CIRCLE OF INEVITABILITY

Chapter 10: Blood

As Lumian stepped out the door, he felt as thought he was transported to another world.

Before him lay no longer the familiar Cordu, but a dark-red mountain peak and the collapsed buildings surrounding it. Together, they formed a strange ruin.

The fog in the sky was thick and pale, making it difficult for light to enter. The ground was shattered and there were many rocks. Lumian gripped his axe tightly and inched forward carefully, his heart pounding in his chest. Along the way, he couldn't find a place to hide.

There were no weeds or trees.

Lumian walked in fear, his every sense on high alert. All he could do was hunch his back and comfort himself. At the very least, if there was any danger in this area, it would be obvious at a glance. He could discover it in advance.

Finally, he arrived at the ruins, a half-collapsed building that had been wrecked by fire.

Lumian surveyed the area for a moment and tentatively confirmed that there were no other creatures lurking about. Satisfied with his assessment, he cautiously made his way inside the building, being mindful of the charred wood that could fall at any moment from midair.

As he searched the room, his eyes landed on a broken pot in the corner of the house. There was a hint of gold shining through the cracks.

Lumian approached the pot slowly and realized that it was a gold coin.

Can it be true? There's actually treasure in the ruins of my dream? He picked up the gold coin and wiped it against his body.

The patterns on the surface of the coin were revealed.

The coin featured a man's portrait carved on the front. His face was thin, and his hair was parted 30-70. There was a mustache on his lips, and his gaze was rather firm. On the back was a bunch of sweet iris flowers surrounding the number 20.

Lumian recognized the man depicted on the coin. It was none other than the first president of the Intis Republic, Levanx.

It's actually a Louis d'or… Lumian was rather surprised.

Firstly, he couldn't believe that the currency in this strange dream ruin was actually the currency of the Intis Republic in reality. And secondly, he had casually picked up something as valuable as a Louis d'or.

He knew that in the present day, the legal currencies of the Intis Republic were verl d'or and coppet. One verl d'or was equivalent to 100 coppet.

Coppet existed in the form of copper coins and silver coins. The copper coins were divided into three categories: 1 coppet, 5 coppet, 10 coppet, while the silver coins had the denominations of 20 coppet and 50 coppet.

Verl d'or could be found in the form of silver coins, gold coins, or banknotes. In silver coins, there were denominations of 1, 5, and 10 verl d'or, while gold coins came in 5, 10, 20, 40, and 50 denominations.

The denominations of banknotes were even more varied, ranging from 5, 20, 50, 100, 200, 500, 1,000 verl d'or.

In reality, the people of Intis still clung to the old currency units. For example, the most widely used 5 coppet copper coins were known as 'lick.'

Similarly, gold coins worth 20 verl were commonly referred to as Louis d'or.

In the old currency era, Louis d'or had been known as Roselle. But after the Republic was established, the name was changed to Louis d'or in order to erase Emperor Roselle's influence.

As Lumian understood it, even in the rural area of Cordu, a Louis d'or could sustain a poor family with fields for an entire month.

He knew that without Aurore's high income, he might never have even seen what a Louis d'or looked like. In fact, in the entire village of Cordu, only the siblings and the family of the administrator had ever seen or owned a Louis d'or.

To any villager, this Louis d'or was an incredibly valuable gain.

Unfortunately, this is just a dream… Lumian couldn't help but feel a pang of disappointment.
This was something ordinary, making it unlikely he could "bring" it out of the dream.

But even so, he handled the Louis d'or with great care and respect. Having spent much of his life wandering, he knew the value of every coppet.

And he knew that one Louis d'or was equivalent to 2,000 coppet, which was equal to one gold pound in the Loen Kingdom, though slightly less. According to the papers he had read, 24 verl d'or could only be exchanged for one gold pound.

Lumian continued his search for any written information that could shed light on the ruins and their history. He wanted to see if this place corresponded to a certain location in reality, and whether a village in the Intis Republic had been "transported" into this dream world. The appearance of the Louis d'or had only fueled his curiosity.

As Lumian moved cautiously through the ruined building, his eyes fell upon a spot where a stove had once stood, now stained with a dark red color.

"Blood?" His pupils dilated as he quickly made a guess.

Immediately after, he made a judgment.

Although it wasn't fresh, it hadn't yet turned black—it looked as though it had just dripped there two or three days prior, or perhaps even more recently!

As his heart began to race, Lumian suddenly felt the light around him dim, as if something had silently blocked the light filtering through the dense fog from above!

The memory of past attacks flooded Lumian's mind like a turbulent wave, causing him to react instinctively.

Without a thought, he lunged forward and wrapped his body in midair, rolling on the ground to avoid any potential danger.

Thump!
A loud thump echoed through the air as something heavy fell behind him.

Lumian quickly rolled to the left side of the dilapidated stove, using a nearby rock to leverage himself around.

As he rose to his feet, axe at the ready, he saw an additional figure standing where he had just been moments before.

The dim light made it difficult to discern whether it was human or some kind of humanoid creature.

The figure hunched in front of Lumian was unlike anything he had ever seen before. It was a monster, with no clothes or shoes to speak of. Its skin had been peeled off, revealing the red muscles, blood vessels, and yellowed fascia beneath. Sticky liquid dripped from its body, yet it didn't fall to the ground.

It was a monster!

Its eyes seemed to be embedded in its face, and its mouth hung open with all its might, revealing uneven teeth and a long drool of saliva.

Despite all the ghost stories Lumian had fabricated in the past, he never expected to encounter such an evil spirit in real life.

Whoosh!
The stench of blood filled Lumian's nostrils as the panting of the monster filled his ears.

Instinct took over Lumian as he dodged to the side, narrowly avoiding the blood-red monster's attack.

Lumian knew that he had Aurore's guidance and years of experience fighting on the streets to thank for his quick reflexes. Without them, he might not have been able to react in time.

Taking a deep breath to calm himself, Lumian charged after the monster that had pounced on him. With his sharp axe in hand, he swung with all his might and struck the monster in the back.

Bang!
Lumian's axe felled the monster mid-turn, sending a spray of pus and blood in every direction.

Without a moment's hesitation, Lumian knelt down on one knee and raised his axe again, ready to strike another blow.

Bang! Bang! Bang!
Again and again, Lumian swung his axe with precision and force, each strike slicing through the monster's flesh and leaving deep, wide cracks on the back of its head, neck, and back.

Finally, the monster lay still, defeated by Lumian's fierce barrage of blows.

"Huff! Puff! You don't act as terrifyingly as you look." Lumian heaved a sigh of relief, his voice tinged with a hint of mockery.

He wiped his face with his left hand, then used it to wipe off the blood on his other hand.

"Is this monster's bodily fluids poisonous? For the time being, there's no pain of the fluids eating at me…" Lumian began to worry about another problem.

Just as Lumian mustered up his courage and was about to search the monster's body, he was caught off guard by a sudden movement. The skinless, blood-colored monster propped itself up with both hands and bounced up again, as if it were still alive.

It isn't dead yet?
Despite being slashed to such a state, it seemed that the monster was still alive.

Lumian was shocked and afraid.

Fear and trepidation took hold of Lumian.

If Lumian had been facing normal humans, beasts, or monsters, he would not have been so afraid, even if he couldn't defeat them. But this monster in front of him seemed unkillable, rendering Lumian's every move useless.

Taking advantage of the monster's brief disorientation, Lumian made a quick decision. He propped himself up with his feet, exerted strength on his knees, and ran wildly.

Thud! Thud! Thud!
He ran with all his might, but he could feel the monster's breath on the back of his neck, and the sound of its heavy breathing echoed in his ears.

The monster followed closely behind him.

Despite his fear, Lumian gritted his teeth and allowed his fear to push himself

to run even faster, surpassing his previous limits.

To his delight, he soon realized that the distance between him and the monster was no longer shortening.

Thud! Thud! Thud!
Lumian finally reached his semi-subterranean two-story building as he pulled open the unlocked door and jumped inside.

With a loud clang, he slammed the door shut and quickly made his way to the stove, where he picked up a steel fork that was leaning against the wall.

Then he focused on the door.

But then, he heard the sound of the monster's running footsteps fading away. He waited, but the monster didn't try to slam through the door.

It knows that I'm lying in ambush here? Lumian couldn't believe that the monster had higher intelligence.
He slowly moved towards the window near the door and peeked out.

Suddenly, a face appeared on the glass—a bloody, skinless mess with uneven teeth.

Lumian froze for a moment, his heart almost stopping.

To Lumian's surprise, the monster didn't try to break the glass or attack him. Instead, it simply met his gaze.

Lumian snapped out of his daze and retreated, brandishing the long fork with both hands.

The monster left the window.

Lumian watched cautiously, observing its movements as it lingered in the light fog for a while before finally retreating back to the ruins.

Lumian was at a loss.

He had been prepared to trap the monster and make a quick escape from the dream, but the creature had simply left without attacking.

After some thought, a possibility occurred to Lumian. *Perhaps the monster is afraid to enter my house?*
Yes, there's no signs of damage to the house at all…
In the dream, this is an absolutely safe place?
With this realization, Lumian felt a sense of relief wash over him.

Lumian was hit with a wave of exhaustion the next second.

The short chase had taken more out of him than an entire afternoon of combat training.

Lumian made his way upstairs to his bedroom, clutching the pitchfork and axe tightly in his hands. As he lay down on the bed, Lumian attempted to fall asleep.

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Lumian opened his eyes, feeling disoriented and groggy.

Outside the curtains, it was still dark, and the room was shrouded in shadows.

For a moment, Lumian couldn't tell if he was still in the dream world or if he had somehow returned to reality. But then he noticed the lack of gray fog and the fact that he was wearing his pajamas, and he realized that he must have woken up.

"I woke up early because of the fright," Lumian muttered to himself, subconsciously patting the pocket of his pajamas. But when he didn't feel the weight of the Louis d'or, he felt a pang of disappointment.

It confirmed another fact—that money couldn't be brought out of the dream world!

Lumian took a deep breath and composed himself, his thoughts turning to a serious problem:

How was he supposed to deal with that unkillable monster?

While Lumian knew that he could bypass the area and enter stealthily, he also knew that this was not a long-term solution. The possibility of encountering similar monsters in the future was always there, and he couldn't afford to risk his life by being unprepared.