Lord of Mysteries 2: Circle of Inevitability

Chapter 13 Attempt

It was the dead of night, and all was quiet.

Lumian stirred in his dream once more. The first thing he glimpsed was a faint gray mist.

On impulse, he reached into his shirt pocket with his hand.

The frigid sensation of cold, hard metal immediately registered in his mind.

He retrieved the object he'd felt. A glint of gold illuminated his eyes.

It was a gold coin.

A Louis d'or.

It's still here… Lumian sat up and peered down at himself.

He still donned the cotton attire, pants, and leather jacket from his last expedition. The nearly two-meter-long steel pitchfork and sharp, iron-black axe rested within arm's reach.

This was precisely the same condition as when he'd exited the dream.

In other words, this dream is persistent. It doesn't reset with each entry… Lumian fiddled with the Louis d'or and slipped it into his cotton shirt's inner pocket.

Though it couldn't be actualized, it was still a joy to have.

Lumian rose from bed and gazed out the window for a spell, ensuring the red mountain peak in the ruins hadn't changed.

He hoisted his axe and pitchfork, departed his chamber, and entered the dimly lit corridor.

Aurore's bedroom and study doors remained ajar.

Lumian studied them briefly, then suddenly conceived an idea.

In the dream, my room is practically identical to reality. It contains all the expected elements. Aurore's room appears the same at first glance.

However, can I locate her witchcraft notebook, secret potion formula, or learn how to become a Warlock in her quarters?

This notion was akin to a devil's whisper, causing Lumian's heart to race. He was tempted to try.

Compared to exploring the unknown, hazardous, enigmatic ruins, sifting through Aurore's room was the simpler, safer option.

No, no! Lumian shook his head vigorously and cast the idea aside.

He'd rather take his chances than violate Aurore's privacy. He wouldn't venture into her bedroom without her approval.

This was due to his respect for Aurore.

If it weren't for Aurore, he would have perished as a child on the streets five years ago.

Lumian withdrew his pained gaze and made his way to the stairs.

If the occupant of the room wasn't Aurore, he would have already delved in to search for useful information.

Once downstairs, Lumian didn't hasten his departure. Instead, he inspected the provisions in the kitchen.

The olive oil, corn oil, and animal fat that Aurore had amassed were neatly arranged in buckets and cans, just like in reality.

Almost instinctively, Lumian lifted the bucket of corn oil and positioned it near the stove.

His sole reason for selecting it was that animal fat and olive oil were pricier.

Then he adeptly kindled a blaze in the hearth with coal and wood, and fashioned a couple of torches to ignite.

He was preparing to incinerate that monster.

Naturally, it would be preferable if there were other options. That was a last resort.

After completing these tasks, he retrieved his axe, opened the door, and departed.

Lumian then observed something unusual.

The faint gray mist that suffused the dream felt more humid than before. The ground beneath his feet was also slightly muddy.

It rained? This place persists and develops naturally according to certain laws when I'm absent or dreaming? Lumian was somewhat taken aback, but he had an inkling that it was only fitting.

Recalling Aurore's bizarre tales, he suddenly had a notion.

This can't be the real world, can it?

My dream is connected to the genuine world. That tarot card enables me to traverse the barrier between dream and the ruins while conscious?

Lumian swiftly surveyed his surroundings and realized that an endless gray fog bordered both sides of the ruins, on the dream's periphery.

I'll check later. I won't venture into the ruins. I'll stroll out of the gray fog and see if it's a surreal and irrational dream after passing through the gray fog, or if there's tangible land, sky, village, and town…

If it were the former, it signified that this place was still a dream. If it wasn't, Lumian had to confirm which world this was.

He surmised that based on the usage of the Louis d'or, this place still appeared to be in the Intis Republic, but it might not be the present era. It could be a location that had vanished decades or centuries ago.

However, Lumian sensed that there was a high likelihood that he wouldn't be able to exit the encompassing gray fog.

He gathered his thoughts and proceeded toward the ruins.

He didn't forget that the purpose of entering the dream was to attempt to contend with that monster.

After traversing a hundred to two hundred meters in the muddy wilderness riddled with gravel and crevices, Lumian abruptly halted.

He thought of a problem.

He'd overlooked something in his preparations earlier!

Previously, his two-story abode lacked any flames. It was quite secure in this world cloaked in gray fog. But now, it had a blazing furnace that emitted light. Would it draw in a swarm of monsters and render the safe zone unsafe?

Lumian instinctively turned his head and peered in the direction he'd come from. He observed that a scarlet gleam had been etched on various glass windows at the base of the half-submerged two-story structure in the faint gray mist.

It was akin to a beacon in the dark world.

Considering that a considerable amount of time had elapsed, it was evidently too late to attempt to extinguish the fire. Lumian hastened his pace and entered the ruins, taking refuge in the building that had crumbled due to a conflagration.

He clipped the axe to the back of his belt and agilely scaled a wall, concealing himself in a shadowy nook separated by bricks and timber.

Lumian gazed at his home on the other side of the wilderness.

As time ticked by, he didn't witness any monsters lured by the fire.

Seems like the fire won't trigger any changes. At the very least, my house won't be besieged by monsters… Lumian breathed a sigh of relief.

This meant that even if he encountered any peril, as long as he could flee home promptly and slumber as soon as possible, he could successfully elude it.

He began to contemplate how to entice and eliminate the previous monster.

From their brief skirmish, he'd deduced that its strength, speed, reaction time, and agility were similar to his, but he could sense that it fought on instinct. It lacked sufficient experience, expertise, or corresponding intelligence. That's why he'd been able to counter and slay it when it ambushed him…

It'll also be bewildered and taken aback. It's not dissimilar to humans…

Other than combat techniques, I have two other advantages over it. Firstly, I possess superior intelligence. Secondly, I know how to wield weapons and utilize tools. This is the greatest advantage humans possess over such monsters…

As long as I'm cautious, defeating it again won't be arduous. The most crucial aspect is how to eradicate it completely…

Just as Lumian was about to deliberately stir up some commotion to see if he could lure over some monster, he spied a figure stealthily approaching the utterly ruined house on the side.

The figure was crimson and devoid of skin. Its muscles, blood vessels, and fascia were exposed. It was the monster from last time.

Unlike before, this monster was wielding a manure fork.

A manure fork!

It knows how to wield weapons too… Lumian's countenance stiffened as his expression turned grim.

Unwittingly, his confidence waned a bit.

As the monster drew closer and turned, Lumian perceived exaggerated wounds on its back, neck, and the nape of its neck. However, the fissures were no longer oozing pus, and it appeared to have mostly mended.

It's indeed the one I encountered previously…

Its self-healing ability is many times superior to that of ordinary humans…

Lumian gasped soundlessly.

He compelled himself to compose and expeditiously assessed the situation.

In the twinkling of an eye, Lumian arrived at a determination.

This was a prime opportunity, and he had to seize it when he encountered it. He couldn't let it slip by!

He silently retrieved a stone brick beside him and awaited the monster's arrival at the desired location.

In just a few strides, the monster entered Lumian's kill zone.

Lumian abruptly hurled the stone brick at the ground behind the monster.

Thud!

The stone brick clattered, causing the monster to swivel around and scrutinize the assailant.

Upon beholding this, Lumian seized the axe with both hands and pounced fiercely from the wall towards the monster.

Bang!

The axe descended heavily onto the monster's neck, cleaving it in two.

With twin thuds, Lumian and the monster plummeted to the ground simultaneously.

Lumian sprang up nimbly, seized his axe, and darted over, delivering weighty slashes to the monster's neck.

Once, twice, thrice. The monster didn't even get a chance to resist before its head was lopped off.

As the head rolled aside, the skinless body convulsed twice and ceased movement.

Lumian didn't halt there. He took a diagonal step, rotated his axe, and pulverized the vicious head with its thick back, reducing it to fragments.

Subsequently, he pivoted and hacked at the exposed muscles, blood vessels, and fascia, crushing the heart and other vital organs.

After accomplishing all of this, Lumian took two paces backward and surveyed his handiwork. He panted and chuckled softly.

"I thought you were truly invincible. Who'd have thought you possessed so little ability!"

Amidst the subdued laughter, the decapitated cadaver abruptly jolted upward.

Lumian's pupils contracted, and he instinctively wished to pivot and flee.

He forcefully quelled this impulse and strode forward once more, brandishing his axe.

After the corpse bounced twice, it reverted to immobility, as if it had writhed in vain.

Lumian scrutinized it a while longer and ultimately verified that the monster was wholly deceased.

How tenacious… Lumian sighed inwardly. Then, he leaned over and crouched down. He employed his axe to pry open the muscles and fascias and scrutinized the corpse.

The monster's bodily structure wasn't dissimilar to a human's, but its muscles were evidently more animated. Even though it was already dead, some of its incisions were still wriggling slightly.

There's no treasure, nor is there any supernatural power transferred into my body… Lumian assessed his present state and felt somewhat disenchanted.

The adage that one grows stronger with each monster they slay indeed only existed in Aurore's tales.

He then relocated the monster's corpse and head into the ruined building and entombed them with bricks and timber.

Subsequently, he scoured the burnt-down house, hoping to discover something.