

Inevitability 861

Chapter 861 Marauder?

As soon as Lumian exited his shadow creature state, he let out a grunt.

Two beams of white light shot from his nostrils, flying towards Harrison, who had no time to dodge.

Almost simultaneously, Lumian sensed a dense aura of death emanating from Harrison. His spirit abruptly contracted, transforming into a tiny, golden millet-like particle, hiding in the deepest void of his body, unreachable.

The two beams of white light hit Harrison's body, but it was like striking a piece of decayed wood or a lifeless corpse, producing no effect.

Harrison turned swiftly towards Lumian, and his contracted spirit expanded instantly, filling his body once more.

With this change, a root wrapped in white cloth swiftly formed in Harrison's right palm.

He swung this semi-illusory root at Lumian.

The white cloth strips on the root fluttered gently, stirring up cries that were either mournful or wailing.

They drilled into Lumian's ears, causing him to falter just as he was about to change his position, unable to dodge in time.

Smack!

The root wrapped in white cloth struck Lumian's body.

His skin quickly turned pale, and a sense of death deepened rapidly.

Crack!

Lumian's body cracked like a mirror, shattering into dull fragments that fell to the ground.

Immediately after, he reappeared at the side of the slope, shaking the mirror that held Franca.

Franca understood his intention, immediately exiting the mirror with the burning white candle and landing not far from him.

Lumian, with his other hand, reached into the Traveler's Bag, took out the Black Tear accessory, and tossed it to Franca.

Here, there was no worry about the mystical plague attached to the Black Tear spreading, and the Demoness of Affliction could withstand the corresponding mystical pathogens for longer!

Lumian even suspected that, due to the special nature of the Samaritan Woman's Spring, the mystical pathogens created by the Black Tear would only survive for a limited time before perishing.

As for what to do during that time, Lumian had already considered it-after throwing out the Black Tear accessory, he quickly reached into the Traveler's Bag again, grasping the hilt of the Sword of Courage.

He intended to have the sword share half the damage and effects with him!

Lumian wasn't overly concerned about the excess courage issue:

With Franca around, she would guide and correct the Warrior's choices in a more subtle way that the Warrior would accept, like occupying a better position, making the Warrior throw the sword to her for brief use, and then not catching it when it was thrown back, preventing both from being affected by the courage.

As Franca put it, with an external brain, they could be bolder in using the Sword of Courage.

Of course, this could only effectively reduce the influence of courage, not completely avoid it.

Harrison didn't just stand by and watch Lumian and Franca prepare. He threw the root wrapped in white cloth towards them.

The root rapidly became illusory in midair, disintegrating into intertwined pale and greenish light, merging into the darkness.

Immediately, several translucent, eerie pale-white hands emerged from the ground beneath Lumian and Franca, cold and sinister, grasping at their ankles and calves.

These seemed to induce some kind of paralysis.

At the same time, Harrison's mouth moved, chanting an incantation in a strange language.

With a whoosh, blazing-white flames ignited beside Lumian's feet, bringing high temperatures to counter the chill, cold, and paralysis created by the pale-white hands.

Franca, with the Black Tear accessory wrapped around her wrist, silently let the eerie, quiet black flames of the Demoness flow like water, engulfing the transparent hands trying to affect her, setting them ablaze.

Lumian finally grasped the Sword of Courage, instantly becoming fearless.

He drew the iron-black straight sword and slashed forward.

A huge fireball, blazing white with a hint of blue, formed and shot straight at Harrison, whose black hair was only a thin layer.

Harrison, seeing this, did not move. He quickly finished the last two sentences of the incantation and pointed his right hand towards the Samaritan Woman's Spring.

Franca, just breaking free from the pale-white hands, finally deciphered what the enemy was chanting.

One sentence was "Steal the secrets of heaven," and the other was unclear at the beginning, ending with "Swift as a decree, be driven."

Below, at the Samaritan Woman's Spring, the pale-white water began to bubble, reflecting a figure of a woman, serene as the night but rotting and oozing pus.

The figure silently gazed at the outside world without any movement.

But in front of Harrison, a similar yet more illusory and flickering figure appeared.

As Lumian's fireball-cleaved out from the Sword of Courage-approached this figure, it gradually dimmed, quickly becoming illusory, and mostly vanished.

The remaining bit exploded on the spot, forcing Harrison back two steps.

Seeing this, Lumian didn't hesitate to activate the residual aura of the Blood Emperor in his right palm.

Want to compete?

Fine!

Let's see who can exert more influence on the Samaritan Woman's Spring!

Nothing to fear!

Splash!

The pale-white water retreated into the dark, bottomless spring, and a sense of wild frenzy instantly descended.

At that moment, whether it was Harrison, Lumian, or Franca, they all felt a shock to their minds and bodies, wanting to submit, temporarily losing their ability to think, their minds blank.

The cold, rotting sensation in Lumian's right palm emerged, suppressing the residual aura of the Blood Emperor.

The frenzied, violent feeling from the spring quickly receded.

Lumian was the first to regain his thoughts. He raised the iron-black Sword of Courage and rushed to Harrison, slashing at his head.

Bang!

Amidst the sound of an explosion and scattered flames, Harrison's body reverted to a sinister, deathly paper figurine.

The paper figurine lightly adhered to the blade of the Sword of Courage, torn to pieces by the violent shockwaves and set ablaze by the white-blue flames.

Multiple similar paper figurines appeared around Lumian, all exuding a sinister, pale, deathly aura, with facial features painted in a horrifying and maliciously humorous manner.

The next second, black flames flew from Franca, landing on these paper figurines, burning the spirituality and mysticism that sustained them.

In the blink of an eye, these sinister paper figurines fell in a series of wailing cries, turning to ashes.

"Harrison has fled!" Franca judged quickly after a glance.

Lumian, holding the Sword of Courage, sprinted up the slope, chasing to the edge of the gray fog.

The fog swayed gently, seemingly indicating that the enemy had just escaped.

Lumian was about to pursue when Franca's voice reached his ears, "Let's switch Sealed Artifacts; mine is almost at its limit."

Lumian, undeterred by the Black Tear's negative effects, immediately threw the Sword of Courage over.

As soon as the iron-black straight sword left his hand, rationality and clarity reclaimed his mind:

Almost forgot that Franca can't leave the gray fog...

If I go out alone, even if I catch up with Harrison, without an external brain and a pre-planned strategy, the Sword of Courage would be my biggest problem...

Franca, though eager to catch Harrison, remained rational enough to quickly analyze the situation and make an accurate judgment...

Once Lumian caught the Black Tear, he immediately placed it back in its isolated space within the Traveler's Bag, then, with Franca's help, stored the Sword of Courage as well.

He then pulled Franca through the gray fog, returning to the slope leading to the ancient burial chamber.

As Lumian used his Hunter tracking abilities to search for Harrison, Franca employed divination methods for clues.

But after leaving the large burial chamber housing the Samaritan Woman's Spring, the visitor from Resurrection Island completely disappeared and managed to thwart their divination.

They stopped at the Krismona Night Pillar on the third level, exchanging glances.

Franca's lake-blue eyes revealed undisguised disappointment and regret. She sighed. "If I had known, I would have called Jenna to ambush him outside the chamber."

Lumian comforted Franca, "Given Harrison's displayed strength, we should be glad Jenna wasn't outside alone. She could have been discovered, attacked, and might not have lasted until we left the Samaritan Woman's Spring."

"That's true..." Franca sighed deeply.

Holding the white candle, she glanced around and translated the two lines of incantation for Lumian.

As Lumian lit a new candle, he pondered aloud, "Steal the secrets of heaven... He tried to steal my Traveler's Bag... Did he sense valuable items and thus saw through my concealment?"

"It seems Harrison is more like a Beyonder of the Marauder pathway, yet he clearly uses powers of the Death pathway, and quite powerful ones at that.

"The Marauders we've encountered before, even at Sequence 5 Dream Stealer, didn't show such capabilities, and Harrison obviously lacks godhood... A boost from the Celestial Worthy's mark?"

Franca thoughtfully said, "After the Demoness of Black told me the Primordial One can modify the abilities of different Sequences in the Demoness pathway to some extent, I wrote to Madam Judgment about it. She said it's not only true gods who can do such things; certain Kings of Angels can too. Amon, for instance, once altered the mystical knowledge and some abilities acquired in different Sequences of the Marauder pathway.

“Is Harrison exhibiting the original, full version?”

“That might be a reason, but I think some of his actions just now have surpassed Sequence 5. Even a full version Dream Stealer shouldn't manage that... The Resurrection Island's method of utilizing power and its manifestation differ significantly from the paths of the divine?” Lumian pondered aloud.

Chapter 862 Help

Holding the white candle, Franca thought for a while but couldn't figure out the situation. She walked towards the area outside the Krismona Night Pillar, saying solemnly, “No matter if it's because Resurrection Island has a special way of utilizing and manifesting power, or if Harrison is a Beyonder of the Marauder pathway, using the secrets of heaven to wield the Death pathway's power, or if he belongs to the Death pathway and uses the Celestial Worthy's mark or boons to display stealing abilities, we can't underestimate him. We need to report this immediately.”

Lumian walked beside Franca, nodding. “If I don't use Sealed Artifacts, I'm not confident I can beat him. At the very least, I'm not sure I can capture or kill him, and he might also possess a Grade 1 Sealed Artifact.”

“Fortunately, we encountered him today. If it were another time, when I was alone, a chance meeting would be much more dangerous.” Franca sighed and changed the subject, “Does this mean the followers of the Celestial Worthy are truly involved in Project Vortex? What benefit could they gain?”

“The descent of an evil god?” Lumian speculated based on his knowledge and intelligence. “Or bringing about the apocalypse earlier?”

Franca's expression flickered in the dim candlelight, and she could only let out a long sigh.

Lumian moved forward, kicking away a silent, bony hand that reached out.

He exclaimed with excitement, “This is undoubtedly a very big vortex. We can't just rely on the Major Arcana card holders for help. We need to quickly improve our own strength to avoid being swept up and rendered powerless.”

“Exactly,” Franca agreed.

Lumian continued to look straight ahead, his voice unwavering, “You need to digest the Affliction potion as soon as possible, and I need to quickly bring Ludwig fully into the team.”

Franca was taken aback and couldn't help but glance at Lumian's profile.

She hesitated for a moment, then asked carefully, “Are you saying this out of guilt? There's no need; we can think of other ways.”

“Guilt is part of it, but it's not the main reason.” Lumian continued forward without much change in expression.

Franca frowned slightly, looking at Lumian, and raised a question she had before meeting Harrison, “Why did you suddenly come to find me today and be so proactive? I thought I would have to endure our awkward relationship until I couldn't take it anymore and had to seek you out.”

Lumian chuckled.”If I told you Jenna asked me to find you, would you believe it?”

Franca suddenly felt a bit stifled, not even sure why she felt this way or if it was for multiple reasons.

She muttered, “She asked, and you just came?”

Lumian smiled as if talking about something ordinary. “If I absolutely don't want to do something-sans the influence of mystical powers-there's only one person in this world who can force me to do it.”

Franca knew who Lumian was referring to and understood what he meant.

The blockage in her heart eased a lot, but recalling certain things made her expression quite complicated. There was anger, bitterness, and a bit of joy.

She clenched her right fist, the one not holding the white candle, and punched Lumian's shoulder with considerable force, “You brat, you gave it away!”

Lumian took the punch stoically, as if he had anticipated it.

They walked in silence for a while. Franca, having adjusted her mood, curiously asked, “Actually, I wanted to ask earlier. Jenna had already found you and expressed her thoughts, and you said the best response was to delay until you became an Iron-blooded Knight. But in that situation, how could you delay? There was no way to delay anymore!”

Lumian glanced at Franca. “Find Anthony. Did you forget we have a Psychiatrist in our team?”

Franca chuckled awkwardly. “How can you discuss such matters with a Psychiatrist teammate you meet every day? It's too awkward! Jenna and I definitely can't talk to Anthony about this.”

Lumian ignored Franca's excuse and continued, “With the help of a Psychiatrist, or even a Hypnotist's abilities, the issue could be delayed for a while. But fundamentally, this is an emotional problem, not a psychological or mental issue.

Using a Psychiatrist can delay it, but it can't be postponed forever. It will eventually erupt, so it's better to resolve it sooner.”

Franca tersely responded.

After a few more steps, she looked at the darkness ahead and said in a calm but slightly joyful tone, “Do you know why I only punched you once?”

“No,” Lumian replied frankly.

Franca smiled, feeling quite gratified.

“Previously, you always gave me a feeling that goals, power, and close relationships were important, but you didn't care much about yourself, as if you didn't matter.

“This time, I originally thought you made all these decisions in that same mindset, but when you said you weren't entirely passive and had your own thoughts, even if just a bit, I was very happy.”

Lumian did not respond but did not refute her either.

...

In Trier, Quartier de la Maison d'Opéra, in an underground room.

Anthony met with the Knight of Swords.

The Minor Arcana card holder still wore a white shirt and black vest, his brown hair slightly disheveled, and his eyes looked quite repressed.

At this moment, the Knight of Swords sat at a long table, with several playing cards covering different chairs.

After glancing at what seemed like the aftermath of a card game, Anthony, who had met the Knight of Swords in the Raklev region of the Southern Continent, politely greeted him.

The Knight of Swords responded briefly. After Anthony found a chair without cards in front of it and sat down, he spoke in a low voice, “I need your help with two things. One is to provide psychological treatment for a while to help stabilize my mental state.”

“No problem.” Anthony nodded gently.

He knew that Madam Justice and Madam Susie were not in Trier recently. It seemed they had left because there were traces of a dragon on the West Midseashire Coast, and a member of the Tamara family's Judgment branch in the Loen Kingdom had surfaced and expressed a desire to cooperate. Both ladies had been away for some time and wouldn't return soon. Among the Minor Arcana card holders in Trier, only he could provide psychological treatment to the Knight of Swords.

Maintaining his repressed state, the Knight of Swords continued, “The second thing is that we discovered some members of the indulgence faction seem to have brought a significant item to Trier. There are traces of a demigod among them.

“We have confirmed where these indulgence faction members are staying, but without knowing what the item is or if there are other powerful individuals hidden, we don't want to launch a rash attack.

“It's best not to involve the authorities in this. If the item is useful to us but falls into official hands, it would be quite troublesome.

“Every two or three days, a servant from their villa comes out to buy supplies. Of course, there's likely an indulgence faction member watching secretly, whose strength and level are uncertain.

“We will handle distracting the indulgence faction member watching the servant.

You will find an opportunity to hypnotize the servant, ask two or three questions, and then hypnotize him to forget being questioned.

“The questioning time is short, and the risk is high. We can't guarantee your absolute safety, only that your safety will be our top priority.

“You can refuse, but if you agree, we will give you sufficient or exceptionally special compensation.”

“Exceptionally special?” Anthony asked, slightly puzzled.

The Knight of Swords, Maric, took a shiny Loen gold pound from his pocket and said in a low voice, “I believe you recognize it.”

Anthony immediately remembered the lucky coin Jenna and Ludwig had obtained.

After a moment's thought, he decided, “Alright, I will hypnotize the servant and handle the questioning, but you need to design the questions. I don't know what concerns you.”

“Deal.” The Knight of Swords showed a slight smile, but his eyes remained repressed.

Anthony looked at him and said, “Shall we start the first psychological treatment now?”

“Okay.” The Knight of Swords nodded gently.

Anthony smiled peacefully.

“First, I must clarify that a Psychiatrist is not omnipotent. Sometimes, I can only help you find the right path. Other times, I can only provide some emotional relief, allowing you to view troubling matters more normally.

“Just as restraint is for crucial moments of release, if you never release, I can only help delay it for a while. Eventually, it will be uncontrollable.”

...

Two days later, in a bustling market.

Anthony spotted his target, a man with evident Southern Continent ancestry.

Pretending to select fresh meat, he slowly approached the target.

According to the plan, the Knight of Swords and his team would now start distracting the indulgence faction member watching the servant. If they failed, they would use Wraith possession to inform him that today's mission was urgently canceled.

Soon, Anthony reached the target's side.

Suddenly, his eyes brightened as he bent down to pick up a Louis d'or from the ground.

After a moment's hesitation, he asked the servant beside him, “Sir, did you drop this?”

The servant looked over blankly, the gold coin's shine making him squint. At the same time, Anthony's eyes subtly turned vertical, tinged with a light gold hue.

The servant, completely focused on the gold coin, swallowed and said, “Yes, it's mine.”

Thus, Anthony completed the hypnosis.

He handed the coin to the servant and asked casually, "What are they doing in the villa, never coming out?"

The servant hesitated, then replied, "They're in an orgy, all together. They're making babies, making babies!"

Chapter 863 Dancing with the Devil

Making babies? Anthony suddenly had a strong sense of foreboding.

He immediately abandoned the second question preset by the Knight of Swords and straightforwardly asked, "Who is making babies?"

The servant replied, his confusion tinged with fear. "Everyone is! The women are giving birth, and so are the men!"

Men are giving birth too... Anthony felt a shiver run down his spine and nearly used Placate himself.

He took another gold coin from his pocket and smiled at the servant.

"Did you forget you dropped another Louis d'or?"

The servant thought the Louis d'or's shine had entered the other man's eyes.

He assumed the man was trying to bribe him and hastily nodded.

"Yes, yes, I forgot."

As he spoke, the servant's thoughts became fuzzy, as if he heard something but also didn't.

When he came to his senses, he had forgotten what had just happened, and the Louis d'or in his hand was gone.

In an alley two streets away from the market, Anthony saw Maric, the Knight of Swords, reflected in a puddle left by last night's sudden rain.

Before the Knight of Swords could speak, Anthony quickly relayed the information he had gathered and then said, "The indulgence faction only indulges desires, not making babies. That's not their hallmark, right?"

The repression in the Knight of Swords' eyes had lessened slightly. He said gravely, "Followers of the Primordial Moon within the indulgence faction do occasionally, but not to the extent where even men give birth."

Anthony said in a serious tone, "Based on the behavior of those indulgence faction members, their bringing a significant item to Trier, the brewing of Project Vortex, and the fact that its leaders are Brokers who worship an evil god, I suspect that the Mother Tree of Desire worshiped by the indulgence faction and the Great Mother worshiped by the Nightstalkers have started collaborating on something, which is a crucial part of Project Vortex!"

Since the Knight of Swords had come to Trier, he naturally knew about Project Vortex from his Major Arcana card holder. He replied in a low voice, "Your suspicion is alarming. I will immediately report this to Ma'am Hermit and the higher-ups of our faction. If necessary, we will take decisive action."

Anthony nodded. "It would be best to inform the authorities as well. In Trier, no one is better suited to handle this than them. I need to return to my companions and warn them to be on guard against the coming vortex!"

With that, Anthony was about to leave the alley. "My companion will take you to find the Seven of Wands; it will be faster this way," the Knight of Swords called out to Anthony. "We will give you the promised reward once the situation stabilizes."

The Minor Arcana card holder quickly vanished from the puddle's surface.

He was eager to write to his Major Arcana card holder, The Hermit.

...

In the Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative, Apartment 702 on 9 Rue Orosai.

Franca and Jenna were squeezed together on the sofa, comparing the Loen gold pounds in their hands.

"I can feel they are somewhat special, but I don't know what makes them special," Franca said happily.

She then looked up at Lumian, who had taken her spot.

"Mr. Star's reward is this, haha, now you're the only one without one!"

Lumian found it amusing and remarked, "Did you forget about Anthony? And Lugano doesn't have one either."

Jenna glanced at Franca, who was leaning on her, and said thoughtfully, "When I first got the lucky coin, I thought it was a gift, but after you and Ludwig got yours, I began to suspect they might be symbols or tokens. We might all experience something together in the future.

"Lumian is special in many ways; he will get involved sooner or later, and he will get a coin eventually."

"At least he doesn't have one now," Franca said, showing off her lucky coin.

After discussing this for a while, Franca put away her lucky coin and asked Lumian about the serious matter, "How is Ludwig's 'training' going?"

"He follows my orders well now. The next step is to go through some experiences together to build rapport with you all," Lumian thought for a moment. "I'll design tasks accordingly. With a small team, it should take two or three weeks to achieve this."

"I'll probably finish digesting the Affliction potion before your advancement. The main issue now is convincing the Demoneess of Black that I can digest it so quickly." In the past few days, Franca's progress in digesting the Affliction potion had advanced significantly, and she estimated she needed only about a week more.

Jenna fell silent for a moment before saying, “My Pleasure potion is fully digested. I just need a couple of days to prepare for the ritual to become a Demoness of Affliction.”

“So soon?” Franca exclaimed in surprise.

Jenna looked at Franca with a complex expression but did not answer.

Franca was stunned for a moment, then said, “Oh.”

She understood why, which made her feelings even more complicated, with a mix of bitterness, sadness, joy, and smugness.

“I have given Jenna the potion ingredients and the remaining Ice Lemon Fish fillet,” Lumian added.

“Okay.” Franca quickly adjusted her mindset.

Feeling Jenna leaning against her, smelling her fragrance, and looking at Lumian, who had taken her spot and was mimicking her sitting posture, Franca suddenly felt that the past couple of days had been quite enjoyable and reassuring. Except for occasional pain and sadness, everything was great. Lumian was even expressing his importance to her more actively, though not much.

Since her transmigration, it was the first time Franca had felt this way.

Well, well, let's just say I've built a harem, except... Franca sighed inwardly.

She hoped these times would last longer, and that the vortex and the apocalypse would never come.

At that moment, Lumian turned his head and looked towards the side door of the living room.

Anthony's figure quickly took shape there.

“I have important information,” Anthony said directly.

Lumian stood up from the armchair and gestured for Anthony to continue.

Anthony quickly relayed the information he had gathered from the servant and his own speculations.

During this, Jenna and Franca, the two Demonesses, both had a premonition of danger from their spirituality.

Lumian said without hesitation, “I'll inform Madam Magician immediately, then meet up with Ludwig and Lugano and move to a new safe house. We'll wait for instructions from the Major Arcana card holders.”

...

Above the endless gray fog, in an ancient and majestic palace.

On either side of a mottled bronze table, figures shrouded in gray fog quickly formed.

There were eight of them.

The seats at the head and foot of the table were empty.

Miss Justice stood up, looked around, and said, “This is an emergency meeting with Mr. Fool's permission.”

Madam Magician did not waste time. Once Miss Justice sat down, she immediately asked Mr. Star across from her, “Was it your idea or a hint from the Church of Evernight to send the Two of Cups to fetch water from the Samaritan Woman's Spring?”

Mr. Star sat upright this time.

“It was a revelation I received in a dream.”

“A dream... Is the Evernight Goddess reminding us to pay attention to Harrison?”

Yes, She should know that Harrison has entered and exited the Samaritan Woman's Spring several times and mastered the pattern...” Madam Magician did not ask further and turned to Ma'am Hermit on her side, “Has Queen Mystic conveyed any information?”

Ma'am Hermit shook her head, then said after recalling, “She hasn't contacted me for a while. I tried to reach her a couple of days ago but received no response...”

As she spoke, Ma'am Hermit suddenly paused, foreseeing a scene.

Then, she saw the gaze of Mr. Hanged Man, Mr. Moon, Mr. Sun, and Madam Judgment all fall on her, their expressions solemn and their eyes full of undisguised vigilance.

...

Tossed high into the air by a storm, then slammed back into the vortex of the sea, the Dawn struggled to maintain its balance, like a toy thrown into the ocean.

There was not a single sailor on its deck; the sails and ropes moved on their own as if controlled by invisible hands.

After a long time, the storm finally subsided, and the Dawn, the flagship of Queen Mystic, soon stabilized.

Ahead, an island covered in dark green, nearly black, giant trees slowly emerged under the blue sky and white clouds.

Wearing a floral shirt and a brown captain's coat, Queen Mystic-Bernadette- stepped out of the cabin and walked to the bow.

Her blue eyes were as deep as the ocean, her straight eyebrows extended gracefully, and her naturally flowing chestnut hair reached her waist. She wore pants and boots for ease of movement.

Empty-handed, Queen Mystic gazed at the island, her eyes darkening, her face expressionless.

As the island drew nearer, another person emerged from the cabin.

This person was also a woman, with black hair and brown eyes, a pretty face, and the typical appearance of a Loenese. She wore a dark robe with many pockets and different flowers embroidered on it, a favorite outfit of ancient merchants.

Overseer Perle!

This evil god worshiper and initiator of Project Vortex appeared on Queen Mystic's ship!

Perle walked to the bow and stood beside Bernadette, also gazing at the island, a clear smile on her face.

Chapter 864 Center of the Vortex

Quartier 14, within the botanical garden, there stood a wooden cabin belonging to the caretaker.

Lumian had prepared this safe house before heading to Morora. He hadn't rented it; instead, he used money to persuade the garden caretaker to vacate the place whenever needed and to pretend he still lived there.

Franca glanced at the lush trees surrounding them, then turned her gaze back to Ludwig, who was sitting at a small wooden table, munching on a donut. She asked with a playful smile, "How about I give you some homework?"

Ludwig looked up quickly, eyeing Franca warily and instinctively scooting back.

Franca laughed immediately, muttering to herself, I feel an Angel's pain, and my Affliction potion has digested a bit more!

"Why are you bullying a child?" Jenna asked, amused by the scene.

"What child?" Franca explained with a grin, "I had suspected that making Ludwig experience the pain of studying and doing homework might help me digest the potion, but I didn't try it for fear of ruining Lumian's 'training' and making Ludwig want to run away from home. Now, with the vortex possibly approaching, I need to digest as much as I can. Besides, it's not like Ludwig will bond with us that quickly anyway."

Ludwig's brown eyes clearly conveyed one message as he looked at Franca: You Demoneess!

Jenna thought carefully and realized Franca's reasoning made sense. Once Lumian completed his advancement and she herself reached the stage of the Demoneess of Affliction, this could be one of the ways to digest the potion.

Ludwig's gaze flicked between Franca and Jenna before he spoke in a determined tone, "I will do my best to build rapport with you all!"

"Not bad," Lumian clapped his hands, then said to Franca and Jenna, "You two have the potential to be Conspirers. Now Ludwig doesn't mind teaming up with you."

I didn't expect it to turn out this way... Franca looked around, sensing that Lugano and Anthony's gazes seemed to say, "Look, you've driven the kid to this point."

Lumian tossed a chocolate coin to Ludwig and asked thoughtfully, "After eating that Chef's stomach, you should have recalled quite a bit of knowledge, right?"

Ludwig quickly unwrapped the chocolate and answered honestly, "Yes!"

This training is quite effective... Franca was a little surprised and looked at Lumian with admiration.

Lumian pulled up a chair and asked in a coaxing tone, "Do you know anything about the Broker pathway? What do they mean by 'vortex'?"

Busy with training Ludwig and giving him tasks, Lumian had nearly overlooked that Ludwig was an Angel from beyond the barrier and might know something about the Broker pathway.

After learning about Project Vortex, Lumian had asked Ludwig a similar question before going to Morora, but Ludwig had shaken his head, saying he had no recollection. Now, he had recovered some memories and was much more obedient.

Chewing on the chocolate, Ludwig fell into deep thought.

After a few seconds, he said uncertainly, “It seems to involve more complex transactions, with multiple traders, not just one-on-one deals.”

As he spoke, Ludwig took a stack of bread slices from the side and laid them out on the table, representing different traders.

He then pointed to the bread slices and said, “Transactions can occur between any of these groups, or there can be three-way, four-way, or even more parties involved. Connecting the corresponding lines creates a web or a vortex, involving many people.”

Lumian understood Ludwig's meaning and pondered, “It seems the transaction between the Mother Tree of Desire and the Great Mother is just one part of the vortex. So where is the center of the vortex?”

...

In the square district, outside a villa where several members of the Rose School of Thought's indulgence faction lived.

Angoulême de Francois and a group of Purifiers had arrived nearby.

For this mission, he had borrowed a Sealed Artifact from the Inquisition in the market district-his preferred Grade 1 Sealed Artifact, the Sword of the Sun, which was now embedded in the spine of a gray-white humanoid mechanical creation.

Angoulême looked up at the sky, where white clouds floated and the sun wasn't too intense. He glanced around and said, “Squad A, enter with me. Squad B, ambush underground. Squad C, go to the back door...”

After instructing his team, he spread his arms slightly and said, “Saint Vieve and Saint Plessy are watching us. We will surely be victorious! Praise the Sun!”

“Praise the Sun!” every Purifier responded.

Once the squads were in position, Angoulême, wearing a brown wool coat, moved from stillness to motion and charged towards the villa, with the gray-white humanoid mechanical creation following closely.

For this mission, which might involve a demigod from the Rose School of Thought, Angoulême was not too worried. The Archbishop of Trier, Saint Plessy, and the Guardian Angel of Trier, Saint Vieve, were not just watching but were also nearby, ready to purify the evil. The main goal was to force the bloody members of the Rose School of Thought out of hiding. If necessary, They could destroy the entire villa, purifying both the Beyonders and the ordinary people who worshiped evil gods together.

Although Angoulême believed that some of the ordinary people might still have a chance to be saved-some might not be deeply devoted to the Mother Tree of Desire-their rescue depended on ensuring the safety of his team.

As the captain, his primary responsibility was to his subordinates!

Angoulême was the first to rush through the garden and reach the front door of the villa.

Just then, he saw a white, thin mist rising inside, twisting and turning to form faces of agony that seemed almost real on the glass windows and walls.

Angoulême stopped and prepared to summon Light of Holiness to purify the mist.

Suddenly, deep within the thin white mist, in a room on the second floor of the villa, crimson moonlight began to glow.

It quickly outlined a stiff, sluggish, twisted, and blurry figure.

For some reason, upon seeing the crimson figure, Angoulême and his team felt a sense of awe at an ultimate beauty.

They gazed obsessively at the crimson figure slowly approaching the window, completely forgetting their mission.

They heard the cries of babies in their ears.

Along with the cries came a sinister, genderless voice: “You're just in time.”

...

In the depths of a primitive island, where the trees suddenly disappeared.

Relying on the help of someone to circumvent her father's “ban,” Queen Mystic Bernadette once again saw the black mausoleum built into the hollowed-out mountain.

Most of the mausoleum was part of the mountain itself, with some artificial traces. There were no weeds or vines on its surface. It stood over a hundred meters tall, majestic and grand.

This was where Bernadette's father, the former Emperor of the Intis Empire, Roselle Gustav, who had created an era, lay in eternal rest.

Engraved on the mausoleum's surface were the Civil Code established and promulgated by Roselle, along with his new social customs and inventions.

In his later years, Roselle had forcefully switched from the Mystery Pryer pathway to the Lawyer pathway, attempting to become the Black Emperor of Sequence 0, but had perished during the apotheosis ritual.

This was an intentional outcome because he had suffered severe, hidden corruption after visiting the moon in his later years. He considered using the Black Emperor's characteristics of eternal tombs and undying order to escape the corruption.

However, after his death, the Beyonder characteristics belonging to the Mystery Pryer and Savant pathways would completely separate, and if he were to be resurrected, only the pure Black Emperor characteristics would be summoned back to his body, preventing him from becoming a half-mad entity like the Blood Emperor of the Fourth Epoch who had forcibly switched pathways.

Unfortunately, despite completing the Black Emperor ritual and gaining the rank of a true god, Roselle found that the hidden corruption could not be escaped even in death.

It kept regenerating.

Thus, Roselle, neither fully dead nor truly alive, sealed himself to prevent being completely altered by the corruption.

Bernadette had visited this Black Emperor mausoleum once before, using the abilities of a Grade 0 Sealed Artifact and Mr. Fool's help to further seal and protect her father.

She came today to use the method of multiple corruptions entangling each other to achieve balance, hoping to free her father from his current state and revive him. Afterward, she could wait for Mr. Fool to awaken and perform the best seal on the corruption. This way, even if it wasn't Mr. Fool who awakened but rather The Celestial Worthy of Heaven and Earth for Blessings, her father could barely maintain himself through his own balance.

For this, she was willing to push some gray transactions. She had also prepared extensively based on her foresight to prevent the situation from deteriorating.

This time, Bernadette encountered no obstacles or attacks like before and smoothly reached her father's mausoleum.

This confirmed one of the traders the Broker Perle had roped in.

And this trade might involve more than two parties!

“You can now perform the ritual to let the desired corruption enter the mausoleum,” Overseer Perle said with a smile to Queen Mystic Bernadette. “But I need the Magic Wishing Lamp as a medium.”

0-05, the Magic Wishing Lamp!

Bernadette replied calmly, “That wasn't part of the deal.”

Perle sighed with a smile.

“It would make the ritual simpler and more effective.

“But it's okay. The trade you facilitated to bring me here has pleased my master, and I have received a new boon. I can try to complete the ritual on my own with the corresponding items.”

As she spoke, Perle spread her arms, her body gradually turning into white mist.

The mist expanded, slowly rotating to form a vortex.

Chapter 865 The Traders

As clusters of gray-white crystals were enveloped by the mist and disintegrated, blending into it, Perle's white mist expanded rapidly into a gigantic, peculiar vortex.

Within the vortex, the Overseer's face flickered in and out of view, sometimes distorted, sometimes normal.

She looked up at the sky, her voice becoming ethereal, and spoke using the Words of Order, “Bernadette offers the location of Roselle's mausoleum on the primitive island, the place for the vortex ritual, and some materials in exchange for a gray trade. She requests that the great Uncertain Mist bestow a blessing upon Roselle, bringing balance to the corruption within Him.”

As soon as Perle finished speaking, a light appeared within the white vortex.

Within the light was a deep, dark void, at the center of which was a solid, massive planet shrouded in layers of ever-changing white mist.

Suddenly, a wisp of white mist that could envelop the planet detached itself and moved towards the edge of the light, as if encountering an invisible barrier.

That wisp of white mist spread out, becoming intangible, and then, using the power of the ritual, a medium containing the truth, and the cracks in the invisible barrier, it penetrated magically, merging with the white mist that Perle had become, landing on her sometimes grim, sometimes smiling, blurred face.

The two fused into one.

Then, a large part of the white mist that Perle had transformed into separated and flowed like a river towards the black mausoleum built into the hollowed-out mountain, seeping inside continuously.

Queen Mystic Bernadette turned her back on the mausoleum.

Her chestnut hair suddenly parted, and a pair of cold, merciless, transparent eyes grew at the back of her head. Other facial features slowly formed around these eyes, blurring together.

It seemed like another her was emerging.

Through this, Bernadette glimpsed several scenes inside the black mausoleum, confirming that her father, Roselle, was being enveloped by the white mist.

The mist slowly eroded Roselle's body, beginning to distort the constantly regenerating corruption, slowing it down.

Likewise, it distorted the force that rapidly killed the new corruption.

Due to the difference in quantity between the white mist corruption and the original corruption, it would take some time to maintain the ritual to achieve true balance.

At this moment, the mid-morning sun in the blue sky with white clouds suddenly blazed intensely, as if sensing the dangerous gray trade happening on this primitive island.

With the white mist strengthened by the wisp from the light, Perle's face became more blurred and abstract, the corresponding mist expanding to completely envelop the treeless area, though it did not approach Bernadette or the black mausoleum.

One by one, points of light appeared within the mist.

Perle's distorted face turned to one of these points of light and, in an even more ethereal and elusive voice, said, “The great Supernova Dominator agrees to intervene fully, suppressing the barrier so that all true gods in the astral world cannot interfere with the matters inside the barrier...”

Before Perle could finish speaking, a blinding light suddenly emerged within the point of light she was gazing at, bright enough to devour all darkness and blind an Angel.

With this change, the sky was illuminated as if a flashbang had been thrown into a dark room.

Even Perle, protected by the ritual, had to close her eyes.

Neither she nor Queen Mystic Bernadette could see the high sky becoming void, with a transparent barrier full of cracks deep within the void.

Within that void, there was a drawn sun, a gigantic entity shrouded in dense darkness, a terrifying figure surrounded by a storm of lightning, a pair of brass-colored eyes opening within the cracks, a corner filled with wheat, flowers, and springs, and a faint glow presenting vague scenes of civilization...

A massive, heavy, and profound “fireball” crashed heavily onto the invisible barrier with many cracks, exploding with a dazzling light that illuminated the void completely, making the abstract patterns seem nearly transparent.

This didn't cause widespread earthquakes within the barrier; it merely temporarily blinded people.

In the white mist, Perle's face, with closed eyes, continued speaking with the Words of Order, “What He needs in return is for the seal on the ship beneath Port Santa to be broken.”

As soon as Perle finished speaking, one of the points of light grew slightly, showing a scene of the deep blue sea.

Finally, the bright light penetrating the barrier became less dazzling, and Perle opened her eyes, looking at the deep blue sea within the point of light. In an ethereal voice, she said, “Topsy of the School of Deliciousness is willing to pay this price...”

As Perle spoke, a terrifying vortex suddenly formed in the deep blue sea.

A monster emerged from the vortex, towering dozens or hundreds of meters high, with a lower body resembling a giant snake covered in shark-like skin with hidden evil patterns. The upper body split into nine necks, each with a different head—some resembling snakes, some like giant sharks, some with wet black wolf heads, some possibly of legendary dragons...

The most bizarre central head appeared human but had only a mouth left, with teeth sharp enough to crush anything.

This head lunged at the invisible force sealing the sea, biting it furiously, while the other heads either devoured the fish in the sea, spewed venom at the seal, or tried to use their abilities to affect the seal...

“What he needs is...” Perle's voice reached Queen Mystic Bernadette's ears through the white mist, “for the Angel of the great Primordial Hunger to return!”

Outside the white mist, Bernadette had conjured an ancient-style spear. This spear had appeared in ancient times and was stained with the blood of a great being, covered in dark red spots and stains, seemingly capable of harming true gods.

Mystical Re-enactment, Spear of Longinus!

Bernadette hurled the spear emitting a destructive aura into the white mist, not targeting Perle but the point of light that had grown larger.

She intended to stop the subsequent gray trades, preventing the vortex from spinning further and causing real harm. After all, she had achieved her goal, and maintaining it for a while longer would suffice!

The Spear of Longinus pierced the white mist, hitting the point of light showing the deep blue sea. However, it didn't dim or extinguish the point of light, as if it had struck a phantom.

As the ancient spear dissipated, Perle's exaggeratedly smiling face turned towards Bernadette.

“The vortex has formed; unless you kill me, it won't stop.

“And if I die now, Roselle won't achieve true balance, and the broken fragile balance won't be restored.”

Bernadette froze.

Perle then looked at another point of light and, in an ethereal voice, said, “Offering help to Topsy of the School of Deliciousness is Mr. Higdon of the Order of All Extinction.”

The point of light Perle was gazing at grew slightly, revealing a luxurious room.

In the room, an elderly man with neatly combed graying hair sat quietly on an antique armchair.

He wore a crisp white shirt and black suit with a gray bow tie, his handsome but stern face showing intermittent festering and oozing from exposed skin, with maggots crawling out occasionally.

His deep, magnetic voice reached the white mist and Perle's face: “But I don't know where the target is in Trier.”

Perle's twisted smile widened, her gaze shifting to another point of light at an angle above.

That point of light grew, revealing a dimly lit room with closed doors and windows.

Sunlight streamed in through the glass windows, illuminating countless dust particles floating in the air.

Below the dust was an old wooden loom, with a black-haired woman sitting beside it, her hair reaching her waist.

The woman had an ethereal demeanor and delicate features but kept her eyes shut, constantly pulling out her hair and weaving it into the threads on the loom.

Tears of pus-laden blood streamed from her eyes, her left arm severed and fallen to the ground, her skirt covering her empty legs, with a graceful female statue standing behind her. The statue, originally faceless, gradually grew features resembling the woman's.

The hair-threads on the loom shimmered with faint light, containing a wealth of information.

Seemingly hearing Overseer Perle's question, the woman brushed her fingers over several black hair-threads on the loom.

The threads she touched lit up, revealing the corresponding information: “The indulgence faction of the Rose School of Thought brought the Shadow of the Beauty Goddess to Trier, trying to get as close as possible to Fourth Epoch Trier. They did it covertly, avoiding detection by Trier's demigods...”

“The temperance faction of the Church of The Fool discovered the indulgence faction's movements and the presence of an important item early but hesitated to act immediately. They waited for the right moment to complete their investigation, missing the opportunity...”

“Lumian Lee and Ludwig moved to a safe house in District 14's botanical garden in Trier. If he knew how immense this vortex would be, he would have regretted not teleporting directly to the New City of Silver with his companions. But how could he have known?”

These intertwined destinies formed a foreseeable future.

Overseer Perle's ethereal voice echoed in the room, “The founder of the Dreamseekers, Fate's Attendant, Héloise, is responsible for weaving the entire matter, ensuring it progresses smoothly without alerting higher beings. She will also provide the locations of two Angels...”

As Perle spoke, the woman named Héloise plucked a strand of destiny thread representing Lumian and Ludwig moving to the new safe house.

A bit of light jumped out, splitting into three fragments that entered the white mist transformed by Perle and flew in different directions.

Chapter 866 The Painting

In Trier, within the botanical garden, inside the wooden house.

Lumian and the others were blinded by the sudden bright light from the sky, unable to open their eyes for a full minute.

Ludwig was the first to recover. He ran to the window and looked out at the plants, as if searching for something.

Lumian was the second to recover. He frowned and said to Franca, Jenna, and Anthony, “Is this the start of the vortex? It's quite a commotion.”

“I wonder if it will affect us,” Franca said just as a strong sense of danger washed over her.

In such matters, Demonesses always had keen intuition.

Almost simultaneously, Jenna exclaimed, “It will definitely affect us! I have a feeling we can't stay here any longer!”

Lumian paused for a moment, then quickly whispered, “Termiboros, you didn't warn me because what's about to happen is something you want to see?”

As he spoke, Lumian signaled to Franca, Jenna, Anthony, and Lugano to come closer. They each grabbed his arm, shoulder, and vest.

The only one who lacked the tacit understanding was Ludwig.

Lumian looked at the young boy and said sternly, “Do you want to be punished with homework? Get over here!”

Ludwig's face showed fear, and he instinctively turned his body. But the next second, he reluctantly looked back out the window.

He didn't know what he was waiting for; he just felt he should stay here, waiting for something very important.

“Hmm?” Lumian urged again.

Ludwig's expression changed, and he finally couldn't resist the authority of his godfather and his fear of schoolwork and exams. He ran over to Lumian, grabbing his black vest.

Still lacking tacit understanding, the ritual can't be considered complete... Lumian sighed inwardly and activated the black mark on his right shoulder.

He needed to teleport this large group to the New City of Silver, to the headquarters of the Church of The Fool!

Lumian saw layers of dense colors and countless transparent, strange figures, along with the seven pure, bright lights always far overhead.

He was about to travel through the familiar spirit world to the coordinates representing the New City of Silver when his body suddenly felt heavy, pulling him away from this fantastical, mysterious, mad, and illusory world.

Lumian found himself and the others back in the wooden house within the botanical garden, in the same state as when Ludwig had just grabbed his vest.

With his extensive experience, Lumian's eyes narrowed, and he warned his companions, Franca and Jenna, “Circle Inhabitant!”

...

Outside Emperor Roselle's mausoleum on the primitive island, in the area in front of the tomb shrouded in thin white mist.

The three pieces of information that flew out from the point of light where Fate's Attendant Héloïse was located landed on three different points of light.

One was where Higdon of the Order of All Extinction was, another seemed to be inside a tunnel under Trier, where a figure holding a carbide lamp, dressed in a black robe, and looking different from those from the Northern and Southern Continents, was the visitor from Easter Island named Harrison.

The third point of light first showed darkness, then outlined a figure. This figure was in his fifties, with a thick head of hair with a hint of white, and clear, deep lake-blue eyes.

He was a man with neatly trimmed facial hair, and his features were well-defined.

Even at his age, he could be considered handsome.

Voisin Sanson!

Circle Inhabitant of the Sinners, Voisin Sanson!

The father of Roche Louise Sanson, the original identity of Aurore, a follower of Inevitability, Voisin Sanson!

As soon as Voisin Sanson, dressed in a black suit, received the information about Lumian, Ludwig, and the others' location, he disappeared into the darkness of the expanding point of light.

Higdon of the Order of All Extinction also quickly left his room, no longer participating in this real-time, complex trade without physical distance.

Overseer Perle showed no surprise at this. With her ethereal voice, she announced the progress of the trade, "Voisin Sanson of the Sinners has obtained crucial information about the recovery of the Inevitability Angel. The corresponding price will be paid by the great Circle of Inevitability.

"Mr. Higdon of the Order of All Extinction has begun his actions. The reward will be given after he completes the recovery of the Angel of Primordial Hunger and provides some assistance to Voisin Sanson, paid by Loki of April Fool's..."

As Perle's words spread, and with the invocation of those honorific names, the area around the white mist grew increasingly dim and uncertain, shadows rising as if a terrifying will was about to descend.

Normally, Perle shouldn't have known or spoken of information regarding great beings, as it would bring extremely terrible and severe consequences. After all, after convincing the gray-leaning Queen Mystic Bernadette with previous events, she had only received a new blessing through a substantial sacrifice, becoming a true Vortex Weaver, but not yet reaching the rank of an Angel.

However, she was currently under the protection of the vortex ritual and had just accepted a wisp of mist transmitted by her faith's truth, the Uncertain Mist, allowing her to remain unaffected. Her understanding of those great beings came from that wisp of mist, previously only contacting corresponding secret organizations and underground cults to reach relatively certain agreements.

At this moment, Bernadette disintegrated herself into strands of information, surging towards Perle's face within the gray mist in a vast torrent.

She hoped to influence the other party in this way, preventing the subsequent trades from progressing but without destroying the current ritual.

Perle's face, composed of mist, suddenly dispersed, disappearing from Bernadette's perception.

The vast torrent of information surged forward, seemingly lost in the white mist, unable to find the true location of the target.

Soon, the torrent of information separated from the white mist and reformed Bernadette's body. Perle's face then reappeared in different parts of the white mist, sometimes smiling, sometimes cursing, sometimes pretending to be friendly, sometimes babbling.

These faces converged inward, once again forming Perle's sometimes distorted, sometimes normal blurred face within the depths of the white mist.

Perle continued speaking with the Words of Order, "Harrison from Easter Island has received information about Lumian Lee's location. After the vortex ritual ends, he will use the special mirror world to visit Fourth Epoch Trier, paying a special item of the Fate pathway as a reward.

"This is the item Fate's Attendant Madam Héloïse wishes to obtain..."

As Perle announced the new trade, a half-body figure that was nearly transparent and quite ethereal grew from Bernadette's back.

This figure looked identical to Bernadette, even in clothing. She held a pale mask with only holes for the eyes, shining with a metallic luster, and quickly put it on.

Pale Death!

Another Grade 0 Sealed Artifact Sealed Artifact owned by Bernadette, Pale Death!

She intended to use this to control Perle.

At that moment, Bernadette's vision blurred suddenly, and the surrounding environment and distances became exceptionally chaotic.

She was passively shifted in position, hearing an unusually familiar deep voice in her ear: "Bernadette..."

...

Outside the Black Emperor's mausoleum, within the increasingly dense and varied white mist.

In an underground location somewhere in Trier, within his corresponding point of light, Harrison took out an item.

It was a thumb-sized, colorful bead with a glass-like texture, exuding a calming aura.

Harrison then threw the bead into the surrounding white mist.

Under Overseer Perle's gaze, the bead passed through Harrison's corresponding point of light, through the dense white mist, and into the point of light where Dreamseeker founder-Héloise-was.

The delicate woman weaving fate caught the colorful, glass-like bead with her remaining right hand.

Her tightly shut eyes suddenly saw a scene: A bald man in a yellow robe with a strange cape sat cross-legged on a bed, a halo of pure light behind his head. Deep within the halo seemed to lead to the unknown, hiding many things.

Héloise put down the bead, pulled out another strand of hair, and completed the last bit of her task.

It was a blessing.

A blessing from fate!

"Project Vortex will be successfully completed."

Héloise's black hair carried this message, woven into the previous threads.

With a swish, a large piece of skin on the right half of Héloise's face was torn off by an invisible force, revealing the bloody, wriggling flesh beneath.

She had not yet become an Angel and could not normally weave such far-reaching fate. She could only forcefully complete it with the goddess's statue, but each weave brought severe damage. Her eyes had gone blind in the process, and her feet, legs, left arm, and fingers had also been broken.

Of course, as long as she did not die on the spot, she could obtain special medicine for treatment through transactions with Brokers.

Overseer Perle's face in the white mist turned her gaze to another point of light.

This point of light showed a scene of an altar inside an ancient castle, surrounded by intact but lifeless bodies, their flesh and bones made into brushes and paints.

A man with long hair, empty eyes, and a frenzied expression had completed the preliminary preparations at the center of the altar.

It was a nearly finished, eerie oil painting, just two strokes away from completion.

The painting depicted an endless, dark starry sky with blood-red circles on the left, resembling a special tunnel or a creature's mouth. On the right, numerous silver-white and black flickered from bone powder, just short of forming a ring.

Overseer Perle's voice resonated.

“The string believer, Mr. Sage of the Fantasy Association, has sacrificed many bestowed and followers and is about to complete a magnificent and outstanding painting!

“Next, we will witness the unveiling of that painting. Mr. Sage's reward will be personally given by the great Uncertain Mist at the end of the vortex ritual, which is also what the great being he believes in wants to see.”

Chapter 867 Exerting Influence

The man known as Mr. Sage used a brush made of bone and hair, dipped it into the paint made from flesh and blood, and painstakingly applied it to the depths of the blood-red circles.

Perle's ethereal voice sounded once again.

“This is an outstanding painting representing the endless cosmos. Once completed, it will allow two great beings to transmit a bit of Their power into the barrier. Although this cannot be used for targeted attacks or corruption, it can exert more universal influence according to predetermined rules...”

Before Perle could finish speaking, Mr. Sage, with his long hair and vacant eyes, finally pressed the human hair and bone brush onto the predetermined spot.

His right side suddenly melted like a candle, with flesh flowing towards the brush, racing into the depths of the blood-red circles. It seemed as though it really connected to the endless cosmos, where no matter how much flesh accumulated, it eventually vanished.

Mr. Sage, left with only half a body and half a head, still had not died. He caught the falling brush with his left hand.

On the oil painting, a pin-sized dot appeared in the depths of the blood-red circles.

It was dark, as if a sound was emanating from it.

Perle's face in the white mist announced the results of the trade with the Words of Order, “The great Inextinguishable Ravings has transmitted the First Philosophy, allowing the Immortal Voice to

penetrate the barrier in small amounts. These will be received by all who can hear unknown and mystical voices. The higher the Sequence, the greater the impact!

“And some faithful followers of the First Philosophy will, after the vortex ritual is truly over, approach the remnants of the Knowledge Moor in Fourth Epoch Trier with the help of the Mirror People...”

...

Trier, at the real residence of Professor and Associate Professor.

Just recovering from the sudden burst of brilliant light and barely able to see their surroundings, Professor and Associate Professor were worried about the current anomalies. They discussed whether to take the children to the small sacrificial square in the underground catacombs, their expressions changing.

Instinctively, they raised their hands to cover their ears, but their facial muscles still twisted, and the veins on their temples bulged and throbbed.

They heard an indescribable strange sound, causing both physical and mental anguish.

In their pain, Professor and Associate Professor exchanged glances, seeing the confusion in each other's eyes.

This wasn't the voice of the Hidden Sage!

This was an unprecedented situation for Professor and Associate Professor.

Although they occasionally discovered some mysterious sounds while researching Warlock spells and exploring certain special scenarios, aside from the indoctrination by the Hidden Sage, they had never encountered such unannounced sounds. Moreover, even without carefully distinguishing the content of the sounds, they suffered severe effects.

Fortunately, compared to the indoctrination of the Hidden Sage, this seemed more bearable and did not push them to the brink of losing control.

Most Beyonders of the Mystery Pryer pathway, upon hearing these mysterious terrifying sounds, witnessed a phantom light composed of complex information writhing madly like a shedding giant snake in an unknown place.

...

In the basement of the house where the Psychic magazine was located.

Mr. K, wearing a black robe and hood, suddenly stood up from the red-backed chair.

The veins on the back of his exposed hands had turned black, writhing like insects.

“No, no...” Mr. K muttered in pain, “It's not the Lord's voice!”

He suddenly shouted, pulling off his hood and sticking his fingers into his ears.

Mr. K's face had completely twisted, making his original appearance unrecognizable. He continually muttered in a voice filled with more mental agony than physical pain: “It's not the Lord's voice! It's not the Lord's voice!”

Amidst the grating sound, Mr. K used both hands to tear off his ears, the ripped flesh grotesque and terrifying.

It wasn't enough!

Mr. K forcefully inserted his fingers into his ear canals, puncturing his eardrums and clogging his ear passages.

Yet, he still heard the sound.

He prostrated, lying on the ground, and tearfully repented to his Lord.

As he repented, he vomited clumps of blood-stained organs.

Similar to Mr. K, some Angels, Saints, and Oracles of the Aurora Order also suffered intense and painful effects, making it difficult to follow the Lord's commands to stop something.

...

In the Forsaken Land of the Gods.

A majestic mountain range was surrounded by strange light, with dense darkness at its core.

At the edge of the light, various twisted shadows continued to form, rushing madly like moths into the darkness at the center.

The darkness occasionally split open, revealing a gaze from behind the veil.

...

On the bloody altar in the ancient castle, Mr. Sage pressed the human hair and bone brush into a pile of silver-black bone powder made from some unknown substance.

The painter, now only half a body and half a head, twisted the brush forcefully, then raised it, aiming it at the last unfinished part of the "Endless Cosmos" oil painting.

As the brush fell, Mr. Sage's remaining half-body and half-head also began to melt like a candle.

Soon, the brush, carrying the painter, completed the silver-black ring.

Almost simultaneously, the ring became ethereal, as if scratched, and seemed to merge into the air.

Three faint figures appeared on the silver-black ring, constantly changing positions as if eternally chasing each other.

The "Endless Cosmos" oil painting was completed, but Mr. Sage would never see this work.

Overseer Perle's voice sounded once more: "The great Circle of Inevitability has gazed upon this. All external forces attempting to interfere with Project Vortex will inevitably fail, except for the participants themselves."

...

Above the blue sea, in the sky where the strong light had driven away the white clouds.

Madam Magician, dressed in a women's shirt and brown ankle-length skirt, appeared with Miss Justice and Ma'am Hermit.

The latter not only wore her usual glasses but also had layers of dazzling starlight covering her ears.

When the mysterious, terrifying, and unknown sound appeared earlier, Madam Magician had sealed Ma'am Hermit's listening abilities in both the literal and mystical senses.

Although this could not completely isolate the sound's influence, it significantly reduced its effect, allowing Ma'am Hermit to perform basic actions and Warlock spells.

Gazing at the blue sea below, Madam Magician frowned slightly and said, "I clearly pinpointed the island where the Emperor slumbers.

"This is the third failure, a failed wandering...

"Inevitable failure?"

Only Miss Justice, wearing a white dress with golden patterns, could hear The Magician's voice.

Miss Justice was about to relay the question to Ma'am Hermit through mental communication when The Hermit, dressed in a patterned purple robe, foresaw a certain scene.

Enduring the pain, The Hermit used Fairytale Magic to create a brightly colored, somewhat unrealistic ball of yarn in her palm.

Ma'am Hermit threw the yarn forward, watching it roll into the void, leaving only a thread in the air to guide the direction.

In the blink of an eye, the ethereal yarn rolled back from the void to Ma'am Hermit's feet.

...

In Trier, the villa where several members of the Rose School were hiding was enveloped in holy and pure light, forming a slowly shaping golden sun.

There was no shadow or darkness here.

Angoulême de Francois and his team were awakened by Saint Viève's attack on the villa.

They immediately received Saint Plessy's order to evacuate the area.

But before they could turn around, they were nearly blinded by the brilliant light exploding from above, their bodies and minds in shock.

When the light subsided, they recovered and ran frantically towards the street away from the villa.

Angoulême was most grateful that the surrounding residents had already been evacuated.

After running for a while, his vision blurred, and his thoughts became hazy.

He found himself and his team back where they had been standing, affecting Saint Viève's performance.

...

In Trier, high above the city.

Mr. Hanged Man, Mr. Star, and Mr. Moon's figures quickly appeared.

"We can't find Seven of Wands and Two of Cups, or rather, we can't reach the safe house they're hiding in," said Mr. Hanged Man, dressed as a captain and riding a

storm. He quickly understood the situation and spoke to Mr. Star, wearing a white shirt, black coat, and red gloves, and Mr. Moon, dressed in a tailcoat.

Mr. Moon, with his handsome face, crimson eyes, and large bat wings gently flapping behind him, did not respond.

He turned his head, looking towards a place in the plaza district where bright light had erupted, and murmured in confusion, "The Ancestor's summoning?"

Mr. Star, with an elderly voice, said, "It's the influence of the power of Inevitability."

"Yes," said the Madam Judgment in knight's training clothes, emerging from the void. "I sensed the calls of Two of Cups and Seven of Cups, but I can't descend to them."

Mr. Star continued in his elderly voice, "There are only two ways to solve this problem. One is to find the medium allowing the power of Inevitability to seep through and destroy it. The other is to discover flaws in the operation of Inevitability's power and use them to escape the predicament. Of course, this all assumes that the being named Inevitability is only exerting a slight influence through a medium and has not descended into our world."

"Find the medium..." Madam Judgment murmured, then said, "I'll ask Will for help!"

As she spoke, a diamond on her gemstone bracelet lit up with pure light.

At the same time, worms made of intertwined transparent and opaque segments, seemingly ringed, crawled out of Mr. Star's eye sockets, ears, and nostrils.

Chapter 868 Confrontation

High above Trier, an ancient, mottled, gigantic shadow emerged. It resembled a stone-carved wall clock, divided into twelve segments. Each segment was either gray-white or dark green, intermixed yet distinct, each marked with different symbols.

Clang!

The ethereal chime seemed to traverse through ages, making all of Trier appear frozen in time.

In this brief stasis, transparent and opaque worms with twelve rings crawled frantically, burrowing into various places, seeking patterns to deceive and escape the influence of fate.

Lumian and the others were also momentarily immobilized by the ancient-sounding chime.

Not long ago, upon hearing Lumian mention the term "Circle Inhabitant," Franca and Jenna both took out a tarot card from the Traveler's Bag.

The tarot card depicted an angel sounding a trumpet to guide the departed.

Major Arcana card, Judgment!

Next, the two Demonesses softly chanted in Hermes, "Rain judgment!"

They felt Madam Judgment's response, but it was faint, unable to establish a true connection.

The two Demonesses instantly understood that this botanical garden or the surrounding area of the cabin was under more severe restrictions, not just the influence of the Circle Inhabitant's abilities.

While they sought Madam Judgment's descent, Lumian, Anthony, and Lugano watched as their cabin rapidly decayed and collapsed, like a long-buried tree trunk disintegrating into the soil.

Boom!

A blazing-white fireball shot upward, blasting apart the collapsing ceiling, preventing the rotting wood from touching anyone present.

As the cabin decayed and collapsed, Lumian saw two figures appear several dozen meters ahead.

One figure was slender, of medium height, wearing a crisp white shirt and black suit, with a gray bow tie. His features were sharp and pronounced.

Although he appeared elderly, it was clear he had been quite handsome in his youth. His hair was now graying but meticulously groomed, and his face bore brown age spots that seemed ready to fester and ooze.

The other figure was also dressed formally, in his fifties, with thick blond hair flecked with white, eyes as clear as a lake, and a meticulously trimmed beard.

Despite his age, he was still strikingly handsome.

Seeing the latter figure, Lumian, though prepared, still forced a hoarse voice from his throat. "Voisin Sanson!"

This was the leader of the Sinner's Organization, the father of Aurore's original body, a follower of fate who had brought tragedy to Aurore!

"Sanson, leave those two Demonesses to me," the man with the age spots said, his eyes brightening at the sight of Franca and Jenna, addressing Circle Inhabitant Voisin Sanson.

It wasn't just a lust for beauty, but a deep-seated attraction from more profound factors.

Voisin Sanson gazed at Lumian, chuckling lightly as he responded to his collaborator, "No problem, Higdon."

Lumian suppressed his urge to rush forward for revenge, quickly instructing Ludwig, "You handle the blonde one!"

Last time, Lumian had relied on the residual aura of the Blood Emperor to intimidate Voisin Sanson, causing the Circle Inhabitant's effect in the painting world to shatter, allowing him to escape. This time, the residual aura of the Blood Emperor was sealed by the Underworld Daoist, and having suffered once, Voisin Sanson would surely be on guard.

So, Lumian hoped that Ludwig, with his angelic body and rank, could forcibly break the Circle Inhabitant's influence through brute strength and rank suppression.

If they didn't break free from the Circle Inhabitant, no matter how much effort he, Franca, Jenna, and the others put in, they would be reset to the current moment, achieving nothing.

Ludwig hesitated, as if saying to Lumian, "Me? Fight that powerful old man? I'm just child!"

On the one hand, Ludwig hadn't expected to be part of a battle, and on the other, he felt he shouldn't fight, believing it best to cooperate with the two elders in front of him and let them take him away.

Vaguely, Lumian heard the chime again, his thoughts briefly blurred.

Franca, Jenna, Anthony, and the opposing Voisin Sanson and Higdon all had similar feelings.

Quickly regaining his composure, Lumian swiftly took out Black Tear from the Traveler's Bag and tossed it to Franca.

From Higdon's tone and attitude toward Voisin Sanson, Lumian believed he must be a Saint, a true demigod. Thus, Franca could only rely on Black Tear to hold off the opponent long enough to break the Circle Inhabitant's effect.

Tossing Black Tear to Franca, Lumian urged Ludwig again, "Go! I'll prepare a grand feast for you later!"

Ludwig hesitated, but his feet remained firmly planted.

At this moment, Voisin Sanson and Higdon, lacking angelic rank, seemed sluggish under some strange influence, not attacking swiftly.

Lumian's voice grew imposing, roaring, "Do you want to be sent back to the Church of Knowledge?"

Ludwig, startled, turned immediately towards Voisin Sanson.

"Don't you enjoy your current life?" Lumian added, based on his understanding of Ludwig.

Ludwig pursed his lips, then stuffed a piece of chocolate into his mouth, sprinting towards Voisin Sanson.

Lumian signaled Franca and Jenna, who had just shaken off the sluggishness.

He meant for Franca to engage Higdon, stalling him, with Jenna assisting Franca but avoiding direct combat.

Franca and Jenna nodded solemnly.

Franca wrapped the Black Tear accessory around her wrist, her figure swiftly disappearing.

Jenna also vanished from sight.

Without hesitation, Lumian retrieved the Devil's Whispers bone ring and slipped it onto his right middle finger.

His body instantly ignited with blue-purple flames, exuding a strong sulfuric scent, and malice surged forth.

He was grateful that he had vented most of his pent-up desires and emotions during this period, feeling much better than when he used the Hisoka relic in Morora.

He then grasped the hilt of the Sword of Courage and drew it from the Traveler's Bag.

Courage filled Lumian's body as he stared at Voisin Sanson, who sought to control Ludwig's insignificant fate, transforming into a long spear of blazing white-blue flame, and hurled it forward.

Revenge! Revenge!

I won't back down!

Before using the Sword of Courage, Lumian had devised a strategy: Franca and Jenna would stall Higdon, while he and Ludwig launched a strong assault on Voisin Sanson, attempting to break the Circle Inhabitant's influence. Anthony would support both sides and act as an external brain.

As for Lugano, he wouldn't participate in the battle, instead finding opportunities to provide healing.

...

Inside the dim "Black Emperor" mausoleum, dark walls surrounded a central black platform.

Atop the platform was a giant chair that appeared to be made of black iron, engraved with complex, twisted patterns. The top of the chair back extended into the shape of a crown.

A massive black shadow sat on the heavy chair, its facial features gradually becoming clear: Blue eyes, a high nose, thin lips, and well-groomed mustache...

The shadow's body also became clearer, seemingly clad in black armor and a luxurious cloak.

Roselle Gustav.

The Intis Emperor who named an era after himself!

He was constantly being reborn and dying, but both processes were distorted and slowed, allowing him to awaken and partially manifest.

Seeing Roselle like this, Bernadette's eyes welled up, and she cried out in both pain and joy, "Dad!"

Roselle's eyes turned blood-red, and his face cracked open to reveal glowing red slits.

But these vanished after another round of death and rebirth.

Regardless of whether he was dying or being reborn, both processes slowed even further.

Roselle looked at his eldest daughter and sighed. "Didn't I tell you never to come back?"

Bernadette, her expression resolute, replied, "Dad, I want to save you!"

"I don't dare gamble on whether the one who wakes up is Mr. Fool or The Celestial Worthy of Heaven and Earth for Blessings. At the very least, I want to ensure you can stay conscious and stable without Their help."

Queen Mystic paused, her voice heavy before adding, "Moreover, I can't predict when the apocalypse will come or what the outcome will be. I don't want to wait any longer."

Roselle sighed with a hint of relief.

"Silly child..."

"Who helped you bypass my restrictions and return here?"

"It was that individual." Bernadette didn't hide anything from her father.

"Adam? The current True Creator?" Roselle wasn't surprised at all.

Bernadette nodded lightly.

Roselle sneered, then looked at Bernadette with a complicated expression.

“You chose to collaborate with the believers of the Uncertain Mist. Do you know how dangerous that is?”

Bernadette was silent for a moment, then said, “It's exploitation.

“The forces capable of balancing your corruption are all outside the barrier.

Among them, only the power of the Uncertain Mist can relatively easily penetrate the barrier and transmit some of it inside.

“I've also made some preparations to prevent the vortex from progressing further.

“I deliberately didn't respond to Cattleya's letter, so she would participate in the Tarot Club. When she is above the gray fog, she will quickly become aware, and with the strength of the Tarot Club and its connections, once the problem is identified, they can respond effectively...

“I've also predicted some of Perle's trade partners, discovered the movements of the indulgence faction of the Rose School of Thought, and arranged for my subordinates to leak it to the temperance faction...

“I've also foreseen the outcome of this matter, and the situation hasn't deteriorated.

“That individual also hinted at the same.”

Roselle shook his head, his tone slightly grave as he said to Bernadette in a teaching manner, “Perhaps the situation hasn't deteriorated because many people have sacrificed themselves.

“To Adam, this might be necessary.

“But what about you?”

Chapter 869 The Final Lesson

Trier, inside the botanical garden.

Higdon from the Order of All Extinction saw the two Demonesses disappear. He immediately raised his right hand and scratched at the dark brown age spots on his face.

The spots instantly festered, releasing maggots similar to those that crawl through corpses, oozing a greenish-yellow pus.

The disgusting pus evaporated upon contact with the air, dispersing without a trace.

Jenna had just circled to Higdon's side, ready to assist Franca in launching an attack. Suddenly, she felt a wave of lethargy, as if stricken by a sickness called “laziness.”

It felt as if her desires were wilting, showing signs of decay, and as if parts of her brain were beginning to malfunction.

Following her instinct, Jenna immediately used her Mirror Substitution, not waiting for the problem to worsen and trigger it passively.

The sound of two simultaneous cracks echoed. Franca, who had been sneaking up on Higdon under the cover of Invisibility to release the Black Tear plague, reacted the same way.

Their figures first materialized and then quickly transformed into mirrors.

During this process, as Franca and Jenna's Mirror Substitutes were still forming, their internal organs sprouted noticeable tumors, autonomously drawing nutrients. Blood vessels around the heart and within the brain rapidly became fragile.

If the Demonesses used pathogens to control diseases, then Higdon's pathway seemed to represent the pathogens themselves, the very essence of disease.

If Franca and Jenna hadn't actively triggered their Mirror Substitution, it would have been much more difficult to deal with the actual tissue changes in their bodies. They would need to perform a ritual, praying to the Primordial Demoness or a corresponding Angel to transfer the disease to a designated mirror, or one would need to stick to the target while the other left the area, allowing Lugano to perform surgery combined with the Doctor's abilities for treatment.

Meanwhile, the disease had not yet spread. Voisin Sanson, with his blond hair flecked with white, had already found several manipulable fragments within Ludwig's mercury-like river of fate.

As long as he didn't touch the most critical parts of the Angel's fate, he needn't fear backlash or losing control on the spot.

Similarly, his godhood allowed him to observe most of Ludwig's fate without peering into fragments containing dangerous scenes or knowledge.

Midway through his dash, Ludwig opened his mouth and extended his hand, intending to strip away the Circle Inhabitant's power from his target. At this moment, Voisin Sanson, who had already raised his arm, gently pressed down, magnifying a specific tributary of fate from a distance.

Thud!

Ludwig, the little boy, tripped over a protruding stone and fell flat on his face.

Simultaneously manipulating fate, Voisin Sanson directed his gaze towards Lumian, who had transformed into a blazing white-blue flame spear.

His eyes glowed, instantly emitting two ghostly green beams.

This was a newly contracted ability Voisin Sanson had recently acquired.

The main issue with the Inevitability pathway's Contractee was that the strength of contracted abilities could not surpass the contracted creature's potential. This meant that early-stage contracted abilities were hard to enhance unless the initial contract was with a demigod-level creature, constrained only by one's own spirit and flesh from utilizing the ability to its fullest. This could potentially enhance the contracted ability with each sequence advancement.

Below Sequence 4, without the qualitative factor of godhood, even Sequence 7 or 8 level contracted abilities could participate in Sequence 5 level battles and play significant roles. However, at Sequence 4, facing opponents of the same level, most of these abilities would struggle to be effective, necessitating new suitable contracted creatures.

The ghostly green beams struck the blazing white-blue flame spear directly, giving Lumian no time to dodge.

Yet, the spear contained no trace of Lumian.

As the fiery spear rapidly withered and extinguished, only scattered flames remained within.

As the figures of the two Demonesses reappeared within the cabin's ruins, Lumian, wielding the Sword of Courage, materialized behind Voisin Sanson.

Teleport!

After the Abscessed Hand regained a complete body, Lumian's Spirit World Traversal ability had significantly enhanced!

At this moment, a translucent figure climbed out from Voisin Sanson's back.

The figure resembled Voisin Sanson but was colder and more indifferent.

This was another ability Voisin Sanson had contracted after becoming a Circle Inhabitant, belonging to the domain of death.

He had always guarded against Lumian's teleportation sneak attacks from behind!

Although this would likely trigger the Circle Inhabitant's effect, he still had to guard against the unexpected. Moreover, it could be used as a trap.

As the cold, indifferent Voisin Sanson specter rushed towards him, Lumian's thoughts began to sink, his body cooling. The blazing white-blue flames on the Sword of Courage gradually dimmed.

...

On the primitive island housing the Black Emperor mausoleum, within the thick white fog.

Perle's ever-changing face cast its gaze on three light points.

The next phase was the most crucial part of Project Vortex.

As Perle's face shifted, two of the three light points suddenly expanded.

One revealed a villa shrouded in white fog, permeated with a blood-red figure yet enveloped in divine light; The other was hazy, as if a figure hung suspended in mid-air, wrapped in yellowing bandages, pierced entirely by countless brownish branches, with thorns and rosebushes entwined. Though constantly intertwining, the roses and thorns continuously wilted and fell.

The suspended figure's belly occasionally swelled and deflated, as if new life was stirring within.

Beside the figure stood a massive tree covered in black tar-like substance. Its limbs, serving as branches, sprouted eerie, terrifying hands, with countless bloodshot black and white eyes rolling over its surface.

Another light point had already expanded, revealing a member of the School of Deliciousness, Topsy, devouring an invisible seal over the ocean.

...

Inside the dim Black Emperor mausoleum.

Hearing her father's question, Bernadette remained silent for two seconds before saying, "I will do my best to prevent it."

Roselle looked at his eldest daughter and smiled with a sigh. "Everyone makes mistakes. In my youth, no, even until I was trapped here, afraid to resurrect, I kept making mistakes, doing many wrong things, some even bad. Only when I resided in this mausoleum, occasionally gaining some peace and clarity, did I finally reflect seriously on my past life, realizing some of my choices caused a lot of unnecessary harm. Of course, I also did many right things, many good things."

Seeing Bernadette's expression turn gloomy yet stubborn, Roselle affectionately raised his right hand, pressing down. "Don't blame yourself too much. I'm actually very happy and relieved about your choices and actions. Seeing my little princess willing to defy her long-held principle of 'do as you wish, but do no harm,' willing to risk falling into the abyss to save her old father, makes me genuinely happy and relieved. It shows I didn't love you in vain, that my family life wasn't such a failure!"

The increasingly clear figure stood up from the massive black iron chair.

He descended the platform, walking to Bernadette, opening his arms.

Bernadette, momentarily dazed, felt like a child again, instinctively throwing herself into her father's embrace, feeling that familiar yet no longer warm broad chest.

After a brief hug, Roselle stroked Bernadette's chestnut hair, then walked past her, heading towards the mausoleum's entrance, his figure growing larger.

"Dad?" Bernadette turned, calling out instinctively.

Roselle turned his head, smiling. "The vortex ritual has already begun. Due to the unique characteristics of the Uncertain Mist's pathway, it will be hard to stop the subsequent transactions from proceeding. Even if you want to kill that woman, it's unlikely to be accomplished.

"But it doesn't matter, Dad will handle it."

Bernadette suddenly understood her father's intention. She took a step forward, trying to catch up, but found the distance between them unbridgeable.

Meanwhile, she urgently shouted, "Dad, your corruption isn't balanced yet! If the vortex ritual is disrupted, you won't be able to return to your previous state!"

Roselle stopped at the mausoleum's entrance, smiling at his anxious, panicked, and pained daughter.

Raising his arm, he said with spirited enthusiasm, "I was an emperor for many years, stood at the pinnacle of human power. I faced true gods, fought Angels, had followers willing to die for me.

"I brought the light of civilization to that era. Even after a century of death, countless people still recite my name. I slept with many beautiful women and controlled countless destinies. Even after my downfall, no longer an emperor, my daughter is still willing to sacrifice everything to save me, to revive me!

"What regrets could I possibly have in this life?"

Bernadette heard the finality in her father's tone, her eyes reddening, her voice choking, "Dad!"

She used every ability to close the distance, but it was as insurmountable as the separation of heaven and earth.

Roselle's nearly clear face showed a gentle smile. "Bernadette, do you remember when you were little, and Dad often gave you lessons?"

Tears welled up in Bernadette's eyes, her vision blurring. "I remember. You taught me words, filled my mind with knowledge, told me many, many fairy tales..."

Queen Mystic's face was streaked with glistening tears.

Roselle nodded in satisfaction. "I remember too."

He continued with a slight smile, "Today, Dad will give you one last lesson."

Roselle's expression grew solemn as he looked at Bernadette and declared, "A true gentleman knows what to do and what not to do!"

With that, Roselle turned away, no longer looking at Bernadette.

The Black Emperor mausoleum's doors swung open instantly.

The outside light shone in, illuminating Roselle's giant figure, his black armor, and luxurious cloak.

Bright and radiant.

Chapter 870 Hidden Trap

As soon as Franca's figure materialized within the cabin's ruins, she saw Lumian, behind Voisin Sanson, turning pale. His eyes gradually became hollow, and only the Sword of Courage prevented him from turning into a corpse or triggering his Mirror Substitution. Voisin Sanson, despite having his back to Lumian, raised his left hand, and an indescribable radiance quickly gathered within his fist.

Franca knew she couldn't passively wait for the Mirror Substitution to trigger.

Perhaps Voisin Sanson's impending attack could bypass the connection between the substitute and the original, rendering it ineffective.

At their current distance, neither she, Jenna, nor Anthony could awaken Lumian or stop Voisin Sanson in time.

Even if they could, the threat from Higdon was even more imminent and closing in fast!

At this moment, Ludwig was the closest to Lumian and Voisin Sanson. He had just gotten up but still had twenty to thirty meters to cover before reaching them.

In a flash, Franca took a mirror out of her Traveler's Bag and instantly vanished.

Relying on Black Tear, she appeared in the mirror world, traversing a dark, void-like tunnel into the distance.

Meanwhile, Jenna watched as Franca's mirror fell to the ground, her attention shifting to Higdon, who was now only a few steps away. His face, mostly rotting and oozing pus, had reached her.

She felt that all the Demoness spider threads she had released had withered and decayed, losing their effectiveness.

At this moment, everyone except Ludwig experienced a moment of disorientation.

When Lumian, Franca, Jenna, and Anthony regained clarity, they found themselves back inside the cabin-intact and uncollapsed.

Franca felt a surge of joy seeing this.

Her “retreat in the face of battle” wasn't to escape but to trigger the Circle Inhabitant's effect, resetting the battle and freeing Lumian from Voisin Sanson's secret power and Jenna from Higdon's grip!

Enemy abilities could be used to their advantage!

Finding the trigger point, reverting an adverse situation instantly, meant any dangerous or fatal scenario could be retried. Of course, this was only if they had time to trigger it.

Never thought you could use the enemy's abilities like this... Jenna, momentarily stunned by this realization, saw the cabin decaying and collapsing again, revealing Voisin Sanson and Higdon approaching from a distance.

Lumian wasn't surprised. He had actively triggered the Circle Inhabitant effect back in Cordu Village, seeking a reset.

He quickly reached into the Traveler's Bag, retrieving the Black Tear forehead accessory and tossing it to Franca.

Franca shouted, “Stall!”

She had a plan for the current predicament: delay until circumstances changed!

Since they couldn't break Voisin Sanson's Circle Inhabitant in a short time, they could use it fully. If things went wrong, they could restart, delaying until the authorities in Trier noticed the anomaly or the Tarot Club's Major Arcana card holders found a solution and approached.

As long as the evil gods hadn't fully invaded this world and the apocalypse hadn't arrived prematurely, delaying would surely bring assistance to cleanse the heretics!

After all, this was the capital of Intis, Trier!

Franca thought this and acted accordingly. She caught the Black Tear forehead accessory and threw her Ice Talisman to Jenna.

This way, three people in the group could try to leave the area in different ways to trigger the Circle Inhabitant effect, without worrying about Voisin Sanson and Higdon each locking onto one of them, thus greatly increasing their margin for error.

When Franca suggested this, Lumian was about to retrieve the Sword of Courage, and Ludwig was already instinctively charging towards Voisin Sanson.

Lumian noticed that Voisin Sanson's expression remained unchanged, despite Franca discovering the weakness of the Circle Inhabitant and planning to delay until the end of the Project Vortex.

He suddenly had a thought. Combining his understanding of the Inevitability pathway, he formed an initial judgment: Voisin Sanson couldn't allow the Circle Inhabitant to loop infinitely. He likely set a predetermined end for it. Each reset would push everyone closer to that conclusion until it became unavoidable.

From the fact that they could retain their memories after the reset, it was clear that the Inevitability power attached to the Circle Inhabitant effect wasn't strong.

This endpoint wasn't far away.

Lumian immediately reminded Franca, "Only one more time!"

In the Inevitability pathway, the number "three" was sacred, with strong mystical symbolism. It represented the past, present, and future, and pointed to the beginning, process, and end. Additionally, the initial number of abilities gained by a Contractee fluctuates around three. Lumian suspected that after three activations of the Circle Inhabitant effect, the fourth reset would lead them directly to the predetermined end, with no way to reverse it.

In other words, three times was the limit, and the fourth would bring the final result. They had already triggered the Circle Inhabitant effect twice.

Franca didn't understand why Lumian was denying her proposal, why he said they could only use the Circle Inhabitant effect one more time. But she knew Lumian understood the Inevitability pathway better than she did; he was the expert in this area, so she should heed his advice.

Thud!

As Ludwig fell again, Higdon, whose age spots had not yet festered, slowly raised his arms.

He clearly remembered the battle from the last loop and chose a different approach this time.

Higdon's aura suddenly weakened, as if he was on the brink of death but not quite there yet.

The age spots on his face festered, and his body emitted a strong smell of decay.

He was quickly covered in a thick, disgusting, greenish-yellow pus.

Higdon then vanished, seemingly disintegrating into countless pathogens.

Seeing this, Lumian gripped the Sword of Courage, and blazing white-blue flames ignited around him.

The flames quickly spread, circling Franca, Jenna, and the others, protecting them in the center.

Meanwhile, Anthony, who had been observing, solemnly reminded his companions, "Higdon feels very similar to the 'Winter is Coming' revolver."

"Winter is Coming?" Franca and Jenna both tensed.

They remembered very clearly that the Winter is Coming revolver had two very powerful abilities: Certain Death and Sure Hit.

The former meant that if hit, even a Saint-level Beyonder would be critically injured and gradually die, while those below demigod level would die instantly unless they had a substitute. The latter meant that unless they used a substitute before the attack or had a special ability, they would be inevitably hit, and the substitute would fail.

If Higdon was indeed as Anthony described and similar to Winter is Coming, the two Demonesses had to be wary of the Sure Hit ability. After all, their physical strength was certainly not comparable to a Hunter of the same sequence. If the substitute failed, even if the attack wasn't Certain Death, it would severely injure them!

Protected by the white-blue flames, Franca raised her guard and came up with a new plan.

She glanced at Lumian, who was ready to charge at Voisin Sanson, and quickly told Anthony, "Work with him! Certain Death!"

Franca meant that, with Lumian and Ludwig distracting Voisin Sanson, they should find an opportunity to use the Certain Death ability of Winter is Coming on the Inevitability believer, to see if it could kill him outright, or if the Certain Death effect would be reset by the Circle Inhabitant ability.

As soon as Voisin Sanson died, the Circle Inhabitant effect would naturally be nullified, removing any hidden dangers!

Just as Franca finished speaking, behind her, a greenish-yellow glow quickly condensed within the white-blue flames, forming Higdon covered in thick, disgusting liquid.

The old man was ignited, but he still lashed out at Franca with his arm like a whip.

Sure Hit!

As Franca's spirituality warning triggered, she immediately used her Mirror Substitution.

Smack!

Her body transformed into a mirror, struck by Higdon's thick arm, quickly darkening and shattering, falling to the ground with no trace of light, as if buried in soil for a hundred years.

As Lumian prepared to charge at Voisin Sanson, he suddenly pulled back and swung the Sword of Courage at Higdon.

Courage could be strategic too!

Lumian wasn't afraid of Higdon; he was just concerned that the enemy would flee too quickly, leaving no time to hit his body, so he feigned an attack on Voisin Sanson.

Boom!

As Ludwig fell again, Higdon's arm, unable to escape, was severed by the explosive and sharp sword. The thick, greenish-yellow liquid covering his body was engulfed by the blazing white-blue flames.

Smack!

The severed arm fell to the ground, wriggling and growing rapidly, turning into another Higdon.

Now, there were two Higdons.

The flames covering them quickly dimmed, decayed, and extinguished!

The two Higdons pounced on Franca and Jenna.

Meanwhile, Voisin Sanson, who had planned to magnify a tributary of Franca's fate to make her substitution fail, suddenly felt a ripple of destiny.

He instantly had an epiphany: No more delays, time is running out!

Voisin Sanson frowned.

He didn't want to do what came next; it would be extremely painful.

Let it be an accumulation for the Sufferer stage... Voisin Sanson raised his right hand, pressing it to his temple, gathering an indescribable radiance.

As the source of the Circle Inhabitant effect, he couldn't trigger a reset by leaving the area; that would mean truly leaving. He had to kill himself!

Seeing this, Franca and the others felt a strong sense of foreboding.

At that moment, the radiance in Voisin Sanson's hand strangely dissipated, as if twisted out of its composition.

Similarly, the two Higdon's missed their targets, and Lumian's Sword of Courage struck nothing.

The sky darkened, and a majestic voice echoed in everyone's ears: "People of Intis, your emperor has returned!"