

Lord of Mysteries 2: Circle of Inevitability

Chapter 23: Combat Intelligence

Lumian's senses were on high alert.

He wasn't as scared as before now that things were finally happening. Despite his body still quivering, he felt more in control and less likely to collapse.

I should've died five years ago. It's all thanks to Aurore that I'm still alive. These past five years were a free lunch. What's there to be afraid of? Lumian muttered to himself, gritting his teeth and mustering up courage. In the blink of an eye, the already dim light illuminating the first trap's surface grew even fainter.

A shadowy figure emerged, blocking the light that pierced through the dense fog in the sky.

The figure loomed in the distance, a hulking beast with blood-red eyes and greasy black hair. Half-human and half-beast, it was armed with a shotgun on its back, ready for anything. Its front "knees" bent as it surveyed the ground before it.

A moment later, the beast, wearing a dark jacket and muddy pants, removed its shotgun and jumped, controlling the vertical extent of its jump to leap over the trap and land on the solid, cracked ground.

It turned its greasy black-haired head and saw a slight movement.

Then, the monster spotted Lumian, who had a panicked expression and was trying to hide behind a wall.

With a low growl, the beast jumped up high again and pounced on its target.

It landed a slight distance away from where Lumian had been, to prevent him from turning around and dealing a fatal blow before it could stabilize itself.

Lumian fumbled his way around the wall, disappearing from view.

As soon as the monster landed, the soil beneath its feet gave way, and it plummeted along with the dirt and rope net into a deep pit that had suddenly appeared.

Thud!

The sound of something heavy crashing to the ground echoed through the abandoned building, accompanied by a screech resembling that of a rat.

Lumian, who had concealed himself behind the wall, couldn't suppress the thrill surging through him upon witnessing the sight.

The first step had been accomplished!

With most of his fear evaporating, he seized the pitchfork by his side and dashed towards the trap.

The skinless monster's formidable tenacity had left an indelible impression on Lumian. Moreover, his quarry had a shotgun, so he refrained from exposing himself above the deep hole. Instead, he aimed the pitchfork from a distance and thrust it into the pit.

In a sudden turn of events, the pitchfork plunged and halted abruptly.

Immediately, an intense force reverberated through the pitchfork, yanking Lumian into the trap with brute force.

Caught off guard, Lumian tumbled forward.

He didn't bother inspecting the pit's bottom. Discarding the pitchfork, he spun around and lunged towards the still-standing wall.

Bang!

The impact hit Lumian like a freight train, knocking him off his feet.

Blood, with a distinct metallic taste, surged up in his throat.

With a thud, he hit the ground, tumbling a few times before he regained his footing.

In the same instant, he caught sight of the monstrous creature—part-human, part-beast—emerging from the deep pit.

It held a single-barreled shotgun in its hand, its body torn open, revealing a grotesque display of wounds. A sickening mixture of dark red and pale yellow liquid poured out, as its insides spilled out.

Despite being badly injured by Lumian's trap, the creature had not lost its ability to fight.

As it tumbled into the pit, it managed to contort its body just enough to avoid a fatal blow. The creature's legs and arms were also still functional, allowing it to break free from the trap.

Without a moment's hesitation, Lumian bolted for the ruins nearby.

It wasn't a spontaneous decision; he had a plan in mind.

He knew there was a chance the trap wouldn't completely incapacitate the monster, leaving it with enough strength to fight back.

In the event that the trap failed, Lumian's contingency plan was to use the environment to his advantage. He'd play a game of cat and mouse, buying time for the beast to succumb to its wounds. Its reaction time and strength would weaken considerably, and Lumian could strike when the

opportunity presented itself.

Bang!

Another shot rang out, followed by the sound of soil splattering as leads appeared at the spot where Lumian had been standing.

He quickly took cover behind a half-collapsed wall and crawled on all fours to the other side of the ruins.

Suddenly, he heard the sound of wind blowing in the air.

The monster had jumped over.

Lumian swiftly pivoted and crawled back behind the half-collapsed wall through a gap.

He made the most of the special conditions of the collapsed buildings, hiding at times and circling around at others, dodging the monster's attacks without engaging in a direct fight.

Hide-and-seek was Lumian's forte, honed through past pranks where he used this innate ability to escape getting beaten up on the spot.

As the cat-and-mouse game continued, Lumian gradually found himself panting, while the monster's running speed, jumping height, strength, and reaction speed had clearly weakened.

Just a little longer, just a little longer. I still can't defeat it now... Lumian retreated back to his previous location, leaning against the half-collapsed wall and trying to control his urge to immediately counterattack.

Bang! Suddenly, he felt a massive blow to his back, sending him flying forward.

The half-collapsed wall and rocks behind him exploded into a million pieces, raining down around him as he crashed to the ground.

The monster hadn't chased after him, instead choosing to body-slam into the obstacles in its way.

The already shaky half-collapsed wall couldn't withstand the brunt of its full force and collapsed completely.

Crimson blood gushed out of the creature's wounds, pooling on the ground in a grotesque display.

Despite being caught off guard, Lumian's reflexes were quick. He rolled out of harm's way and sought cover behind a pile of rubble.

Bang!

The monster's shotgun blast missed him by a hair's breadth.

Having slammed into the wall, the monster struggled to regain its footing.

It fumbled with the cloth bag strapped to its waist, only to find it empty.

With a snarl, it hurled the shotgun aside and lunged at Lumian.

Lumian had already darted to a new hiding spot for a continued game of cat-and-mouse.

Of course, he couldn't keep up this game forever. The monster might slip away if he waited too long, and the noise could attract others of its kind. As he circled around the area, he noticed that the monster seemed to be slowing down.

Here's the chance!

With a quick decision, Lumian pretended to make an escape towards a collapsed building.

Once there, he stood firm, drew his axe from his back, and took a moment to catch his breath.

In a flash, the monster rounded the corner and stood in front of Lumian.

Without hesitation, Lumian raised his axe and charged forward.

He stepped towards the creature, turning his body sideways and lowering his shoulder. He planned to body-slam the monster, a move his sister had taught him, and then slash at its neck.

Bam!

Lumian took a step forward, leaning his body against the monster's chest, but the creature didn't budge. Lumian was surprised by its unyielding stance. He tried to push harder, but the monster remained like a thick wall.

What... Lumian's heart tightened, and he bounced back. He was about to pounce to the ground and try to escape the monster's attack range.

In a flash, the monster lunged forward and clutched Lumian's neck in a death grip.

It didn't look like it was having trouble moving at all!

Lumian gasped in shock as he was hoisted into the air, his neck throbbing with pain. *Sacrebleu*, I've been tricked! he exclaimed, his mind reeling.

A creaking sound filled the air, and the world spun around him, making his head swim.

His axe had missed its target and was now knocked off to the side.

Lumian finally realized that he had been outsmarted by the monster.

Despite being in dire straits, the creature had enough strength to fight. It had cunningly faked weakness, luring him into attacking instead of staying hidden. Lumian had underestimated its combat intelligence, and now he found himself in a desperate situation.

The monster was clearly at the end of its rope, as evidenced by its

inability to snap Lumian's neck. But this was just a temporary respite. The creature still had enough energy left to finish the job.

As his neck threatened to snap and his breathing grew more ragged, Lumian felt his mind begin to go blank.

Blank.

As Lumian teetered on the brink of death, the lady's words suddenly resurfaced in his mind.

She wanted him to use what's special about him in the dream.

Special trait... His thoughts were nearly blank, and so he quickly seized the opportunity to meditate.

The red sun instantly appeared in his mind. Unlike his previous attempt at meditation to calm his emotions, where the sun disappeared as soon as it was formed, this time he focused on keeping it in existence.

Suddenly, a voice from above, infinitely high, pierced his skull.

The pain was excruciating, and Lumian felt as though his heart might burst from his chest. He forgot about the monster's vice grip on his neck and the fact that he was struggling to breathe.

Suddenly, he fell to the ground with a sickening thud.

The strange sound that had accompanied his meditation disappeared, but the pain remained, almost unbearable. He was unable to take stock of his surroundings or even assess the damage done to his body.

After an unknown amount of time, the near-death sensation subsided.

Lumian didn't bother checking his neck; instead, he placed his hands on the ground and lifted his head.

The beast was squatting nearby, half-human and half-beast, with its head drooping and its arms outstretched in front of it.

Lumian noticed its wounds still seeping with blood mixed with a yellow liquid, and the creature's body quivered uncontrollably.

What's wrong with it? Was it scared silly by the "specialness" I displayed? He picked up his fallen axe and took a step towards the monster.

Without hesitation, he held the axe with both hands and swung it at the back of the beast's neck.

The axe sank deeply into the creature's muscles and came to a halt at its bones.

Lumian used all his strength to remove the axe, then continued his assault, slashing at the monster's neck once, twice, thrice. Finally, the beast's head detached from its body with a sickening splash, rolling to

the side.

The body held on for a moment longer, barely clinging to life.

No resistance, just trembles.

And then, with a sudden jerk, Lumian's body contorted, his hands releasing their tight grip, letting the bloodied axe slide down with a sickening squelch.

Huff. Puff. Huff. He could finally catch his breath.

