she couldn't understand what the voice was saying.

After an unknown amount of time, Amandina came to her senses. The old man's figure was no longer in her sight, only the dark soil that had lost the pale-white spring water, and Lumian crouching beside the spring, holding a small golden bottle to collect the seeping water droplets.

Of course, Lumian and the others had reported Amandina's situation to the Major Arcana card holders before daring to bring her into the area around the Samaritan Women's Spring, and Madam Magician had also asked him to collect some more spring water.

"What's the use of this water?" Amandina, no longer so nervous and scared, asked curiously.

"If you make your enemy drink it, they will die instantly," Lumian patronizingly replied.

Amandina's eyes lit up, but she asked in confusion, "But how can I make my enemy drink it..."

Lumian put away the small golden bottle, stood up and said, "What did you see just now? What did you experience?"

Amandina recalled and recounted all the details, then self-examined.

"But I couldn't understand what was being said, the pronunciation was %¥..."

"It seems like I've gained a new ability, I can placate souls, calm emotions and desires..."

Lumian carefully remembered the few pronunciations Amandina had relayed, walked back to the young lady's side and said, "You've received a new boon, Soul Assurer."

"Yes." Amandina smiled, "I feel like my body has even changed a little..."

Lumian chuckled.

"Maybe you'll slowly grow a white beard, develop wrinkles. I've heard that boons gradually make the blessed ones resemble the high-level beings who granted them power, both mentally and physically."

Amandina was startled. "Can I... not have that?"

"Try consuming corresponding pathway potions to see if it can counteract it," Lumian said as he passed by Amandina and walked up the slope leading to the tomb chamber.

Amandina followed closely behind, lost in thought.

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Even until Lumian and Amandina left the underground catacombs, Franca, Jenna, and Anthony had not encountered Harrison, the visitor from Resurrection Island.

"He didn't show up?" Franca frowned and said, "Was my deduction wrong? Is relying on the traits of characteristics alone not enough to achieve such powerful convergence? Or is it that only Angel-level high-sequence Beyonders can actively utilize the law of convergence?"

Jenna's eyes shifted slightly as she thought for a moment before saying, "Maybe Harrison can sense this deliberate convergence and actively avoided it..."

Maybe, maybe he's not from the Death, Darkness, or Twilight pathways. He has a deep understanding of death and is pursuing corresponding things and scenes, but that doesn't mean he's a Beyonder of these pathways. What if he's a scholar studying death?"

"It's possible." Franca sighed, "Let's wait five more minutes, then we'll go after Lumian and Amandina."

...

Even until they all gathered at 9 Rue Orosai Apartment 702, Harrison from Resurrection Island still hadn't appeared.

“Thank you all, I can provide help for you now,” Amandina said, looking at Franca.

Franca looked at the young girl who appeared somewhat tired from her terrifying experience and smiled, saying, “There's no rush. You should go back first. Once you've adapted to your newly gained power and regained your body's balance, we'll come again.

“Besides, it's quite convenient to travel from Port Pylos to Trier.”

How is it convenient? Without using the mirror world or teleportation, it might take two or three months to arrive... Amandina grumbled silently, but accepted Franca's suggestion.

Then, she was sent back by Lumian and the others using Black Tear to the mirror Franca had given her, and she emerged from it.

At this moment, it was still night outside, with servants occasionally passing by in the corridor.

Looking at her familiar bedroom, at the fountain pen on the desk and the pile of books, Amandina suddenly felt as if she had been away for many days and experienced too many things.

But it had only been half a night.

In this half night, she had completed a round trip using the mirror world, toured the prosperous Trier that was farther than any distant place, explored the underground catacombs featured in magazines, and witnessed the terrifying area around the Samaritan Women's Spring.

After savoring the experience for a while, Amandina sincerely sighed.

“How amazing... A marvelous journey...”

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Inside Apartment 702 at 9 Rue Orosai.

Lumian tried to repeat the sounds Amandina had heard.

Franca listened intently, hesitating before saying, “It seems to be... ‘Be careful, Penglai’...”

“Be careful of Penglai? The Penglai divine mountain mentioned by the Armored Shadow? This doesn't have much practical meaning for us...” Lumian said thoughtfully.

Jenna and Anthony both nodded.

“Indeed.” Franca quickly adjusted her mindset, “But we've at least achieved one of our goals. In a few days, we can bring Amandina to summon Armored Shadow!”

At that time, she planned to first try asking if it could understand the meaning of the text on Mr. Star's information.

Just thinking about it was quite exciting!

After chatting idly for a while, Anthony, seeing that it was getting late, bid farewell and left to return to his own home.

Jenna looked at Franca pacing back and forth, then turned to Lumian and quietly pointed at herself.

Lumian slowly shook his head and pointed at himself.

After exchanging glances several times, Jenna, wearing her Vampire makeup, pursed her lips and said to Franca, "I'll make a move first."

"Mm." Franca didn't say much, as she wanted to talk to Lumian alone about those ancient texts and the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society.

After Jenna left, she sat down in the armchair and comfortably stretched her limbs.

She glanced at Lumian and asked curiously, "Why don't you sit down?"

Lumian looked at Franca, unable to hold back another sigh. "I have something to tell you."

Franca scrutinized Lumian's expression suspiciously.

"Are you playing a prank? You're the type of person who would warn everyone in a joking tone even if a disaster was about to happen. No, you're... you're serious? Is it something very serious?"

Lumian had already used Black Tear to sense the various mirrors in the room, roughly confirming that the Demoneess of Black wasn't watching.

He looked at Franca, instinctively wanting to force a smile to make himself seem a bit more relaxed, but he couldn't manage it.

Franca unconsciously sat up straight.

Lumian spoke in a low voice, "Jenna asked me to help her digest the Pleasure potion."

Chapter 852 Two Choices

Franca was initially stunned, then her expression turned to one of obvious shock.

She opened her mouth, instinctively wanting to say something, but her red lips quivered uncontrollably.

Her face gradually turned pale, and her eyes flickered between emptiness and confusion.

Lumian quietly watched Franca without saying a word.

After a while, Franca asked hoarsely and with difficulty, "You agreed?"

Her voice sounded like it was being squeezed out of her throat, her eyes holding a glimmer of hope.

Lumian nodded slowly.

The light in Franca's eyes dimmed instantly.

She lowered her head bit by bit, staring at her legs resting on the armchair.

After a few seconds, she muttered as if in a dream, "I knew... Jenna's affection and regard for me were never love. I was just fantasizing... Fantasizing that she couldn't find anyone suitable to help digest the Pleasure potion and had to reluctantly choose me. And maybe, over time, physical entanglement would lead to emotional closeness..."

“I knew... Jenna was in a hurry to digest the potion because her brother would soon return to Trier..

“I knew... the female Demoness path is very dangerous. Jenna is very aware of this too...

“I knew... her sexual orientation is men...

“I knew... she's decisive and good at making bold moves...

“I... Lean accept Jenna choosing someone else. I can accept... accept that she likes someone else. She's free. She's independent. She's not my appendage. Just because I like her doesn't mean she must like me or can't get close to others... I've been mentally preparing myself for this, even comforting myself that maybe this could help me digest the Affliction potion...

“But, but..”

Franca suddenly looked up, her eyes burning with anger. “Why you? Damn it, why you?”

Lumian felt like he was being stared at by a beautiful yet dangerous leopard, but he remained silent.

The answer didn't need to be spoken. It had already been spoken.

Franca and Lumian locked eyes, her gaze gradually turning sorrowful.

She laughed at herself bitterly, then asked in frustration and anger, “Why did you agree?”

“For two reasons: one superficial and one real. Which do you want to hear?”

Lumian replied with a bitter smile.

“I want to hear both!” Franca said without hesitation, her voice firm.

She stood up, trying to make herself appear more imposing.

Lumian sighed and said, “The superficial reason is that Jenna had already come to me. Whether I refused or avoided her, it would hurt her, affect her state, and leave hidden dangers. If I agreed to help her, it would hurt you. I had to choose the option where the aftermath was relatively easier to deal with. You are optimistic and have a good nature; you should be able to gradually let go...”

“Dammit! So because I have a good nature, I deserve to be bullied?” Franca interrupted angrily, laughing bitterly.

She walked to the window, placing her hands on the window frame, staring at the night outside as if to calm herself down.

Lumian came up beside her, also gazing into the deep night.

After a few seconds, without turning her head, Franca asked, as if talking to herself, “And the real reason?”

Lumian was silent for a moment before saying, “From the moment you didn't want to lose your image in front of someone you truly loved-at the moment you began digesting the Pleasure potion-

and Jenna took the initiative to approach you, your relationship entered a vortex, spiraling downward, and sooner or later it would erupt. The longer it dragged on, the more hurtful and severe the consequences. It's better to have a conclusion sooner.

“For me, the optimal choice in this matter would actually be to delay until preparations for the Iron-blooded Knight advancement ritual were complete. If things went smoothly, that would only be a matter of three or four weeks. By then, I would have gained godhood, becoming a demigod of Sequence 4.

Whatever emotional issues you two had, it wouldn't affect me even if it completely shattered our team's harmony and unity.

“Even if the subsequent Sequence 3 also required a team, I would have enough time to reorganize.”

Franca listened quietly, then turned her head to look at Lumian's face. “And your emotions?”

Lumian gazed into the darkness outside, remaining silent.

Franca followed suit, remaining silent for a while before saying expressionlessly, “You should go now. I'm a mess. I want some peace.”

Lumian hesitated, not moving.

Seeing this, Franca said with a complex smile, “Don't worry, I won't leave. I still have a mission.

“Why aren't you leaving yet? Do you want me to beat you up?”

“Let me tell you, once I figure things out, I might end up like that Demoneess in Morora and cut off your manhood! Anyway, you can grow it back; I'll cut it every day!

“Go on, get out!

“Get lost!”

Seeing Franca's emotions gradually intensify and her grabbing something to throw at him, Lumian sighed softly, walked towards the door, opened it, and stepped into the stairwell.

Bang!

The sound of the door slamming shut echoed behind him.

Lumian descended the stairs and soon saw Jenna standing silently in the shadows.

She hadn't really left. She had been waiting quietly in the building, head slightly lowered.

“How did it go?” Jenna raised her head, asking Lumian.

Lumian recounted his conversation with Franca and her reactions, focusing on the key points.

Jenna pursed her lips and said to Lumian, “You should go back. I'll wait outside in case of any accidents.”

Lumian glanced back at the dark hallway, then said, “I'll wait here too.”

Jenna shook her head. "One person is enough. If she calms down, she might want to talk to me. Your presence might provoke her further."

After a moment of thought, Lumian said, "Okay."

He looked at Jenna's deep eyes, filled with a hint of pain, and sighed, saying, "In this world, most people are selfish most of the time. Like you..."

Lumian paused and pointed at himself. "And like me."

Jenna's gaze softened a bit, and she smiled self-deprecatingly. "Sometimes, I really want to drag you into the abyss with me."

...

Returning to his rented apartment, Lumian lay on his bed, staring at the dark ceiling, unable to sleep.

He didn't want to rely on Cogitation to calm himself down either.

After an unknown amount of time, he suddenly had a premonition and sat up abruptly, directing his gaze towards the bedroom window.

With a creak, the window opened, and Franca, wearing a woman's shirt and fitted trousers but sporting fuzzy slippers, jumped in.

In the crimson moonlight, her eyes appeared red, and she held a dagger in her hand.

"Thanks to you, I've digested quite a bit of the Affliction potion!" Franca said through gritted teeth, looking at Lumian sitting on the bed. "Damn it, the more I think about it, the angrier I get!"

Lumian stared at Franca's face for a few seconds, his gaze slowly shifting to the dagger in her hand.

He waited for Franca to continue speaking.

Franca ground her teeth and said, "I can accept Jenna making this choice.

Although I would be sad, sorrowful, and in pain, I am willing to accept it and even encourage her.

"But you, you hurt your bro! You should be cut into pieces for this!"

"Do you know how much this hurt me? We were so close, so in sync, always thinking of each other. Why, why did you break this beautiful state?"

"You ended up making me feel abandoned, like you two are close and intimate, while I'm left out, the unnecessary one..."

"I feel betrayed..."

As she spoke, the gnashing tone in Franca's voice diminished, and a trace of confusion appeared in her voice.

She paused, then threw the dagger, which embedded itself accurately in Lumian's bed.

Franca then took two steps forward, glaring at Lumian.

“You now have two choices!

“One, as I said before, if you dare touch Jenna, I'll make you drink the Witch potion and turn you into a woman. Now, your choice is to switch pathways and become a Demoness of Despair!

“Two, I screw you, or you screw me!”

Lumian had anticipated many possible developments, but he hadn't expected these choices.

Seeing his shocked, bewildered expression, Franca added angrily, “I want to join you two!”

“Wh-” Lumian finally said a word, carefully observing Franca's state.

After speaking, Franca let out a long sigh, revealing her usual smile.

“Let me ask you, do you, uh, care about me?”

“Yes,” Lumian answered without hesitation.

Franca nodded in satisfaction. “Do you care about Jenna?”

“Yes,” Lumian also didn't hesitate.

Franca pursed her lips and asked further, “Does Jenna care about you?”

“Yes,” Lumian had no doubts.

Franca then asked, “Do I care about you?”

“Yes.” Lumian nodded solemnly.

Franca continued, “And do I care about Jenna?”

“Very much,” Lumian added an adjective.

Franca hesitated and asked again, “And does Jenna care about me?”

“Very much. You're her family and her best friend,” Lumian answered seriously.

Franca then raised her hand slightly.

“There you have it! We all care about each other, and we never know when we might die suddenly. So let's stay together. No one abandons anyone. It's just sleeping together. Love is a pain in the ass! To hell with love!”

Lumian was rendered speechless for a moment. He looked at Franca and sincerely remarked, “You look quite beautiful in your current state of mind.”

Franca chuckled. “What else would I be doing?”

As she said this, she suddenly half-turned her head and looked to the side, her voice growing louder.

“Should I give up? Should I leave?”

Tears, long in the making, slowly trickled down her cheeks.

Lumian remained silent.

After a few seconds, Franca turned her head back, her gaze deep as she looked at Lumian. In a hoarse voice, she said, "Because in this world, you two are the most important people to me.

"The only two..."

Under the crimson moonlight, her face was already streaked with tears.

Chapter 853 Confession

Seeing the sparkling tears and streaks on Franca's face, Lumian suddenly thought of his sister Aurore. He recalled the loneliness that always emanated from her when she gazed at the stars from the rooftop.

He also remembered the life he and Aurore had depended on each other in Cordu, the excruciating pain when his sister died and Cordu was destroyed, and the self-destructive impulses he had when he first arrived in Trier. Overcoming those emotions and rebuilding his social connections had started with Franca, Jenna, Charlie, and many tenants at the Auberge du Coq Doré.

In this world, there aren't many people I care about anymore... Lumian sighed deeply.

Back in Morora, he had engaged in mutual scheming against Julie, Albus Medici, and the others. Even when facing various dangers and conspiracies, he hadn't sighed as much as he had in the past few days.

He often felt so troubled that he wanted to burn the world down.

Franca's words had struck a chord in him. He already knew what his answer would be, but he wanted to struggle a bit more.

Looking at Franca, Lumian said with a bitter smile, "Caring doesn't have to manifest in that way. Apart from Aurore, you and Jenna are the people I care about most."

Franca shook her head without hesitation. "No way! I would feel resentful, like an outsider!

"You agreed to Jenna, so you have to agree to me too. Once you started this, you can't take it back! You should have realized this when you made that decision. If you don't balance the bowl filled with water, it will spill out!

"As the leader of a team, you must remember three things when dealing with each member: "Fairness! Fairness! And damn fairness!"

"But for this kind of matter..." Lumian responded instinctively, "If Anthony wants to sleep with me, do I have to agree too?"

"You must agree!" Franca walked to the bed and looked down at Lumian sitting there, her voice fierce. "Who told you to sleep with Jenna first, unless Anthony doesn't want to or you consider him a dispensable member of the team!"

Lumian rubbed his temples, feeling a headache coming on.

What kind of strange logic is this...

Why does Franca always have so many bizarre ideas...

Lumian looked at Franca and said with a bitter smile, "Is this how you digested the Instigator potion?"

Before Franca could respond, he sighed again. "I agree."

He added, "But I'm only speaking for myself. You'll have to talk to Jenna about it yourself."

He was referring to the threesome.

Franca's body suddenly swayed, as if she had briefly lost strength.

Her expression slowly relaxed, and she said with a chuckle, "We'll talk about it later. For now, I just want your agreement."

"And Jenna and I..." Lumian initially wanted to say that he and Jenna had only agreed until the Pleasure potion was digested, but he felt it wasn't the right time to say this now.

Franca, looking a bit tired, showed a teasing smile. "You haven't said which choice you agreed to. I'm more looking forward to you becoming a Demoness of Despair, or me screwing you."

"The remaining choice," Lumian answered helplessly.

Franca let out a long breath. "That works too."

She seemed to have lost her hard exterior, looking quite weak.

She waved her hand. "I'll go rest now."

"I thought..." Lumian was slightly surprised.

Franca rolled her eyes at him. "What did you think? I've been so shocked and hurt, feeling down for so long, my emotions and state are all over the place. How could I be in the mood for the deed? You've agreed, so just keep it in mind, and we'll talk about it when I feel better."

My mind and spirit need a break too... Lumian sighed silently.

After watching Franca leave through the window, disappearing into the night outside, Lumian walked to the bedroom door and opened it.

Jenna was quietly sitting in the dark area of the living room.

Lumian wasn't surprised by Jenna's appearance; she had been watching Franca's door, and Franca's intense emotions made it hard not to be noticed or followed when she left.

"I didn't expect it to turn out this way." Lumian sighed to Jenna.

Jenna stood up, smiling. "Although I didn't expect it either, I thought about it for a while and felt like, maybe I could accept it. Just you and her, it's much better than I anticipated."

"What did you anticipate?" Lumian quietly sighed with relief.

Jenna's eyes held a mix of sadness, guilt, and pain as she said, "Franca losing her mind and trying to kill us.

“I would agree but hide for a while, waiting until I have arranged Julien's future before seeing her again.”

Lumian looked at Jenna for a few seconds, then sighed.

“Since your mother's death, you've had quite a bit of self-destructive tendencies. We thought we'd completely helped you overcome them, but it turns out a bit still lingered.”

Jenna's eyes glistened as she looked at Lumian. “Aren't you the same?”

Lumian met her gaze and after two seconds, couldn't help but laugh. “Is this a support group for the broken?”

“Yes.” Jenna pointed to the door. “I'll go talk to Franca. We'll exchange our ailments in a few days.”

“Okay.” Lumian nodded gently.

...

Inside Apartment 702 at 9 Rue Orosai.

Franca lay back in the armchair, her eyes open, gently rocking with the chair's movement.

Knock! Knock! Knock!

She heard the knocking and realized someone was outside.

In this state, I could easily be assassinated... Franca reflected on herself, stood up, and walked to the door.

She could guess who was outside.

Sure enough, she saw Jenna with her Vampire makeup.

Franca opened her mouth, unsure what to say, and just stepped aside to let Jenna in.

After Jenna sat on the single sofa, she smiled at Franca, who had returned to the armchair.

“I heard your conversation with Lumian.”

Franca's face, which had been somewhat pale, quickly turned red.

Embarrassing!

How embarrassing!

So embarrassing she wanted to crawl into a hole!

Jenna laughed softly. “Actually, I also looked forward to those other two choices more.”

Franca could only give a sheepish chuckle.

Jenna looked at her seriously. “I can tell there were other thoughts behind that last choice. Can you tell me what they were?”

Franca remained silent for a few seconds before speaking up, "That bastard Lumian must have told you it was only until the Pleasure potion was digested. I know him!"

As she spoke, Franca felt a bit indignant on Jenna's behalf.

Then, she sighed. "If I joined now, in this state, Lumian would definitely feel awkward and not set a time limit. For fairness, he shouldn't propose one to you either."

Jenna closed her eyes briefly, as if being blown by the wind.

She looked at Franca with unusually gentle eyes and said with a bitter smile, "But that's just a false realization. I can't deceive myself."

"False is better than nothing. If it lasts long enough, it might become real," Franca showed a self-mocking smile, "For a long time, even knowing it's false is better, it helps us digest the potion."

Looking at Jenna, Franca suddenly felt a surge of emotion and had a lot to say, "Maybe I'm a coward. I've liked you for a long time, but I've never dared to truly pursue you or express my feelings. I've always been indecisive about this, retreating every day."

In the current atmosphere, Franca suddenly found it wasn't hard to say the words "I like you."

This unexpected ease made her even sadder.

Jenna looked at Franca without any anger or words.

She could feel that what Franca truly wanted to say was yet to come.

After a brief pause, Franca clenched her teeth and uttered, "I've been hiding something from you. I-I was originally a man."

"I know," Jenna replied calmly, her eyes showing some encouragement, "The Witch potion."

"You did know." Franca wasn't surprised. She mustered her courage and continued, "There's something else. I-I'm not from this world. I transmigrated from another world. I-I took over this body."

Jenna exclaimed in surprise, "Another world?"

A thought suddenly struck her. "The one with the Underworld Daoist and the Celestial Master?"

Having worked together for so long, Franca often forgot whether she had told Jenna about these things, so Jenna knew these terms but didn't understand what they represented, considering them as powerful beings.

"Yes, and also Resurrection Island." After revealing this secret, Franca felt much lighter.

Jenna had a look of sudden realization. "No wonder you were so agitated when you got Harrison's information..."

"So, you understand why I've been eager to summon the Armored Shadow?"

Franca asked nervously, "You, you don't mind that I took someone else's body, do you?"

"Why should I mind? Unless it's the Franca I know being replaced," Jenna responded with amusement, clearly expressing her stance.

Franca relaxed completely, almost collapsing into the armchair.

Jenna thought for a moment and probed, "Lumian's sister and those mysticism gathering attendees with strange codenames, are they from your world too?"

"Yes, but I can't tell you more. I can only talk about my part," Franca said with a sigh. "I used to dream of going home, returning to my world. So every time I had the impulse to step towards you, I couldn't help but ask myself, can you bear her future? When there's a chance to go home, would you stay for her? Taking her to an unfamiliar world, wouldn't that be too cruel? Would she be willing to go, could she go..."

"Each time I asked those questions, I retreated..."

"I was always so conflicted, never taking any real action."

Jenna listened gently, and when Franca finished, she smiled and said, "You're one of the kindest people I've ever met. I'm glad you were with me through the toughest times."

She looked at Franca and hesitated for a moment before asking, "Do you still think about going home now?"

Franca fell silent. The crimson moonlight outside had dimmed at some point.

After a few seconds, Franca answered in a low voice, "Yes."

Chapter 854 Translation

Hearing Franca's answer, Jenna bit her lip and said, "Was that choice you just made also influenced by this factor?"

"Maybe," Franca said with a bitter smile. "I felt that if I didn't do this, there would always be that lingering resentment in my heart. We would definitely grow apart over time. Once the mission is completed, once there's no external force keeping us together, we might just drift apart. But I don't want that..."

"When I left with a dagger just now, I genuinely wanted to castrate Lumian once to vent my anger. But walking in the shadows of the street, the cold wind sobered me up a lot. Then I thought, love is such a nuisance. Without it, the three of us could still be together happily like before.

"With that thought, I suddenly felt that if I could exclude love, and the possessiveness and jealousy it brings, maybe, just maybe, it could work..."

“Madam Judgment has always told us that the end is near, coming in a few years or decades. We must prepare ourselves mentally and in terms of strength. Although there are no signs of the apocalypse yet, and we often forget this matter to maintain a good mindset and avoid going mad from stress, we've already experienced two major catastrophes in Trier alone. The Tree of Shadow incident and the Hostel plan, no matter how we try to avoid or ignore them, we can't escape their impact.

“Under such circumstances, any one of us might leave, say goodbye, or die at any time. So why care so much? Although that choice is strange, and even I find it hard to accept, why not give it a try?”

“After trying, our future might be better and we'll become closer, even more caring for one another, or it might get worse, gradually drifting apart and becoming familiar strangers or even enemies. But how will we know the result without trying? It won't get much worse anyway.

“Of course, human emotions are uncontrollable. Even if our future gets better, the hidden love and possessiveness and jealousy it brings can't be completely eliminated. Pain and pleasure will coexist for a long time. Perhaps that's the essence of a Demones.

“But no matter what, I still like that saying:

“Life is short, why not give it a try?”

Jenna listened intently to Franca's statement, then said with a gentle gaze, “That's why I feel such a strong sense of urgency and sometimes make selfish choices.”

She then chuckled.”I've heard Lumian tease you with ‘Life is short, why not give it a try’. Was it because you did something strange with that saying in mind?”

Franca smiled awkwardly. “I was quite hesitant and conflicted about drinking the Witch potion. Then someone said that phrase to me.”

Jenna understood and, instead of mocking Franca, asked curiously, “Was it also that saying that encouraged you to be with Gardner Martin?”

“Yes... I hadn't met you all then, and I didn't have anyone I particularly cared about,” Franca replied even more awkwardly.

Seeing this, Jenna chuckled softly. “Did you ever think about trying it with Lumian?”

“Well...” Franca felt like running away, “Oh, come on, you pure-hearted girl, let's not talk about such inappropriate topics!”

Jenna deliberately swore, “Dammit! The dirty jokes and obscene scenes I heard and saw while singing in bars and dance halls were far more shocking than this. Not just between men and women, even between men and men.”

The atmosphere became less sad and heavy, and Jenna stood up.

“You look very tired. Emotional upheaval does that. I'll go back now. Get some rest.”

“Okay.” Franca stood up as well.

She opened her mouth, seemingly wanting to ask something, but ultimately didn't.

Sensitive to details, Jenna smiled. “Ask whatever you want. You've already made that decision, what else could you hesitate to ask?”

Franca hesitated for a moment, then looked into Jenna's eyes and asked, “If I had told you from the start that I was originally a man, and after spending some time together, genuinely pursued you, would you have fallen for me?”

Jenna thought seriously for a moment, then replied, “I can't answer such a hypothetical question. All I can say is maybe.”

She looked back into Franca's eyes, saying, “I've told you before, during that period, you were a light in my life. To me, you were both my best friend and the older sister who always protected me, despite not being related by blood. After my mother died, I even projected some of my feelings for her onto you. Maybe that's why I sometimes thought I shouldn't give you any false hopes and it was better to cut things off early.”

Jenna smiled. “In my heart, if I were to rank the three people I care about most, Julien would be first, you second, and Lumian third. Love might fade one day, but the bond we share won't.”

Franca felt relieved and said with a smile, “You have a great way with words.”

“Of course, I studied hard back then!” Jenna walked towards the door.

After a few steps, she turned back to Franca and hesitated, “I can't accept the idea of joining right now. Just speaking for myself.”

She then laughed. “But who knows what the future holds?”

Franca smiled. “It's just a saying.”

Jenna turned back to the door, opened it, and held the brass handle, pausing once more. She turned her body and looked at Franca standing in the center of the living room, asking quietly, “If one day you find a way home, and both Lumian and I want you to stay, would you?”

Franca stood with her back to the crimson moonlight, her face hidden in deep shadow.

After a long silence, she answered slowly, “I don't know...”

Her voice seemed to be squeezed out from her heart, light and weak.

...

Two days later, in an underground quarry in Trier.

Franca, Jenna, and Amandina, who had just arrived from Matani in the Southern Continent, stood inside a wall of spirituality, watching Lumian set up an altar.

Anthony, who Amandina hadn't noticed, was responsible for guarding the perimeter.

Lumian calmly completed the preparations, lit the candles, dripped the essential oil, and stepped back two steps, standing next to Franca.

He wasn't worried about the lack of demigod protection. Firstly, Amandina was present. Secondly, when he sent the bottle of Samaria Woman Spring water to Madam Magician, he mentioned this matter.

Seeing the candle flames flicker, Franca suddenly became nervous, while Amandina looked puzzled. She had no idea what she was supposed to help with or could help with.

Once Franca nodded, indicating she was ready, Lumian recited in ancient Hermes, "I!"

Then, switching to Hermes:

"I summon in my name:

"The spirit that wanders about the unfounded, a combination of numerous shadows, Lumian Lee's contracted creature..."

This was a familiar part of the process to Amandina, similar to summoning a messenger. So she didn't pay much attention, curious about the incantation's description while observing Franca, the lady whose name she had just learned, and Lumian's eye interactions, looking for any signs of intimacy.

To her disappointment, Franca, Jenna, and Lumian were all focused on the ritual.

Soon, a blurry shadow in fish-scale armor emerged from the candle flame, its black scales stained with pure gold, appearing solemn and sacred.

The transparent faces on the scales were clearer than before, more twisted and fierce like evil spirits.

They silently screamed, displaying hatred and malice.

Amandina was startled.

It wasn't the appearance of Armored Shadow that scared her; such horror couldn't intimidate someone who had experienced the Dream Festival, summoned Baynfele, and been to the underground catacombs.

What shocked her was Armored Shadow and the ghostly faces on its scales simultaneously looking at her!

She almost stopped breathing, her body enveloped in icy coldness.

Armored Shadow spoke in a strange language.

Only Franca could barely understand it, hearing: "Disciple of the Underworld Gate..."

It really recognizes Amandina's boon... Franca murmured, noticing Armored Shadow's malice had lessened, indicating a more peaceful interaction was possible.

Lumian also noticed the change and quickly had Franca place the 100,000 verl d'or worth of gold on the altar, then spoke in Hermes, "I offer this sacrifice, please complete a simple task and answer two questions."

Armored Shadow conveyed agreement, its scales' transparent faces greedily eyeing the gold.

Lumian immediately placed the documents Franca handed him on the altar.

These weren't the documents Mr. Star gave Franca, nor the original documents.

The former had its order completely scrambled, making it difficult to interpret through a question and answer format, and the latter could corrupt Armored Shadow, leading the ritual to unforeseen dangers.

So, after Franca expressed her intention, Mr. Star provided new documents through Madam Judgment.

The new documents extracted several complete sentences from the original, containing hundreds of frequently used words from the rest of the text.

“The task is to translate these documents.” Franca listened to Lumian's request with anticipation and anxiety.

She wasn't sure if Armored Shadow would accept the deal.

With a whooshing sound, the two pages floated up, hovering before Armored Shadow.

After a few seconds, the armored shadow spoke again in an incomprehensible language.

Franca's ears perked up.

“Pure yin does not last, pure yang does not grow, yin contains yang, yang contains yin, the union of yin and yang gives rise to everything, this is the way of heaven...”

That's it? Franca's lips twitched.

Although she hadn't truly done the deed, she suspected Armored Shadow was insinuating something about herself, Jenna, and Lumian.

Chapter 855 That Corpse

To Franca, the sentence Armored Shadow Chen Tu had just translated was quite ordinary. It was something she often read before her transmigration. She couldn't understand why the Major Arcana card holders thought such words could bring corruption.

Could it be the words themselves?

Just like the word “I,” which can have entirely different meanings in Intis and ancient Hermes!

However, isn't there a phrase that seems a bit off? Yin and yang unite to create all things... shouldn't it be yin and yang unite to produce all things? Franca had been an avid internet user before her transmigration, and one of her hobbies was reading novels and watching anime. She had only seen “Yin and yang unite to produce all things” and never heard of “Yin and yang unite to create all things.”

Of course, after thinking carefully, she found it understandable:

Yin and yang unite to nurture all things, all things grow and weave together to form matter!

In that case, the logic remains sound, just omitting the ‘all things’ as the bridge...

While Franca was distracted by her thoughts, she continued to listen seriously to the rest of the sentences translated by Armored Shadow.

She didn't write down the corresponding content. As a Demoness proficient in divination, she could easily recall the full content in her dreams later.

The subsequent sentences were similar to the first, all about the opposition, contradiction, conflict, reflection, harmonization, and unity of yin and yang. They were all broad principles without in-depth explanations or practical details, making Franca feel like yawning.

The only thing she felt was worth pondering was the last half sentence of the document: "To approach the way of heaven."

From her understanding of this phrase, Franca naturally linked it to the knowledge that boons made the recipient gradually closer to the giver, and the way Underworld Daoist granted power to Amandina was indeed through a boon.

To approach the way of heaven... is this document actually about how to use mind and body harmoniously, balancing yin and yang to synchronize with the so-called way of heaven, thereby gaining power? Is this a way of seeking boons?

Franca saw that Armored Shadow Chen Tu had finished translating and let the documents float back. She quickly gathered her thoughts and prepared to ask her questions.

After catching the documents, she immediately asked in her true, native language, "The first question, have you heard of anyone traveling from the world you and Underworld Daoist to another world?"

Franca didn't translate this question into Intisian for Lumian to ask, fearing Amandina would learn about the transmigration. Though they could later have Anthony hypnotize Amandina to make her forget, why not use a simpler method?

Armored Shadow Chen Tu turned its gaze towards Franca, who spoke a similar language.

After a few seconds, it looked back at Lumian, conveying the thought of "Should I answer?"

As the host of the current ritual, Lumian had to approve, or Armored Shadow and Franca wouldn't be able to communicate. Otherwise, Armored Shadow, unless using force, couldn't take the gold on the altar even if it didn't fulfill the agreement.

Lumian nodded."This is the first question."

Armored Shadow replied in a deep, hoarse voice, "Unknown."

It still used the language close to Franca's mother tongue.

Amandina grew increasingly confused.

She couldn't understand anything!

Throughout the process, she could only understand Lumian's part!

Amandina glanced at Jenna beside her and, lowering her voice, asked as though they knew each other well, "What are they talking about? What language are they using?"

Jenna chuckled softly. "Even though I look very serious and focused, I actually can't understand either."

Amandina couldn't help but sigh.

"I'll tell you secretly, Lumian doesn't understand either," Jenna smiled, glancing at Lumian who was closely watching Armored Shadow, and whispered to Amandina.

Amandina looked at Jenna, then at Lumian, and recalled the expression, tone, and wording of that sentence just now, giving a silent "wow" in her mind.

Some things are unintentionally revealed!

She curiously asked, "Why don't you learn that language from Franca?"

"We've just started in the past two days; it's tough." Jenna unconsciously frowned.

It's really tough!

At this time, hearing Armored Shadow's answer, Franca couldn't help but feel disappointed but maintained her normal demeanor and asked in her native tongue, "The second question, can you use an illusion or a similar method to show the corpse that floated from Penglai to the river earlier?"

This question came to Franca's mind in the past two days, directly prompted by Amandina hearing the Underworld Daoist say "Beware Penglai," and Armored Shadow Chen Tu mentioning before that the mysteriously vanished Penglai had reappeared, with a corpse from there floating to the river.

Franca thought that matters related to Penglai might be important and possibly linked to their hope of returning home.

Just after asking this question, Franca suddenly realized her mistake and wanted to slap herself.

It wasn't that she shouldn't have asked this question but that the way she phrased it was problematic!

According to her current phrasing, even if the Armored Shadow agreed, it only needed to say "yes" without showing the specific appearance of the corpse. The question didn't have a corresponding mandatory requirement!

Should I prepare another 100,000 ver! d'or of gold? I'm almost broke, with only a bit over 2,000 ver! d'or left... Franca regretted it deeply.

Fortunately, Armored Shadow Chen Tu was honest. Once the question was approved by Lumian, it immediately made countless transparent faces on its scales protrude frantically.

This made the surroundings instantly eerie green, with cold wind blowing.

Water droplets quickly condensed on the altar surface, gathering into a water surface, reflecting a figure.

The figure floated in the deep darkness, unable to show a specific form as if it had been hollowed out. The black robe and body were highly decayed, oozing pus.

Its face was relatively intact. Through the deep-to-the-bone rotting marks, one could still see the pale and dim skin, soft contours, and thin layer of black hair...

Franca was stunned.

I-isn't this the visitor from Resurrection Island, Harrison?

He had long died, turned into a decaying corpse floating on what seems like the River Styx, so why was he still active in Trier?

Moreover, the corpse appeared on the river a few years ago, and only then did the Demon Warlock encounter Harrison!

Though Lumian didn't understand Franca's question, he roughly guessed why Franca was so shocked from the key details of "floating," "corpse," and "Harrison's appearance."

He turned his head to look at Franca, seeing surprise, astonishment, and confusion in those lake-blue eyes.

Lumian nodded to reassure her, then said to Armored Shadow Chen Tu, "Thank you for your answers."

The gold on the altar disintegrated, turning into pure light, flowing like water onto Armored Shadow's surface.

Seeing the fish-scale armor mostly turned golden, sacred, and heavy, Lumian frowned slightly and ended the ritual.

After extinguishing the candles, he immediately said to Franca, "Another two times, and Armored Shadow should fully restore its golden body. We can only summon it once more at most."

"Yeah." Franca finally snapped out of the shock of seeing Harrison's past corpse.

As Lumian cleaned up the altar, she smiled at Amandina and said, "We can leave now."

"Huh?" Amandina was puzzled, "Wasn't I supposed to help? I haven't done anything yet..."

"You already provided help." Franca grinned.

Amandina was even more confused."When did this happen?"

Jenna helped clarify, "Don't you feel that the language Franca and Armored Shadow spoke was similar to what the figure whispered in your ear?"

Amandina thought carefully. "It does seem similar."

After tidying up the altar, Lumian returned and casually said, "The shadow just now was likely sealed by your teacher, hmm-the figure. You being here could mislead it, making it think this represents the figure's attitude, reducing the difficulty of our communication and preventing its attack.

"That's your help, just standing by and observing."

Amandina suddenly recalled Armored Shadow's gaze and reactive response when it first appeared, understanding."Is that so... Well, um, what is my teacher's name?"

Though we all know this question is normal, it still sounds weird... who doesn't know their teacher's name and needs to ask someone else... Jenna grumbled inwardly.

Franca answered with a smile in Intisian, “Underworld Daoist.

“Also, you should call him Master, not Teacher.”

“Underworld Daoist...” Amandina softly repeated the title described in Intisian.

After a few seconds, she contentedly asked, “What's the difference between Master and Teacher?”

“A Master includes a paternalistic meaning,” Franca explained with some effort.

Amandina didn't ask further, her eyes sparkling as she said, “I can provide help again in the future!

“Can you help me collect the Mid-to-Low Sequence potion formulas and Beyond character characteristics of the Evernight pathway?”

“No problem.” Franca didn't tell Amandina those would be available soon.

Lumian smiled and said, “I thought you'd ask to visit the Samaritan Women's Spring again.”

Amandina smiled a bit reluctantly. “I'll adapt for a while longer, and go after my own Sequence matches my boon level.”

After speaking, she muttered softly, “I don't want to turn into an old man with a white beard...”

...

After sending Amandina off, Lumian, Jenna, and Anthony sat in the living room of Apartment 702 at 9 Rue Orosai, listening to Franca recounting the sentences translated by Armored Shadow.

“What do they mean?” Jenna felt like she somewhat understood but also didn't understand at all.

Franca had to translate in her own words what “Pure yin does not last, pure yang does not grow...” meant.

As Jenna listened, she gradually didn't know how to position her body and avoided moving her gaze.

Lumian took a tactical sip of water, and Anthony's expression remained unchanged.

“I think these sentences are too ordinary, not worth such high regard,” Franca concluded.

Lumian pondered for a few seconds and slowly said, “No, they might be very important.”

Chapter 856 The So-called Way of Heaven

Franca looked at Lumian, asking expectantly, “What do you mean?”

Lumian, now completely comfortable, glanced at Anthony and Jenna before focusing back on Franca's recliner.

“We all know that there are great existences occupying several adjacent pathways in this world, like Mr. Fool and the Celestial Worthy at the top of the Apprentice, Seer,

and Marauder pathways. Then there's the Great Mother, who is at the top of the Moon, Earth, and Villain pathways.

“So, if the phrase ‘to approach the way of heaven’ indeed means adjusting oneself to get closer to the bestower and actively seeking boons, then in this context, what does the ‘way of heaven’ represent? Top of which pathways?”

Franca pondered for a moment before replying, “From our current understanding of the twenty-two pathways, the Hunter pathway definitely represents ‘yang,’ while the Demoness pathway might represent ‘yin.’ It could also be the Earth or Moon pathway. Considering the symbol of ‘yang,’ ‘yin’ here likely refers to the Demoness pathway.”

Franca only knew that the Hunter pathway could transform a woman into a man.

She was unsure if the Earth or Moon pathways could turn a man into a woman, classifying them as ‘yin’ based on their association with nurturing, reproduction, and growth.

“So, in these sentences, the ‘way of heaven’ refers to the top of the Hunter and Demoness pathways?” Jenna asked, following Lumian and Franca's train of thought.

“Probably,” Franca nodded emphatically. “The knowledge in Mr. Star's document might explain how to correctly understand the contradiction, opposition, transformation, and unity of ‘yin’ and ‘yang.’ Then, through one's behavior and necessary external help, harmonize yin and yang to the greatest extent to approach the corresponding way of heaven, that is, the great existences at the top of the Demoness and Hunter pathways, and obtain boons.”

Lumian chuckled. “Having reached this point in the analysis, what comes to mind?”

Jenna was momentarily stunned and blurted out, “The joining of the Blood Emperor and the Primordial Demoness?”

“Barely keeping up with my thoughts,” Lumian half-praised, half-mocked. “We've always wondered why the Blood Emperor and the Primordial Demoness would cooperate. As true gods of adjacent pathways, shouldn't They be mortal enemies? Madam Magician told me that choosing a pathway determines your enemies and friends.”

Aren't you two from adjacent pathways and still not enemies? Haven't you shared a bed? Franca glanced at Lumian and Jenna, feeling a slight twinge of jealousy as she lampooned.

During such moments, she often felt that her Affliction potion had digested a bit.

Of course, she knew that this enmity mainly applied to the higher levels.

Lumian continued, “The seal on the convergence effect from Mr. Door might just be a technical detail on how it's done, not the cause or purpose.”

“The goal of the Blood Emperor and the Primordial Demoness is to join the body with the way of heaven?” Franca expanded her thoughts from “to approach the way of heaven,” using a concept from her previous life that she felt was more appropriate.

Lumian, Jenna, and Anthony looked at Franca, more or less confused.

What does merging the body with the way of heaven mean?

Sensing her companions' confusion, Franca scratched her ponytail and tried to explain, “It means uniting with the so-called way of heaven... Uh, an imprecise analogy would be usurping a true god's position, not replacing a true god but the great existence represented by the way of heaven.”

“Then why don't the Primordial Demoness and Blood Emperor directly kill each other and devour the other's Beyonder characteristics to unify yin and yang?”

Anthony questioned.

There's no need for them to consummate to give birth to two children!

Franca thought for a few seconds. “Maybe they need to harmonize before unifying? At least that's what the sentences suggest...”

“In other words, the Blood Emperor and Primordial Demoness had to combine first, adjust their state, get close to the way of heaven, and then enter the unification stage. So, They had to temporarily cooperate while preparing to betray each other once they achieved Their goals...”

“What do they call this? The first sword upon reaching the shore cuts down those around you!”

Lumian and the others were used to Franca's sudden nonsensical remarks and patiently waited for her to continue.

Franca suddenly laughed. “It's also possible that the Blood Emperor and Primordial Demoness came across similar knowledge but, due to a lack of proper training and understanding, They naively thought combining yin and yang meant the Hunter and Demoness pathways had to be physically united; this resulted in Them producing some children.

“What do they call this? This is what happens when cultures don't communicate well! Uh, it's not exactly wrong, just somewhat narrow-minded, overlooking other possible approaches.”

As Jenna started to feel uneasy, relating to her own experience, Lumian sarcastically remarked, “I've always said that redheads and thick-heads need to read more and study hard.”

As soon as Lumian finished speaking, Franca and Jenna glared at him furiously.

“I don't think it's a misunderstanding. Even if the Blood Emperor, being half-mad, didn't fully grasp the meaning of unifying yin and yang, He had top-tier Cryptologists around Him,” Anthony expressed a different view, referring to Amon, the grand duke of the Tudor Empire and Angel of the Marauder pathway.

Lumian mused aloud, "Did you forget that one of Amon's titles is the 'God of Mischief'?"

"Maybe He wanted to see such a development."

"Do you resonate with Amon's mindset because you're a trickster too..." Franca muttered softly.

Jenna nodded. "So, the special mirror world is a byproduct of the Blood Emperor and Primordial Demoness's attempt to unify yin and yang to approach the way of heaven?"

"Or a necessary creation for occupying the way of heaven, similar to High-Sequence advancement rituals?"

"We can't draw conclusions yet, but the direction seems right." Franca took out a dark red fountain pen from her Traveler's Bag and wrote the translated sentences under different headings on her thigh.

She thoughtfully interpreted individual characters based on sentence structure, text shape, and reasonable assumptions. Finally, she organized their discussion into a report, appended it to the document, and sent it to the Major Arcana card holder as a reference instead of a conclusion.

Phew... Having completed this task, Franca breathed a sigh of relief.

"The gains from summoning Armored Shadow this time were greater than I expected. Now we can confirm that Resurrection Island is Penglai divine mountain, and Harrison is the corpse that drifted from Penglai!"

Franca was somewhat disappointed that there was still no definitive evidence proving that Underworld Daoist and Harrison's world was the same as the one they had transmigrated from—similar language, culture, and appearance were not sufficient premises for inference.

She planned to ask Armored Shadow directly next time if it had heard of the Celestial Worthy of Heaven and Earth for Blessings, the culprit behind their transmigration!

Anthony, who knew little about Armored Shadow, Penglai, and the so-called river, was confused but understood the importance of Resurrection Island and Harrison, which the Major Arcana card holders were also interested in.

"Harrison died and was resurrected? As expected from someone from Resurrection Island... Why did Resurrection Island disappear from Underworld Daoist's world?"

"Based on Harrison's words to the Demon Warlock, people from Resurrection Island have been active in our world for a long time..."

"Did Resurrection Island disappear from its original world because it transmigrated here? Can it now communicate with its original world?" Jenna finally understood Franca's shock at seeing the corresponding illusion after asking the second question.

She suddenly froze, feeling she shouldn't analyze in this direction.

Franca's eyes lit up. "It's possible!"

She then left the armchair, paced back and forth, and said angrily, "Damn, why didn't we lure Harrison out this time!"

Although she realized that the visitor from Resurrection Island might be more dangerous than expected, they had Madam Magician overseeing their visit to the Samaritan Women's Spring this time.

"Our main task now is to find Harrison or the Mirror Person, Palia." Lumian stood up and spoke with the demeanor of a team leader.

Mirror Person Palia was the mineralogist, Jasmine.

Before Franca and the others could respond, he added, "I also need to start gathering supplementary ingredients for the Iron-blooded Knight."

"We can also gather ingredients for the Demoness of Despair. With no clear leads to track for now, we have plenty of free time," Franca agreed.

Anthony said, "I'll do my best on this task, but I have another one as well."

"Joining the Psychology Alchemists?" Franca asked curiously.

"That's a long-term task," Anthony explained briefly. "Ma'am Hermit's Minor Arcana card, the Knight of Swords, is in Trier and needs help from a Beyonder of the Spectator pathway. Madam Justice recommended me."

"What kind of help?" Lumian asked.

Anthony shook his head. "We haven't met yet."

Lumian nodded. "Feel free to ask for help if needed."

...

In a wooden house on the Southern Continent.

The Star leaned back in his chair, staring blankly at the paper and pen on the table.

Suddenly, a brilliant starry light appeared before him, forming a dazzling door.

The door opened, and Madam Magician stepped out, holding a letter from Franca.

Chapter 857 Inklings of That Individual

"The translation you asked for has arrived." Madam Magician tossed the stack of papers onto the table in front of The Star, then pulled up a chair and sat down.

Mr. Star didn't change his posture, merely extending his hand forward.

The stack of papers floated up, held by an invisible force, and landed in The Star's hand.

The Star began to read through the pages with focused eyes, the soft sound of pages turning filling the quiet room.

After a while, he looked up at The Magician across the desk. "What do you think of their speculation?"

Madam Magician replied with a smile, "From a writer's perspective, there's no better speculation than this. Of course, I actually believe it's likely true. What about you, Mr. Pallez?"

Mr. Star's eyes darkened, and an aged voice emerged from his mouth. "Back then, we only sensed that Alista Tudor was doing something very dangerous in Trier, but we didn't know the specifics.

"If this is true, one question remains: where did Alista Tudor acquire the knowledge to undertake these actions?"

The Magician had long considered this question. "One possibility is that the Uniqueness of the Red Priest, already somewhat tainted, combined with Alista Tudor's forceful switch to a non-adjacent pathway, ascending at the cost of madness, caused Him to sense the situation over there when He became a god, resulting in a wondrous resonance and acquisition of relevant knowledge.

"Another possibility is that it was given to him by you know who through some method."

At this point, The Magician, following her spiritual intuition, asked, "Are you saying that there are inklings of that individual in this matter?"

The aged voice responded from The Star once more, "Hasn't He always been interfering in history, steering it toward His envisioned direction?"

"Of course, this might not be predestined history but rather an experiment of His.

"I never fully understood why He would help Alista Tudor forcibly ascend to Red Priest, stabilizing him to prevent immediate loss of control. Now, I have some idea: "At that time, He was only a King of Angels, making it difficult to influence and arrange events involving true gods. But what if the true god was already in a poor state, acting on instinct most of the time? It would be much easier.

"With the participation of the mad Blood Emperor Alista Tudor, the Primordial Demoness might indeed be drawn into this matter.

"In the end, He likely confirmed His hypothesis, gaining valuable experience, though it led to the unexpected eruption of the War of the Four Emperors."

The Star's voice suddenly reverted to its usual slightly magnetic tone. "How many years passed from Alista Tudor's ascension to Red Priest to the outbreak of the War of the Four Emperors?"

He immediately answered his own question with an aged voice, "Five hundred and thirty-seven years."

"Enough to verify some things." The Star remarked with a magnetic tone.

The Magician nodded slightly and said, "If this is the truth, He must be very aware of the latent issues in the special mirror world.

"Ha, if Mr. Fool were awake now, He would definitely go to the Forsaken Land of the Gods, grab Him by the collar, and demand to know what's hidden in the depths of the special mirror world!"

The Star subconsciously sighed. "He-Mr. Fool-isn't so violent and crude."

Madam Magician chuckled. "Do you know what fantasy means?"

"You have to distinguish between fantasy, truth, lies, the real emotions behind lies, and the deep-seated feelings, tendencies, impulses, and conflicts expressed through the most impossible scenarios imagined in fantasies. Also, what's said as truth, thought as truth, and even actions taken don't necessarily represent the true attitude.

"Once you distinguish these..." She glanced at the papers and pens on the desk, laughing softly. "You'll have a preliminary grasp of the art of poetry."

Mr. Star was silent for a few seconds.

"The knowledge gained this time pertains to the Hunter and Demoness pathways, also arranged by Him?"

"I think it's more likely done by the Celestial Master," The Magician pondered.

"We don't know the current state of the Celestial Master, but judging by Underworld Daoist, even if He couldn't prevent the Moses Ascetic Order's Kmerolo from being corrupted, He could deeply influence the knowledge comprising the corruption. In the Hostel incident, He noticed the Seven of Wands."

Mr. Star nodded.

"Is it His arrangement that the Hunter and Demoness among your Minor Arcana card holders got entangled? Trying to replicate the findings from the Blood Emperor and Primordial Demoness with them?"

Madam Magician chuckled and responded, "It's more than just entanglement. Though I haven't witnessed it myself, my spiritual intuition and writer's sense tell me something must have happened.

"I pity them but can't help being curious about the details..."

Clearing her throat, she shifted the topic back.

"The current development is the inevitable result of their fate entanglement, emotional interactions, personal character, and inner growth, likely unrelated to Him.

"But!"

Madam Magician emphasized the word "but."

"I now suspect that their initial meeting was arranged by Him, and then He let things develop naturally.

“Do you understand? A top-level writer sets the stage, constructs events, and lets the characters express, demonstrate, interact, and conflict on the stage to create the most wonderful story.”

The Star initially wanted to mock the writers but glanced at the paper and pen on the desk and remained silent.

The Magician sighed and then said, “We should be able to decrypt more of that information now.

“What about the payment? What's the payment for the Two of Cups?”

As he took out one Beyonder ingredient after another from a silver box, The Star spoke.

“They have been prepared long ago.

“These are the potion formulas and ingredients from Sequence 9 Sleepless to Sequence 7 Nightmare.”

Madam Magician looked and smiled. “Not giving that gold coin?”

“Although the Two of Cups is our chosen guide for that dream, she can't be given it too easily, even if she's trustworthy and knowledgeable about the environment. I'll give her another task and tell her that besides the Sequence 6 Soul Assurer potion formula and corresponding ingredients, she will receive a special reward.” The Star brushed his slightly messy hair and smiled.

The Magician nodded slightly, then asked another question, “I've always wanted to ask, Mr. Pallez, why do you remain with Mr. Star even after advancing to Sequence 1?”

The Star's eyes darkened again, and the aged voice returned.

“When you get old, you desire stability and don't want to change your accustomed environment.”

The Magician smiled in response. “I want to hear the truth.”

The Star sighed and said in an aged voice, “When you become a Sequence 1 Archangel, you'll understand. You'll feel the terrifying impact of Mr. Fool and the Celestial Worthy's conflict, forcing me to stay within the Church of the Evernight Goddess for some protection.”

Madam Magician nodded, then gathered the potion formulas and ingredients from the table.

After a moment of thought, she asked Mr. Star, “Where did you obtain these ingredients?”

The Star smiled. “Sent an application to the Pope.”

Madam Magician pondered and asked further, “Her Holiness didn't ask why and just gave them to you?”

“Yes, just given to me like that.” Mr. Star smiled calmly.

Madam Magician seemed to have an epiphany.

She then stood up, opened a starry door in the void, and left the wooden house.

...

The night was just receding, and dawn had not yet broken at Lumian's rented apartment.

Jenna lay under the covers, her white shoulders exposed, leaning beside Lumian.

She stretched out her right hand, trying to pry open his eyelids.

“What are you doing?” Lumian asked, both amused and exasperated.

Jenna pouted. “You're not looking at me with your eyes closed. I have to be proactive and help you open them.”

Reluctantly, Lumian opened his eyes, meeting her blue eyes, which sparkled with a hidden darkness.

After a few seconds of staring, Lumian remarked thoughtfully, “Your mental state seems much better than before.”

Jenna withdrew her hand, propping her chin up with a smile as she gazed at Lumian's face and eyes. “Yeah, I felt much better after that talk with Franca.”

Lumian let out a scoff. “Who was it that said the worst-case scenario was Franca coming to kill me, and you'd agree? You knew Franca wouldn't do such a thing.”

“That was just a fantasy, a projection of inner emotions, self-conflict, and self-destructive tendencies. Didn't you catch that?” Jenna retorted.

Lumian chortled. “Of course I did. That's why I said it was best to confront the issues between you early.”

He instinctively reached out to pat Jenna's head but hesitated midway, his hand freezing.

Seeing this, Jenna's gaze dimmed slightly. She pursed her lips and grabbed his hand, forcing it to the back of her head.

Lumian slowly started to pat her, transitioning from awkwardness to naturalness.

Jenna watched him with a smile. “What about yours?”

Lumian fell silent.

Jenna didn't press further, instead asking cheerfully, “Did you and Franca...?”

Lumian sighed. “I try not to talk about my relationship with her in front of you.”

Jenna smiled. “Before my talk with Franca, it would have made me sad, conflicted, and miserable, even if I tried to hide it. Now, though I still have those emotions, I feel more hopeful and even relieved when you mention it. Do you understand this contradictory feeling?”

“Many of my previous choices were also like that.”

Lumian nodded slowly. “You know Franca. Although she might have made up her mind, she still hesitates when it comes to the final step. Lately, I've noticed her being awkward whenever we see each other. Anthony probably noticed too but didn't say anything.”

“I can't be the one to initiate, right?”

“Yes, you should. Go to her now, this morning!” Jenna said without hesitation.

Lumian looked deeply at her. “Are you trying to create stronger bonds to keep her in critical moments?”

Jenna grunted. “I will try to keep her, but I’ll also respect her final decision.”

Chapter 858 Taking the Initiative

Lumian stroked Jenna's hair once more. “Actually, Franca going home might not be a bad thing. If their world doesn't face an apocalypse or dangerous situations like ours, I could help you knock your brother out so you could take him and Franca there together.”

Jenna gazed at Lumian with her clear blue eyes. “What about you?”

Lumian fell silent for a moment before responding, “I’ll see how things go.”

Jenna opened her mouth as if to say something but then closed it again.

After a few seconds, she didn't press for details. Instead, she spoke seriously, “On the one hand, I want to keep her here. On the other hand, I'm afraid that the bigger Franca's hope, the bigger her disappointment will be. If she finally confirms that returning home is impossible, she'll definitely break down. For a Beyonder, that's very dangerous, especially the higher the Sequence.

“She mentioned, or maybe it was Emperor Roselle who said it, that a person is the sum of their social relationships. Anthony also talked to me about the importance of social relationships for a person. I know he saw that I still had some psychological issues and wanted to help me through this. When you sought treatment from Madam Susie and Madam Justice, didn't they also emphasize the importance of rebuilding social relationships? For Franca, the most important relationships are with you and me. The closer we are now, the more it will help stabilize her in the future. Just me alone might not be enough.”

Lumian withdrew his hand, looking at Jenna for a few seconds.

“Since finding out Franca's true origins, you've been thinking a lot, haven't you?”

“Why do you think she might not be able to go back home?”

Jenna's eyes flickered, and she said provocatively, “Franca later told me that Emperor Roselle and she came from the same world and the same country. I was thinking-the Emperor was at least an Angel, maybe even close to becoming a true god, and he couldn't go back.

“Don't you think that means it's either hopeless or impossible?”

Lumian sighed with a smile. “But Franca and the others believe that either the Emperor didn't have time to find a way back before something unexpected happened, or he faked his death and already transmigrated back.”

Jenna shook her head. “It's definitely not the latter. If it were, the Emperor would have destroyed parts of his diary before crossing back.”

“You're quite sharp,” Lumian remarked thoughtfully. “From the Emperor's diary that Franca shared, it's clear he encountered something terrifying in his later years. But what confuses me is that during that period, he never seemed to consider going back. Also, he valued his eldest daughter highly, and Queen Mystic Bernadette is still active in our world. These are the reasons I think Franca's hopes are slim. They probably have similar thoughts but just don't want to believe it.”

Lumian's voice suddenly grew somber. “People need hope to live...”

Jenna chuckled, tracing circles on Lumian's bare chest. “You're doing much better too, being able to say something like that.”

Before Lumian could respond, she lifted her head and looked at him. “Go see Franca this morning, okay?”

“Is this something I can do alone?” Lumian smiled. “If she doesn't want to, I can't force her, can I?”

Jenna couldn't help but laugh. “She's inclined to agree deep down. She's just feeling a bit awkward after the initial emotions have calmed. Especially since she has to face you, her friend's brother who knows her true state.”

“You know Franca,” Lumian teased. “When she's impulsive, she'll try anything, but when she calms down, she might turn into an ostrich.”

“Take the initiative. Maybe she's just waiting for you to make the first move,” Jenna suggested, feeling a mix of jealousy and anticipation.

Lumian spread his hands. “How do I take the initiative? I've never been the one to make the first move in such matters. I can't just go up to Franca and say I'm here to fulfill our agreement, right?”

Jenna's eyes sparkled as she thought for a moment.

“Show your guilt in front of her, help her out as much as you can, and then ask if she needs a massage for her head, shoulders, and back. If she doesn't object and there's physical contact, you can gradually... gradually...” Jenna trailed off, quickly concluding, “Got it?”

“You seem quite experienced,” Lumian said, amused.

Jenna reminisced. “When I was a Showy Diva, I saw some things. Also, the dancers under Franca liked to read novels about love and interactions between men and women. A single book could be passed around by dozens to hundreds of people. Thanks to Emperor Roselle and some remaining compulsory education, some of them could understand simple stories, and those who couldn't would listen to others. It was one of the few bright spots in their lives.

“I read a few as well and learned how those playboys and Dandyists behaved.”

Lumian laughed, moving closer to Jenna and placing his hands on her smooth, bare shoulders.

“Like this?”

“Yes.” Jenna rolled her eyes. “Now you think of giving me a massage? I’m nearly falling apart because of you. You start reluctantly and then...”

As Jenna teased him, her words caught in her throat.

Lumian leaned in with a teasing smile. “It’s six in the morning...”

Jenna swiftly pulled the covers over herself and nimbly jumped out of bed like a deer.

Wrapped in the blanket, she looked at Lumian and laughed softly.

“Go find Franca now and use your Conspirer skills.”

Before Lumian could respond, Jenna grabbed her Traveler’s Bag and disappeared into the shadows of the room.

Lumian stood still for a moment, sighing. “Couldn’t you at least leave the blanket?”

After a while, the blanket was thrown from the shadows, landing on Lumian.

Lumian shook his head with a smile, mimicking Franca’s voice in his mind.

Ascetic, activate!

...

Inside Apartment 702 at 9 Rue Orosai.

Franca opened the door and saw Lumian. She instantly felt uncomfortable and wished she could slam the door in his face.

As she turned to walk to the armchair, she asked, “Jenna didn’t come with you?”

“She went back to rest,” Lumian said thoughtfully.

Franca suddenly understood, her expression turning complicated.

She stood by the armchair, momentarily forgetting to sit down.

Lumian glanced at her and asked intentionally, “Did you digest more of your Affliction potion?”

“Dammit!” Franca gritted her teeth, conjuring several crystalline ice spikes and hurling them at Lumian.

Lumian dodged easily and moved to the sofa area, looking back at the fuming Franca.

See, now we can forget the awkwardness and talk properly.

But Franca’s reaction was a bit too strong. We need to make that agreement a reality soon, or she might get tangled up again...

Lumian put on a placating smile and said to Franca, “It’s a habitual taunt. You know how Hunters are.”

Franca snorted and sat in the recliner.

Today, she wore a fitted white shirt with ruffled cuffs and a lace flower at the neck, paired with cream-colored trousers and her usual fluffy slippers.

Following Miss Celia Bello's guidance, Lumian feigned guilt and asked, "How's your Affliction potion digestion going?"

Franca puffed up her cheeks. "About a third."

"Hmm, you've got the self-inflicted pain down, but you're still lacking in causing pain to others," Lumian said cautiously.

Then, he proactively poured her a glass of water and asked with a smile, "Want a shoulder and leg massage? You must be tired after running around for clues on Harrison these days."

"Massage?" Franca was stunned, then wary, eyeing Lumian suspiciously.

After a few moments, she took the glass of water and drank. "No need."

Eh... Great theorist of male-female interaction, master of theory Miss Celia Bello, your method doesn't work... I have to rely on my own improvisation as a Conspirer... Lumian quickly sat down on the single sofa.

He opened his mouth as if to say something, then closed it, taking out the Black Tear headpiece from his Traveler's Bag.

Franca realized Lumian was checking if the Demoness of Black was observing through the mirror.

Well, perfect timing... Franca was about to mention the potion formula and ingredients for Amandina when she saw Lumian quickly put away the Black Tear and give her a look.

Wh- The Demoness of Black is watching... Franca swallowed her words.

The next second, she saw Lumian get up, walk over to her, and squeeze into the armchair with a smile.

Hey... Hey, hey! Franca was stunned.

Her first reaction was to teach this space-invader a lesson, but then she realized Lumian's purpose.

In the Demoness of Black's eyes, we're lovers. If we don't show any intimacy, it'll be suspicious...

Okay, let's put on a show...

Franca felt Lumian's arm wrap around her waist.

Her body stiffened before she forced herself to relax.

Then, Lumian turned her around, and she found herself looking into his deep blue eyes and chiseled face.

"I'm here to fulfill my promise," Lumian said, giving her another look.

He chuckled softly and slowly lowered his head.

Franca's eyes widened.

Hey! Are you doing it for real?

She instinctively wanted to break free but remembered the Demoness of Black was watching and Lumian's hint to cooperate.

You little brat, are you taking advantage of me? Franca thought angrily. Then she remembered the previous agreement and sighed inwardly. Fine, it was bound to happen anyway...

Her long eyelashes fluttered, and her eyes slowly closed as her body softened.

Then, she felt Lumian's lips, warm and firm, breaking through her defenses.

In a daze, Franca thought, No, no! The Demoness of Black is still watching! How shameful!

Almost simultaneously, she heard Lumian's husky voice in her ear. "Let's go to the bedroom."

You're quite considerate... Once we're in the bedroom, covered by the blanket, the Demoness of Black can't see... It'll also solidify our relationship... Franca vaguely nodded, feeling herself lifted into the air.

...

In the warm and intimate bedroom.

With a lingering blush on her cheeks, Franca turned to Lumian and said, "I just remembered something I need to tell you..."

She asked with her eyes if the Demoness of Black was still watching.

Lumian chuckled. "The Demoness of Black left a while ago."

Franca was stunned for a moment, her foggy mind realizing something was off.

"You didn't check... How do you know?"

Lumian looked sincere. "The Demoness of Black didn't come today."

"...?" Franca was speechless.

She quickly understood, and in a fit of embarrassment and anger, she pounced on Lumian, hitting him.

"You tricked me! You tricked me!"

"..."

"You can't use something like this to deceive teammates, understand?"

"I understand."

"This makes it hard for me to trust your hints in the future. What if next time I think you're lying, but the Demoness of Black really shows up?"

"I'm sorry."

"Alright, I'll trust you one more time, but don't let it happen again! Don't let it happen again!"

"..."

Chapter 859 "Ingenious" Plan

After Franca vented her anger and lay back down, Lumian finally asked, "What were you saying earlier?"

Franca glanced at the curtained bedroom window, making it clear: Check if the Demoness of Black is watching!

Lumian replied casually, "We're inside a Bottle of Fiction."

"..." Franca blinked. "When did that happen?"

"When I closed the door. I didn't want to disturb the neighbors," Lumian answered earnestly.

"..." Franca felt another surge of anger. She snapped, "You still need to check! What if the Demoness of Black can penetrate the Bottle of Fiction without you noticing?"

"Yes, yes." Lumian admitted his fault and took out the Black Tear headpiece from his Traveler's Bag, quickly sensing for a few seconds before putting it back.

Franca finally relaxed and nodded in satisfaction. "The thing is, Mr. Star gave me another task. He said, in addition to the Affliction potion formula and the materials, there will be a special reward."

"What task?" Lumian asked cooperatively.

Franca looked puzzled and said, "To get some water from the Samaritan Woman's Spring."

Lumian's first reaction was to consider the purpose of the task, but he quickly remembered that Franca had said Mr. Star was likely a high-ranking Red Glove from the Church of Evernight, and the Underworld Daoist who could grant others Beyonder powers from the Darkness pathway.

"It's understandable that Mr. Star, or rather the Church of Evernight behind him, needs water from the Samaritan Woman's Spring. But this task is too simple for us right now. And yet he wants to give you a special reward. Doesn't that seem a bit strange?" Lumian pondered aloud.

Franca thought for a moment and spoke, "I agree. It feels like he designed this task just to give me the special reward. It doesn't make sense. We've only met once."

Compared to other Demonesses in the Demoness Sect, one of Franca's greatest strengths was not assuming that every man she met would be infatuated with her or want to please her.

Lumian considered for a few seconds and said, "Maybe that special reward will bring a lot of trouble. It also represents something Mr. Star truly wants you to do."

Franca nodded in understanding. "Free rewards are the most expensive. What appears 'free' often comes with hidden costs."

Understanding this, she felt less worried.

She thought the potential problems with the special reward, even if they brought significant trouble, should be something she and her companions could handle.

Otherwise, the Major Arcana card holders wouldn't make such a choice.

She then turned to Lumian and asked, "How's your collection of the supplementary ingredients going?"

This should have been a daily concern, but hadn't she been feeling uncomfortable every time she saw Lumian these past few days?

Lumian reflected for a moment before answering, "I found a large battlefield from the war a few years ago and got a bag of blood-stained soil."

"I thought you'd go to the camp where Anthony and his comrades were attacked," Franca teased.

Lumian responded with amusement, "Am I that much of a devil? Besides, that's not a large battlefield and might be polluted by an evil god's worship."

Franca concurred succinctly, "What about the others?"

"I confirmed that there's active lava at the bottom of the volcano on Saint Tick Island, but it's unnecessary to collect it now. It will solidify quickly in the Traveler's Bag. I'll teleport it when it's needed." Lumian had been using his teleportation ability to travel around the world these days. "I plan to make the powder of plants and trees polluted by the Stone of Catastrophe myself."

As for acorns, that was too simple.

"Make it yourself?" Franca was surprised. "Is that possible?"

"It should be theoretically feasible. Certain parts of a Beyonder creature can replace such supplementary ingredients. And I have the Sword of Courage. I can place it and its companions on a pile of plants and trees, monitoring and replacing consumables. In about a few days, I should be able to create polluted plants and trees. Of course, this pollution will be more complex and severe than simple Stone of Catastrophe pollution. I'll consult Madam Magician in advance to see if the amount should be reduced."

"Indeed," Franca's eyes brightened, then dimmed slightly. "But the Plague Mother Serpent bile and Silver Hunter's fragments for the supplementary ingredients of the Demoness of Despair can't be made by the Black Tear."

"No rush. Jenna hasn't fully digested the Pleasure potion yet. It will take a few more days or even a week or two to become a Demoness of Affliction." Lumian thought and said, "I have collected the blood of seven different plague victims."

Although there was no widespread plague at the moment, many places on the Northern and Southern Continents had sporadic outbreaks. They were either quickly contained or limited to small, isolated areas without spreading.

With the Magic Mirror Divination of the two Demonesses, Lumian pinpointed eight or nine similar locations, then teleported there with Lugano.

If the authorities had already noticed the outbreak and were working to control it, he would leave after collecting the blood of the plague victims. If the plague was still quietly spreading, he would attempt to heal it with Lugano's help. If it couldn't be solved, he would find a way to inform the authorities.

After these few days of hard work, Lumian had basically achieved his goals.

Franca breathed a sigh of relief, stating, "Remember to use the Black Tear to deliver the potion formula and all the materials Mr. Star gave to Amandina."

"Sigh... When will I completely digest the Affliction potion?"

Although her current digestion progress could be considered very fast, she still felt it wasn't enough. The person next to her was just one step away from the final domestication step, ready to hold the ceremony and become a Sequence 4 demigod.

Lumian turned his head to Franca and laughed.

"I just told you, you're still lacking in the part about causing others pain. And the target should be of high Sequence, otherwise, it has to be replaced with numbers."

Franca didn't link it to her own pain this time and started thinking seriously.

Causing others pain, high Sequence... Causing others pain, high Sequence...

Muttering to herself, Franca suddenly turned her head, her eyes shining brightly at Lumian.

Lumian's smile faded as he raised an eyebrow and asked, "Do you have a bold idea?"

Franca chuckled. "You have a false Angel rank. If I can make you feel pain, wouldn't the digestion speed be incredibly fast?"

"But it has to be real pain." Lumian didn't dismiss Franca's suggestion outright.

"For example, castration?" Franca glanced at the blanket with a growing smile.

Lumian fell silent for a moment before responding, "We can try."

"Wait, you're actually agreeing?" Franca was startled. She had only been joking with the suggestion of "castration."

"If it can really help you quickly digest the Affliction potion." Lumian shrugged. "It can grow back anyway."

"Forget it, that's too painful. It would leave you with serious psychological trauma and issues." Franca said, ruffling her tousled hair.

Suddenly, her eyes lit up. "I have a better plan. An ingenious plan!"

Lumian felt uneasy, sensing that Franca's new plan might be even harder to endure than "castration."

Franca's smile turned wicked.

“I thought of that Julie from the castration, and her digestion method. She would seize the moment when the target was about to reach ultimate satisfaction, then cut it off, plunging them from extreme pleasure into extreme pain.

“I can be gentler, not cutting it off, but preventing you from reaching ultimate satisfaction. Let you yearn and suffer without fulfillment, which is also a kind of intense pain...”

Lumian raised an eyebrow, unable to speak.

Franca's smile grew more sinister, having found a prank to pull.

“For this, I need to bind you with the Demoness's spider silk, prepare more tools, and to enhance the stimulation, you need to use your Ascetic abilities to refrain from burning the silk...

“Although it won't compare to Julie's method, your false Angel rank should help me digest it quickly.”

Saying this, Franca clicked her tongue. “I never thought I'd do something like this, and be the one doing the tormenting.”

In the past, Lumian might have lacked a concrete concept of this pain, but after experiencing the two Demonesses, he could now imagine how unbearable that torment would be.

“This is the hell of pain.” Lumian couldn't help but sigh.

“That's the Demoness, bringing pleasure and pain,” Franca said with a smile.

Lumian jumped out of bed and picked up his clothes.

“Eh?” Franca looked puzzled.

Lumian responded in a deep voice, “We're going to the Samaritan Woman's Spring now.”

Franca was first stunned, then burst into laughter, rolling on the bed.

She had regained her normal control over her desires after passing the Pleasure stage, so even after being with Lumian, tasting long-lost pleasure, and achieving unprecedented satisfaction, she still felt weird because it was someone she knew well, who also knew her original gender. But now, she suddenly found it amusing and interesting, making her feel much less uncomfortable.

“Give it a try, give it a try.” She lay on the bed, her eyes bright as she continued with her prank.

Lumian sighed again.

“We'll talk after we get the water from the Samaritan Woman's Spring.”

...

Beside the Samaritan Woman's Spring, shrouded in gray-white fog.

Since Lumian didn't approach and trigger any anomalies, Franca patiently waited for a while and then used the golden vial given by Mr. Star to collect half a vial of water from the Samaritan Woman's Spring.

They didn't bring Jenna, fearing that her encounter with Krismona's shadow might lead to uncontrollable changes. Lumian planned to bring Jenna here after becoming an Iron-blooded Knight with a certain level of self-protection.

The high-ranking Major Arcana card holders seemed to dislike entering the underground or underground catacombs. But Lumian, marked and branded, felt that even as a demigod, he should still be able to enter the area of the Samaritan Woman's Spring.

Not long after, Franca put away the golden vial, and the two walked shoulder to shoulder towards the edge of the gray fog.

As they approached the edge of the fog on the slope, Lumian and Franca simultaneously noticed a blurry figure outside the fog slowly approaching.

Franca first darted to the side, then stared intently for two seconds.

Her expression suddenly became excited, and she said in a hushed voice to Lumian, "Harrison!"

The visitor from Resurrection Island, Harrison!

They had failed to converge with him last time, and now they coincidentally ran into him!

Chapter 860 The True Meaning of Those Words

When Franca uttered the name, Lumian also saw the approximate outline of the figure outside: Dressed in a black robe, with light hair, pale skin, and dark brown eyes, he didn't look like an Intisian.

Although Lumian had never seen Harrison in person, he had seen the image Franca had depicted using dream divination and a corresponding ritual, so it wasn't hard to identify the person outside the gray fog.

Seeing Franca's excitement, Lumian raised his right hand and gestured downward, signaling his companion to control her emotions.

Franca, an experienced Beyonder in combat, quickly composed herself and nodded at Lumian.

She understood Lumian's intention not to act rashly but to observe and see what Harrison intended to do. By understanding his actions, they could determine his Sequence, ability characteristics, and primary intentions.

This way, whatever response they made afterward would be more composed.

Franca shrank further to the side of the slope, using the gray fog as cover, and observed Harrison, who was holding a white candle.

Meanwhile, she couldn't help but muse, The Law of Beyonder Characteristics Convergence really works!

We gave up too soon after just one try. It was our fault for not respecting science -no, mysticism. If we had tried a few more times, wouldn't he have come?

Franca felt at ease, knowing that only Beyonders like Lumian, marked by Mr. Fool, could enter the area around the Samaritan Woman's Spring, while others could only see a gray-white fog and found it difficult to pass through.

She had tried earlier and found she couldn't penetrate the fog on her own, prompting Lumian to mock her, saying, "Even Madame Hela couldn't do it. Where did you get the confidence that you could?" This only strengthened her resolve to have Lumian help her digest the Affliction potion.

Lumian stood beside Franca, observing every move of the figure outside while recalling his encounters with Beyonders of the Death, Darkness, and Warrior pathways, hoping to quickly formulate the most effective strategy against Harrison based on their combat characteristics and abilities.

Holding the white candle, Harrison took a few steps outside the gray fog, glanced around, and then continued forward.

He walked into the gray fog as if passing through a curtain of water!

He can pass through the gray fog barrier?

How?

Franca's sky-blue eyes widened in shock, disbelief, and reluctance.

Lumian was equally surprised.

But he hadn't ruled out the possibility that Harrison could break through the fog barrier and enter the area around the Samaritan Woman's Spring. He just hadn't expected it to be so easy for him.

Based on Harrison's constant search for scenes closely related to death, darkness, and dusk, and his drifting as a corpse on the River Styx in Underworld Daoist and company's world, Lumian reasonably suspected that he might have a way or an item to penetrate the fog barrier.

Lumian had expected to see Harrison perform a strange ritual or take out an item with an otherworldly style. Instead, like himself, Harrison had simply walked into the area around the Samaritan Woman's Spring, covered by gray fog!

Seeing that the fog no longer served as a barrier, leaving only the fog to interfere with their vision, Lumian made a decisive move and extinguished the white candle in his hand.

As he expected, the surrounding darkness silently surged in, activating the Underworld Daoist's mark on his right palm without corroding his body.

He had kept the candle lit to maintain this state, partly because it couldn't last long in the current situation without risking turning into a catacombs administrator and partly to mislead any potential enemies, setting a trap.

As Lumian extinguished the candle, Franca quickly took action.

Unable to borrow the Black Tear from Lumian, she directly took out an Ice Amulet and a mirror from her Traveler's Bag.

With a flash of crystalline cold light, Franca, illuminated by the candle's yellowish flame, entered the mirror in her hand.

As her figure disappeared, the unheld mirror fell to the ground, only to be accurately caught by Lumian.

Holding the mirror, Lumian immediately activated the contract mark, transforming into a shadow creature and blending completely into the darkness enveloped by the gray fog.

Before Harrison could get closer, they had completed their concealment.

In the void behind the mirror, Franca, holding the burning white candle, quickly surveyed her surroundings.

She found that the area was filled with the same gray-white fog as outside, permeating every corner.

The illusory dark tunnels, like spider webs, were excluded by the fog, appearing blurry and hard to see.

Sure enough... Franca wasn't surprised by this situation.

Lumian had already told her that this area was isolated from the spirit world, making spirit world traversal unusable here.

With even the spirit world being isolated, the mirror world would certainly be no exception!

Because the mirror had been brought into the fog-covered area, Franca could enter the mirrored region to hide but couldn't traverse to any mirror outside the underground catacombs-this was the principle that allowed the Traveler's Bag to continue being used.

Franca couldn't even reach the mirrors on Lumian's person, let alone those outside the catacombs!

Of course, Franca hadn't intended to use the mirror world for anything other than hiding, preventing the yellowish glow of the white candle from being seen by Harrison.

During their previous ambush on Harrison, she hadn't done this because the area she could monitor through the mirror was too small, and all senses, including vision, would be severely weakened.

Franca approached the glass mirror and found that Lumian had thoughtfully turned it towards Harrison, allowing her to see their target.

Seeing Harrison, illuminated by the yellowish glow of the white candle, slowly moving down the slope, Franca grew even more puzzled.

How did he get through the fog barrier?

Could he also bear Mr. Fool's mark?

But Madam Judgment and the other Major Arcana card holders didn't know!

He hadn't used an item or performed a ritual earlier, relying on his own ability?

But whether it was the Apprentice pathway's mastery of seals or the Marauder pathway's exploitation of loopholes, they are all within Mr. Fool's domain. It doesn't make sense to bypass the fog barrier...

Mr. Fool's mark...

At this thought, Franca's heart skipped a beat, and a title flashed in her mind: The Celestial Worthy of Heaven and Earth for Blessings!

Harrison bears the mark of the Celestial Worthy, allowing him to penetrate the fog barrier? Franca made this startling and shocking guess.

She found it quite reasonable.

Based on the current information, it seemed that the Celestial Worthy was the culprit behind their transmigration into this world, and Resurrection Island was Mount Penglai, a node where the two worlds intersected or a transmigration point. If this was true, it was natural for Harrison, from Resurrection Island or Mount Penglai, to have a close relationship with the Celestial Worthy.

They had been misled by Harrison's pursuit of death, darkness, and dusk-related scenes and his mastery of the depths of death, overlooking this point!

Perhaps, as Jenna had speculated, Harrison's deep research into death didn't necessarily mean he was a Beyonder of that pathway!

This could better explain why they couldn't converge with him last time. Why had they coincidentally encountered him this time?

As a shadow creature, Lumian also thought of the Celestial Worthy, the great being competing with Mr. Fool for the apex powers of the Seer, Apprentice, and Marauder pathways.

He watched Harrison's slow advance and thought of more things.

Previously, Harrison seemingly met the Mirror Person, Jasmine, leading us to speculate that he was also involved in Project Vortex...

Now it's almost certain. Madam Magician mentioned encountering the Celestial Worthy's followers while dealing with Overseer Perle, who was one of the initiators of Project Vortex...

This background can explain why an outsider like Harrison can frequently appear in Underground Trier without being found by the Purifiers...

Lumian didn't rush to act. He was unsure of Harrison's level and wanted to see what Harrison intended to do by repeatedly coming to the Samaritan Woman's Spring. This might reveal a lot of important information.

As he followed Harrison's movements, Lumian suddenly understood why the Underworld Daoist had warned Amandina to "beware of Penglai."

He had previously thought that the reappearance of Mount Penglai and the bodies floating on the river had alerted the Underworld Daoist. But given his dire state, closer to a wraith, he couldn't discern Amandina's exact location and situation, so he had instinctively issued a warning.

Now it seemed the message was to tell Amandina that someone from Penglai had been to the Samaritan Woman's Spring and to be cautious!

Just as Lumian sighed internally at their earlier oversight, Harrison suddenly turned his head and looked towards their hiding spot.

Almost simultaneously, the grand, layered voice of Termiboros echoed in his ear:

"Protect your Traveler's Bag."

Uh... Lumian didn't have time to discern the purpose behind Termiboros' suggestion. He quickly reached for his waist and grabbed the Traveler's Bag.

The next moment, Harrison raised his right hand.

Lumian felt the Traveler's Bag being tugged by an invisible force, but he held it tightly.

Marauder? Not a power of the Death pathway? A special boon from the Celestial Worthy? Puzzled, Lumian immediately shifted his position using the shadows.

Behind Harrison, darkness surged, outlining Lumian's form.