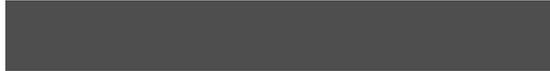


LORD OF MYSTERIES 2: CIRCLE OF INEVITABILITY

Chapter 271 Acting



With this in mind, Lumian's gaze automatically drifted over "Rat" Christo and "Giant" Simon, taking them in.

He sensed that the chances of them becoming expendable pawns were slim. Potion-consuming Beyonders, unlike the Blessed relying on divine favors from evil gods, were a rarity. They couldn't be simply stockpiled at will. Firstly, the ingredients required were specific, and secondly, ample time was needed. At the Mid-Sequence, luck and mastery of the acting method played a role.

If he were to use them as mere pawns in this mission, the likelihood of reclaiming the Beyer characteristics would be greatly diminished. It constituted a substantial portion of Gardner Martin's control over the underground world in the market district.

As a member of the secretive organization, the Iron and Blood Cross Order, Gardner Martin could indeed bear such a loss, but he wouldn't make such a colossal sacrifice for something insignificant.

And if the mission was of sufficient importance, sending only one Sequence 7 and two Sequence 8 Beyonders was clearly inadequate. Shouldn't Gardner Martin be concerned about failure?

With this realization, Lumian swiftly revised his conjecture.

Either this was a preliminary test, a low-risk mission designed to assess him, regardless of whether "Rat" Christo and "Giant" Simon were aware of it, or it was indeed a crucial and perilous operation. While using them as pawns, there would be powerhouses present as a safety net. This was also a test.

With this in mind, Lumian's initial reaction was to gaze at Gardner Martin and accept the mission, projecting an image of an ambitious young man striving to climb the ranks.

If it was the first possibility, this was his best chance to prove himself. If it was the second possibility, Lumian still had Mr. K's finger quietly nestled in his pocket as a trump card. When the time came, if he needed to divulge his affiliation with the Aurora Order to ensure his survival, he could abandon the Iron and Blood Cross Order's mission.

As long as he remained alive, he could await another opportunity!

After the catastrophe caused by the Tree of Shadow, Lumian visited Psychic's headquarters and met Mr. K before Gardner Martin could conduct an investigation.

He concealed his experience with the Tree of Shadow, merely mentioning that something had occurred in the market district, trapping them in a peculiar wilderness. Then the brownish-green tree descended, and Susanna Mattise appeared, draining everyone's energy. To combat the Fallen Tree Spirit, he used the finger to fashion a robust defensive flesh robe, but he didn't receive additional assistance.

Later, with the aid of the tree's further descent, Susanna Mattise's weakened state, and the involvement of the other two present Beyonders, he barely overcame the enemy and vanquished her using his Pyromaniac abilities and the Fallen Mercury from Cordu.

He spoke the truth, albeit blurring the sequence of events, time, and location, as well as omitting a few details. The logic remained intact. Mr. K harbored no suspicions after hearing the account; instead, he sighed and cautioned Lumian not to overly rely on the finger since there were multiple ways to sever the mystical connection between him and it.

Satisfied with Lumian's advancement to Pyromaniac with Gardner Martin's assistance, Mr. K plucked another finger for him.

This led Lumian to believe that, as long as he didn't encounter extraordinary environments like Paramita or the Tree of Shadow and wasn't entangled in the perilous affair of confronting a godlike entity head-on, with Mr. K's finger, even if he couldn't completely reverse the situation, he still had a high chance of escape.

Just as Lumian was about to express his stance to the boss, he suddenly sensed that he shouldn't push his acting too far.

That was what Jenna would occasionally say.

According to Franca, Boss is at least a Sequence 6 Conspirer. I can't underestimate his intelligence and discernment...

My background is undeniably evident. I'm young and hail from the countryside. I was once entangled in a Beyonder catastrophe and lacked knowledge. I wanted to change my fate, but I've spent a considerable time in the market district, openly and covertly accomplishing much. Even with what the Boss only knows, it should be enough for him to perceive that I'm not an ignorant country bumpkin who acts rashly and mercilessly.

Based on today's incident, the impression the boss has of me should be someone capable of detecting mission abnormalities and potential dangers. Simply agreeing without reason or observation would only raise suspicions of ulterior motives or reliance on something.

That would be troublesome...

A whirlwind of thoughts raced through Lumian's mind. He immediately shifted his gaze to "Giant" Simon and "Rat" Christo, eagerly awaiting their reactions and attitudes toward the mission.

It remained unclear whether "Rat" Christo was recalling the incident involving the "mirror person" or his brother's demise due to it. His expression grew nasty, tainted with fear and apprehension.

Doubt and wariness flickered across "Giant" Simon's face, yet he didn't voice any objections.

After a few seconds, they nearly spoke simultaneously.

"Yes, Boss!"

Observing this, Lumian deliberately hesitated before continuing, "Yes, Boss!"

With keen eyes, Gardner Martin observed Lumian, Christo, and Simon, assessing their expressions and demeanors.

After their unanimous agreement, the boss of the Savoie Mob grinned with satisfaction and said, "I shall now disclose the mission details."

He reached into a drawer and retrieved a scroll made of faux goatskin, laying it out on the desk before them.

Approaching, Lumian and his companions beheld a map revealing a section of Underground Trier!

The map measured a meter in length and 50 centimeters in width. The upper level depicted the Underground Trier, formed by the municipal department through the excavation of various tunnels and reinforcement of the quarry cave. It corresponded to the streets and squares above ground.
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The map focused solely on the underground areas of Quartier du Marché, Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative, Quartier du Jardin Botanique, and Quartier de l'Observatoire. However, it was intricately detailed, as if copied from the original by infiltrating the municipal department.

Lumian could clearly discern extensions on both sides, although the drawing did not continue. I think you should take a look at

In the middle of the map lay quarry caves, ancient catacombs, and underground river tributaries, scattered in a haphazard manner and connected to the upper level through visible or concealed tunnels.

This portion contained numerous gaps and omissions. Beside these areas were inscriptions such as "to be investigated," "to be explored," and "to be searched."

The lower levels of the map encompassed collapsed mines and more missing information, as if veiled in a shroud of fog. Even the Iron and Blood Cross Order, a secret organization, lacked comprehensive knowledge.

Numerous passageways extended downward from this level, but the map did not indicate their connections.

Fourth Epoch Trier? The place referred to as the Ancient Ruins Reserve by the authorities?

It's evident that this map is a copy of a more comprehensive one...

A complete version includes Fourth Epoch Trier?

The Iron and Blood Cross Order possesses extensive knowledge of the underground... Lumian speculated as he committed the incomplete map to memory.

After his three subordinates had taken a cursory glance at the map, Gardner Martin pointed to a location and said, "This is your destination."

It marked a collapsed mine, yet there remained some open space.

Situated at the lowest level of the map, it was near Fourth Epoch Trier.

Above it, corresponding to Avenue Sèlbù, Rue des Mauvais Enfants, and Place de la Forêt, lay the intersection between Quartier de l'Observatoire and Quartier du Jardin Botanique.

"It's called the Albert Mines," Gardner Martin introduced. "To reach it, you must traverse two privately-bored tunnels. It remains unknown to the authorities and most people who travel underground."

As he spoke, Gardner Martin traced the tunnel with his finger and instructed Lumian, Christo, and Simon on the correct entrance.

Finally, he sighed with a tinge of emotion and added, "Six years ago, Albert Goncourt, the leader of the rebellion and the mastermind behind the uprising, relied on this mine, which he discovered and named, to elude the army, police, and official Beyonders who were searching the underground. He survived."

Six years ago... Rebellion... Uprising... Lumian instantly recalled what he had witnessed and heard.

During the war with the Loen Kingdom, prices in Trier skyrocketed, leaving people in despair due to the exorbitant cost of food. This triggered a massive protest that swept through the city, resulting in various conflicts.

From Gardner Martin's words, it was evident that the protest wasn't purely spontaneous. Someone had planned and guided it. Was the Iron and Blood Cross Order also involved? Lumian continued to gaze at the map, lost in thought.

Concluding his explanation, Gardner Martin said, "Your task is to reach the Albert Mines before noon and await the arrival of a trader who will hand you a box.

"You need not give him anything, nor do you need to communicate with him verbally.

"On your return journey, you must not open that box, as doing so would expose you to immeasurable danger.

"As long as you strictly follow my instructions, the mission poses minimal risk. While you may encounter peculiar phenomena concealed underground or face Beyonder monsters, good teamwork will resolve those challenges."

After providing them with additional guidance, Lumian, Christo, and Simon each took a carbide lamp and departed from 11 Rue des Fontaines, making their way to the nearest entrance to Underground Trier.

Casting a final glance at the now-out-of-sight grayish-white villa, Lumian considered the impression Gardner Martin had of him.

With a smile, he casually inquired of "Rat" Christo and "Giant" Simon, "Have you undertaken similar missions before?"

"Rat" Christo fell silent for a few seconds before answering, "Thrice."

"Once," "Giant" Simon replied in a slightly buzzing voice.

Lumian chuckled.

"Well, the fact that you're still alive suggests that such missions aren't too perilous."

"Rat" Christo remained silent, as though he had fallen into a grim recollection.

"Giant" Simon reassured himself, echoing Lumian's words.

"You're right. Perhaps this is a test from the boss. Those who pass may have an opportunity to advance further."

Lumian smiled.

"And what about those who fail? Do they perish on the spot?"

LORD OF MYSTERIES 2: CIRCLE OF INEVITABILITY

Chapter 272 - 272 Charismatic Artist



272 Charismatic Artist

"Giant" Simon found himself momentarily speechless, struggling to find the right words. After a few seconds of contemplation, he finally spoke up.

"Are you out of your mind? If you fail, the worst outcome would be missing an opportunity."

"Rat" Christo chimed in.

"If the mission is truly important, the Boss wouldn't hesitate to handle it personally. He wouldn't send us. And if it's not a significant task, the risk won't be too high."

This train of thought mirrored Lumian's initial concerns.

Lumian glanced towards the nearby entrance of Underground Trier, intentionally wearing a smile.

"Perhaps we are merely bait in this scenario?"

"For instance, the Boss suspects that a faction is secretly watching us, so he has deliberately devised this mission. If everything goes smoothly without any

abnormalities, he can deactivate the alarm and consider it a test. However, if he does catch something, he can follow the trail of clues to uncover the truth and eliminate any hidden dangers. As for us being the bait and potentially getting caught, it's not his concern. As long as we ultimately achieve his goal, losing a few Low-Sequence Beyonders falls within his level of tolerance."

"Rat" Christo's face turned pale upon hearing these words, while "Giant" Simon fell into silence.

Although they lacked experience with mysticism, their years as mobsters and leaders had honed their basic analytical skills.

They couldn't help but admit that Ciel's theory made sense.

This, naturally, brought about a deep sense of fear for their lives.

Especially for Christo, memories of his brother Erkin's death and the pained expressions of his wife and children flooded his mind.

If it weren't for the Boss assigning him another task and excluding him from the smuggling operation, he might have been replaced by the so-called "mirror people" and met a tragic end somewhere underground.

And as for his wife, his dogs, and the other animals he cared for, the "mirror person" would have had the opportunity to enjoy them for a while!

With these thoughts weighing on their minds, the three of them ignited their carbide lamps and descended the steel stairs in silence.

Christo scanned the dark tunnel with the bluish-yellow light, his voice trembling as he spoke.

"The Boss wouldn't purposefully send us to our deaths.

"Even as Low-Sequence Beyonders, we still have our uses. If we perish underground, it might take the Boss half a year or even a whole year to groom a replacement."

The “mirror people” incident came to his mind, the Boss’s request for him to undertake a different task being a clear attempt to protect him without revealing anything.

“Everything comes at a price. Perhaps the stakes involved this time are more valuable than the three of us combined.” Lumian held the carbide lamp emitting a yellowish glow, walking steadily through the dark and slightly damp passageway. He sneered and said, “I hope this mission won’t be as perilous as the Boss claims, but we can’t afford to be naive. We must prepare for the worst.”

Noting Ciel’s significant improvement, Christo couldn’t help but ask, “What should we do?”

From his perspective, Ciel was the most reliable person in this mission—a lifeline in critical moments.

Surprised by Christo’s sudden timidity, “Giant” Simon turned towards him.

When did the “Rat” become so fearful?

As a leader under the Boss, why would he choose to display weakness and worry in front of Ciel?

Where is his pride and self-esteem? Wasn’t he afraid that Ciel would overshadow him and encroach upon his smuggling business?

This was precisely the effect Lumian intended. He genuinely spoke up.

“The Boss has helped me multiple times, and I’m more than willing to carry out missions for him. However, the risk involved should not be excessively high, leaving us with only the option of ‘death.’ Damn it, I haven’t lived long enough!

“That’s why my stance is to attempt the mission if possible. If it becomes too dangerous, I won’t hesitate to abandon it and ensure my own survival. This

might require the three of us to let down our guard against each other and cooperate fully to overcome any hidden threats.”

Such an attitude struck a chord with Christo and Simon, prompting visible or imperceptible nods from them.

No one was entirely selfless. Taking a calculated risk for the Boss was already a testament to their loyalty!

Accepting this attitude and genuinely cooperating to resist danger seemed to be the only viable choice, at least on the surface.

“How should we collaborate?” Christo swiftly made up his mind.

He didn’t want another “mirror people” incident.

Lumian smirked once more.

“First and foremost, we must understand each other’s abilities so that we can complement one another more effectively.”

Christo pondered for a moment before speaking up, “I’m a Beast Tamer, a Sequence 8 of the Apothecary pathway. I can directly confront and communicate with various beasts to a certain extent. I have the ability to gradually tame them and make them my assistants.

“I’m also skilled in treating illnesses and providing comprehensive medical care...”

At that moment, he couldn’t help but cast a questioning glance at Ciel, as if hinting at his need for a remedy to improve his performance in bed and replenish his physical stamina.

Word had gotten around about Ciel being quite a libertine. Not only was he involved with Jenna, “Red Boots” mistress, but he had also been linked to nearly ten dancers. He had arranged for them to receive acting lessons at

Théâtre de l'Ancienne Cage à Pigeons, allowing them to earn money without having to accompany customers.

An Apothecary? If only I had known that “Rat” Christo was an Apothecary, I would’ve gotten him to give plenty of medicine to Jenna’s mother... She would’ve made a quick recovery and returned home that very night... Lumian silently sighed and nodded approvingly in the flickering light of the carbide lamp.

The more “Giant” Simon listened, the more astonished he became.

He began to suspect that “Rat” Christo had lost his mind by divulging the secrets of his Sequence!

Until now, apart from Gardner Martin, nobody knew Christo’s Sequence or the pathway he belonged to. After all, there were plenty of people in Trier who had a fondness for pets—some even had a large number of them or formed intimate relationships with animals, as occasionally seen in the newspapers.

In a flash, an idea struck Simon.

“Rat” Christo was in charge of the smuggling business and had completed most of the Boss’s secret missions. Perhaps he knew something and had become pessimistic about this operation, hence his sincere cooperation with Ciel.

Christo let out a sigh and continued, “I’ve been unlucky. I haven’t managed to tame a genuine Beyonder creature yet. Otherwise, I wouldn’t be powerless against Mid-Sequence Beyonders even if I encountered them.

“This mission was sudden and we didn’t have time to prepare. I only brought a few companions with me. Is he afraid that we won’t die quickly enough?”

As he spoke, he raised his right hand.

A colorful snake-like creature with a triangular head emerged from his sleeve.

Soon after, Christo had the snake retreat back into his sleeve. He reached into his pocket and produced a palm-sized rat.

This rat was different from the ordinary kind. Its fur was pale white and distinct, with eyes as bright as rubies.

“This is Taffy. It’s a unique creature I discovered underground during my smuggling days. It can’t be used as the main ingredient for any potion, but it has the ability to sense hidden dangers,” Christo briefly introduced.

“It can also sense the approximate strength of others, right?” Lumian asked thoughtfully.

Christo looked at Lumian with surprise and hesitated for a moment before replying, “Yes.”

Recognizing that Christo had already divulged enough information, Lumian didn’t press further, despite suspecting that he possessed other abilities or other animal companions. Instead, he shifted his gaze to “Giant” Simon.

Simon hesitated for a moment, recalling his earlier speculation. In a muffled voice, he said, “I’m a Sequence 8 Pugilist of the Warrior pathway. Like ‘Hammer’ Ait, I excel in face-to-face combat and various fighting techniques. I carry a gun, a dagger, a bayonet, and boxing gloves.”

His explanation was brief, as Pugilists didn’t possess any extraordinary abilities.

No mystical item? That’s true. It’s indeed challenging for mobsters groomed by secret organizations to acquire such items... Lumian chuckled to himself.

“You’re stronger than ‘Hammer’ Ait because you’re intelligent and can read the situation clearly.”

These words left Simon unsure whether to feel angered or proud.

Holding the carbide lamp, he looked at Lumian and said, "What about you? Which Sequence 8 pathway are you from? Hunter?"

Since they were working together, Ciel couldn't keep his Sequence a secret! Lumian smiled, raising his right hand in front of him.

Silently, a crimson flame emerged from his palm and hung in the air, burning silently.

"You're a Pyromaniac?" Simon exclaimed in surprise. *nOvelusb.com*

Among Trier's mystical circles, the most common information concerned Mid-Sequence Beyonders of the Hunter pathway, especially those below Sequence 6.

Lumian didn't respond, opting to maintain his smile instead.

Simon suddenly understood why "Rat" Christo's attitude towards Ciel had undergone such a drastic change and why he appeared to seek his assistance.

Sequence 7 was the starting point for Mid-Sequence Beyonders. Compared to Low-Sequence Beyonders like themselves, their strength had undergone a qualitative transformation. They were countless times more powerful!

With his attention now diverted from the pocket of "Rat" Christo, Simon asked Lumian in surprise and suspicion, "Does the Boss know that you've advanced to Sequence 7?"

"The Boss provided me with the necessary supplementary ingredients," Lumian truthfully replied, dissipating the crimson flame in his palm under the yellowish glow of the lamp.

Wha... Simon's pupils dilated.

Lumian looked around and continued, “That’s why, if I can complete this mission, I will do everything in my power to see it through.”

With those words, he pulled out an iron-colored canister and tossed it to Simon.

“This is Scorpion Poison that I obtained from ‘Hammer’ Ait. You can apply it to your weapon.

“Increasing your strength will increase our chances of survival.”

Simon caught the canister, momentarily taken aback.

Though Ciel disgusted him and they were at odds, his knowledge, intelligence, strength, and approach to things made him seem reliable. Unconsciously, he found himself listening to him and following his lead.

Lumian, who was walking ahead without turning back, let out a sigh of relief.

He had exaggerated the risks and instilled fear to dampen the spirits of “Rat” Christo and Simon, plunging them into a state of worry. Then, by revealing his own strength, offering convincing suggestions, and providing small favors, he would establish himself as the team’s leader.

Only then could he fully harness the team’s combined strength without exposing his hidden trump cards and effectively combat any potential threats.

LORD OF MYSTERIES 2: CIRCLE OF INEVITABILITY

Chapter 273 Trader



Holding the carbide lamp aloft, "Giant" Simon trailed behind Lumian for a few steps, his keen eyes picking up on the inconsistencies in Lumian's words.

"Ciel, the Boss knows you've turned into a Pyromaniac. He won't just toss you aside recklessly, will he?"

Lumian gazed ahead at the tunnel bathed in the yellowish glow, a smile playing on his lips as he posed a question without turning around.

"How long have I been with the Savoie Mob?"

Both "Giant" Simon and "Rat" Christo had a moment of enlightenment and found themselves in agreement with Lumian's explanation.

It was true that Lumian, a Beyonder with a dubious past who had recently joined the mob, had brought with him a crucial ingredient for a potion. Such a person couldn't be trusted right off the bat. They had to undergo a series of tests in the form of missions.

And if Lumian were to meet his demise during one of these missions, it would simply be chalked up to his ill luck. Losing a foreign Beyonder was far less painful for the Boss than losing a subordinate he had meticulously groomed.

The two leaders of the Savoie Mob hesitated no longer. They cautiously followed Lumian, maintaining a distance of two to three steps. It was a familiar arrangement, much like when they traveled with a few mobsters stationed at similar positions behind them.

In the midst of their journey, "Giant" Simon donned gloves and applied a small amount of Scorpion Poison to his dagger, bayonet, and boxing gloves. He then returned the canister to Lumian.

The trio descended into the tunnel marked on the map. Despite their soft steps, the special environment caused their footfalls to echo faintly in the dark, eerily silent underground.

Nearly 45 minutes later, they passed through the area marked as an ancient tomb and arrived at the entrance of a concealed passageway.

It led to an abandoned quarry cave that had lain dormant for ages. The ground was uneven, covered in moss. In the distance, the sound of an underground river could be heard, occasionally accompanied by the rumbling of a steam subway passing by.

Lumian observed for a moment, clenching the ring of the carbide lamp between his teeth. With both hands, he grasped a protruding stone wall and climbed to the cave's summit.

Then, extending his right hand, he pushed an apparently ordinary stone behind him, wedging it between the side wall and the cave roof.

A pitch-black hole materialized, allowing someone as tall as Simon to bend over and crawl through.

The hidden tunnel had been fashioned using a long-forgotten ventilation system that already existed in a nearby quarry.

The three of them hunched over and strode deeper into the underground tunnel. Gradually, the sounds of the underground river and the steam subway faded away.

Apart from their own breathing and footsteps, the surroundings were silent as a tomb.

After nearly half an hour, Lumian and his companions followed the markings on the map and leaped from an exit, emerging into an already existing underground cave.

From high above, stalactites dangled like the menacing teeth of a terrifying beast lurking in the darkness.

Lumian didn't rush to enter another hidden tunnel at the cave's base. Instead, he turned to "Giant" Simon and "Rat" Christo, who had accumulated a fair amount of dust on their heads. Wearing a grave expression, he spoke.

"Before we proceed, let's confirm something to avoid any mishaps. We won't have time for verbal communication."

"Alright." Both "Rat" Christo and "Giant" Simon accepted Lumian's words without question.

With a subtle nod, Lumian replied, "Firstly, from the moment we enter the second tunnel until we return here, no one is allowed to speak. Make use of physical gestures as much as possible. If that's not feasible, you must obtain my permission before uttering a word."

This precautionary measure stemmed from Gardner Martin's advice regarding the lack of need for communication with the trader. Lumian had expanded its scope and made it absolute to prevent any potential mishaps.

Christo and Simon recalled the Boss's counsel and nodded in agreement.

Observing their response, Lumian pressed on, "Secondly, no matter what anomalies occur, unless something attacks both of you, stay calm and act in accordance with my lead.

"Thirdly, I won't force you, but if you wish to survive, it's best to heed my instructions."

These two requests were met with resistance from "Rat" Christo and "Giant" Simon. They would be entrusting their safety to Lumian's intelligence, skills, reactions, and knowledge. It was a departure from their usual reliance on their own wild Beyonder instincts.

After a few seconds of hesitation, "Rat" Christo forced a smile, recollecting Ciel's strength and previous performances.

"I'll follow your arrangements, but if you fail to react in time and Taffy warns me of danger, I'll take matters into my own hands.

"Dammit, the longer I've been in this smuggling business, the more I dread Trier's underground."

"Giant" Simon chimed in, "I'm with you on that, 'Rat.'"

Lumian felt a sense of satisfaction, having successfully "tamed" the two Beyonders who also served as leaders in the Savoie Mob. He didn't push further and simply nodded in agreement.

"No problem.

"Fourthly, I will be the one to make contact with the trader later and retrieve the box the Boss desires."

Upon hearing this, "Rat" Christo and "Giant" Simon looked at Lumian as if they were seeing Ciel in a new light.

They had expected the Pyromaniac to leverage his strength and authority to assign one of them to interact with the trader and handle the riskiest part of the mission. Alternatively, they thought Lumian might suggest drawing lots to determine who would handle the task. To their surprise, Lumian volunteered to take on the responsibility himself.

Ciel is quite fair... "Giant" Simon couldn't help but sigh.

He knew he wouldn't be able to do the same if he were in Lumian's position.**NOVELusb.cOm**

This realization made both "Rat" Christo and "Giant" Simon less resistant to following Lumian's instructions. I think you should take a look at

Though the lighting was dim, Lumian managed to observe his two colleagues' reactions.

He couldn't help but sneer inwardly.

If it weren't for the fact that you two Beyonders lack mystical knowledge and might cause trouble during the box exchange, I wouldn't be taking such a risk myself.

Lumian sighed from the depths of his heart. Sometimes, weakness could be an advantage.

Emphasizing that they were to maintain silence, Lumian picked up the carbide lamp and made his way to the bottom of the cave. He gestured for "Giant" Simon to embrace a rock about half his height and move it aside.

The rock was incredibly heavy, posing a challenge even for Simon's strength. It took him some time to shift it, revealing the deep entrance to the hidden tunnel.

The tunnel wasn't particularly long, and it took them only seven to eight minutes to crouch down and make their way through. They arrived at a mineral cave that had suffered significant collapse, leaving only a limited space.

This was their destination—the Albert Mines.

Lumian surveyed the cluttered gray-black stones and turned to "Giant" Simon, who was dressed in a black formal suit. He pointed at his chest.

Understanding the unspoken request, Simon produced an iron-gray pocket watch and opened it with a snap.

The dial revealed numerous tightly clenched gears, exuding a sophisticated yet cold mechanical beauty.

"Giant" Simon held up his pocket watch, showing it to Lumian and "Rat" Christo, indicating that there were still over ten minutes until the designated time of the transaction—noon.

Lumian nodded and remained silent, patiently awaiting the appointed hour. After a while, he subtly turned his head, listening intently for any signs of movement around them.

He sensed an unusual sound emanating from underground, as if a multitude of people were screaming, roaring, and fighting.

Beneath the illumination of the carbide lamp, Lumian glanced at Simon and Christo, noticing their similar reactions, as if they too had caught wind of the commotion.

Observing Simon and Christo's gazes fixed on him, Lumian lowered his right hand, signaling them to refrain from being affected.

Intermittently, they could hear peculiar movements. The three of them stood at the edge of the Albert Mines, silently waiting.

Suddenly, the sound of footsteps echoed from the other side of the mine, as if someone in leather shoes was approaching from an unusually quiet tunnel dozens of meters away.

Is that the trader? Lumian mused, casting his thoughtful gaze in that direction.

The footsteps paused and then resumed, resonating through the Albert Mines.

When they were merely a few meters away from the entrance, they mysteriously ceased altogether.

After a brief wait, Lumian and his companions spotted a figure emerging from the opposite mine entrance. It was a man over 1.8 meters tall, donning a white shirt, yellow vest, black formal suit, and dark pants. He clutched a small brown leather suitcase in his hand.

The man wore a silk top hat pulled low, casting a shadow over his face. However, Lumian's Hunter eyesight allowed him to discern the man's appearance with the aid of the three carbide lamps.

The man had short auburn hair, brownish-red eyes, slightly unkempt and thick beard, and thick eyebrows. He resembled a starved male bear, exaggeratedly thin.

The collar of his shirt was tightly fastened, as if he dreaded the cold.

Lumian held the carbide lamp and was about to approach the man.

But then, Christo tugged at his arm.

When Lumian turned his head, Christo anxiously and fearfully pointed at his right pocket.

Does this mean that Taffy, the peculiar rat, has issued a warning of danger? But judging from Christo's behavior, the threat hasn't materialized yet and is still manageable. Otherwise, he would have already turned and fled... Lumian interpreted the signs and nodded at Christo, indicating that he would proceed with caution.

Christo didn't stop him. He watched Lumian with concern as he advanced toward the trader.

As he closed the distance, Lumian's gaze carefully assessed the man's physique, analyzing every detail.

His clothes are slightly oversized, as though they don't quite fit him... He seems fearful of something, yet his eyes hold anger and hatred... His hands don't extend beyond his sleeves, and they're concealed within, including the handle of the suitcase... His feet...

Lumian's pupils dilated as he noticed that the trader wasn't wearing shoes but rather a pair of gray socks.

This contradicted the sound of leather shoes they had just heard!

Could it be that the footsteps didn't belong to him but someone else? Lumian grew increasingly vigilant.

With limited space remaining in the Albert Mines, he swiftly arrived in front of the trader.

The man, resembling a starved bear, chuckled and inquired with a hint of amusement, "Did Gardner Martin send you?"

"Was he scared out of his wits after receiving a message from his companion, who went underground to search for the entrance to the Fourth Epoch Trier, months after disappearing, claiming to possess an important item to deliver to him."