

Circle of Inevitability

Chapter 1051: Protector

[1,762 words]

Having considered his next direction, Lumian looked out the carriage window.

By now, the hired carriage had reached the gray-white city walls encircling Trier, queuing to leave the city.

The Church of The Fool's newly established cathedral in Trier was located in the suburbs, right next to where the Srenzo River curved. The river was wide there, with convenient transportation, both a dock and a station, in a picturesque town.

After arriving at this town called Ramb, Lumian discovered it wasn't small at all, with numerous steamships at the dock and streets bustling with people, extraordinarily lively.

After asking the carriage driver, Lumian roughly understood the reason.

Most goods entering Trier had to pay an entry tax. though rates varied. Therefore, many goods that didn't need to be sold in Trier or transit through it were unloaded at Ramb and sent to surrounding towns. This gradually made the town prosperous, attracting many maritime merchants, adventurers, and sailors, bringing with them the faith of The Fool.

Lumian had heard from Franca that the Eternal Blazing Sun Church had long wanted to abolish the entry tax to promote commerce and improve circulation, but this tax was one of the Intis Republic's main sources of revenue, and Trier's entry tax alone equaled the sum of several major cities' entry taxes. The government simply couldn't give it up.

Lumian put on a wide-brimmed hat, letting the black veil fall, and began wandering around Ramb.

Soon, he found what was now called Saint Lumian Cathedral, the Church of The Fool's location, but didn't rush to enter. He just stood on the street for a while, admiring the large glass windows and plain walls.

I hope one day, no clergy will say that Saint Lumian will have to make do with their actions... After making this self-deprecating joke, Lumian continued walking.

The main faith in this town was the Eternal Blazing Sun, worshiping Trier's patron angel Saint Viève.

Lumian examined the white stone angel statue for a few moments before walking into a bar diagonally across the square.

This bar had good business, and on weekends, many people from Trier would come to freely enjoy various alcoholic beverages that didn't require entry tax.

As soon as Lumian pushed open the bar's heavy wooden door, he felt gazes turn toward him-some surprised, some amazed, some greedy, some excited, and some like snakes slowly slithering across his body.

He then remembered that he was now a lady, an extremely charming lady, even with her face hidden behind a veil.

It was never like this when he was a man before-at most, thieves would observe to judge if there was any value or possibility of theft... Ah, the sense of belonging at "home" is gone... Lumian slowly shook his head and directly took out a revolver from his Traveler's Bag.

He placed his hand on the doorframe, pointed the revolver at the ceiling, and pulled the trigger without hesitation.

Bang!

The bullet brought down clusters of dust, and the people in the bar, like athletes hearing the starting gun, quickly scattered in all directions.

This left Lumian a spacious path to the bar counter.

When the chaotic scene of people taking cover had somewhat settled, Lumian deactivated the Bottle of Fiction and, holding the revolver, walked toward the bar counter while saying in an icy but soft voice, "I just want a drink."

He then sat on a barstool, tapped the counter, and said to the bartender who was staring at him blankly. "One La Fée Verte"

The bartender finally snapped out of it and hurriedly poured Lumian an absinthe with a splash of lemon juice.

Lumian didn't remove his hat or lift his veil, slowly sipping the bitter and fragrant liquor.

The other people in the bar gradually returned to normal. In this small town frequently visited by pirates and adventurers, they were used to such things, which explained their practiced response earlier.

Lumian quietly listened to their chitchat and whispers. trying to discover useful intelligence, especially anything pointing to the Sick Church.

But unfortunately, what he heard was mainly discussion about himself.

The most discussed topic was what it meant to be a person of dual bodies.

There were artistic interpretations, such as "having a male body but also a female side, being both flame and frost," and there were vulgar ones, like "busty up top, hard down below."

Lumian turned his gaze toward the drunk who had said the latter.

His highland lake-like eyes were like mirrors, reflecting the other's figure.

The drunk was making obscene gestures to accompany his earlier description when his chest and lower body suddenly experienced intense pain, as if being burned by flames.

He screamed in agony and fell to the ground, rolling in pain.

This stunned those around him who had been agreeing with his joke.

After about ten seconds, the drunk finally came back to life. He supported himself on a nearby chair and stood up trembling.

"What just happened?"

"Sudden illness?"

"You should go to a clinic right away!"

The people around him spoke up in a jumble.

The drunk shook his head in confusion.

"It just hurt suddenly, but now I'm fine..."

As he spoke, he looked down to check his physical condition and was surprised to find his chest had strangely swollen from unknown burns, while his lower half had become like stone, tenting his pants.

Almost simultaneously, those around him also noticed this condition.

"Busty up top, hard down below..." someone repeated the drunk's earlier words.

Wh- The people around quickly moved away from the area, all looking at the drunk with wary gazes: It was him who insulted the saint, it has nothing to do with us!

We weren't standing next to him either, don't let the lightning strike affect us!

In their fear, everyone present unconsciously had the same thought: Is the Church of The Fool's new patron saint really this efficacious?

Lumian withdrew his gaze, letting the reflected figure in his eyes disappear.

This was a small punishment, not affecting any essential functions or physical health.

For Lumian, he didn't care at all if someone insulted him-he would just find an opportunity to play a prank. But insulting Aurore was not acceptable.

Moreover, this was also an opportunity, a chance to reasonably use fear to spread faith.

It could also help digest the Witch potion.

Lumian looked at the absinthe in his hand, seeing his veiled, half-visible face reflected in the dreamlike green liquid.

...

The deep red wine swirled gently, with three faceless wooden dolls placed beside it.

Franca leaned back in her chair, leisurely admiring the blood color permeating the wooden grain and the hair that had slipped into the crevices.

After looking for a few seconds, she turned to look at the three men standing in front of the desk and smiled, saying, "I only have two requirements for you:

"First, help me collect various intelligence, and second, follow these thirteen rules I've established and treat those dancers and streetwalkers well."

After Franca finished speaking, Jenna, standing beside her, held up the paper and began reading.

"First, no coercion,

"Second, ensure adequate rest;

...

"Thirteenth, provide basic medical care."

"We're the mafia, not some damned charity!" burst out the most hot-tempered of the three.

Franca laughed.

"Right, I'm not doing charity either."

She then flicked out a quiet black flame, letting it fall on one of the wooden dolls.

The doll was immediately covered in black flames. silently burning.

The gang leader who had just spoken suddenly screamed in agony as strange black flames erupted from within his body.

He fell to his knees in pain, his face contorted as he shouted, "I-I was wrong.

"I am doing charity!

"I agree! I agree!"

Neither Franca nor Jenna responded, watching silently until the gang leader collapsed to the ground, convulsing until death.

Only then did Franca look at the other two gang leaders and ask with a smile, "Any objections?"

"None." The two gang leaders seemed to be competing to see who could shake their head faster.

After Jenna posted the paper with the thirteen rules on the wall, Franca stood up and said.

"Remember to look at it every day, and if there's any violation..."

Franca picked up the remaining two wooden dolls.

"You should know what they represent-they're a Demoness's curse medium."

After becoming a Demoness of Pleasure who could directly curse through mirrors, Franca no longer used such black magic in battle, but mirror curses were real-time and couldn't be fixed in place. To control these two gang leaders and make them obey, she still needed to make media like dolls using their blood and hair.

And for a Demoness of Unaging, possessing such media could also affect the targets' direct relatives.

"We know, we know." The two gang leaders began their nodding competition again.

Jenna thought for a moment and said to Franca, "May I add one rule?"

"Of course." Franca smiled.

Jenna picked up the pen and added another rule to the posted paper: "Rule Fourteen, loan shark annual interest cannot exceed 36%, and no additional fees such as handling fees or service charges can be collected."

"No problem, right?" Jenna turned and smiled.

The two gang leaders being questioned dared not object.

Franca put away the two curse dolls and casually said as she walked toward the door,

"I know you have some supporters behind you. I don't care what they think, nor will I interfere with your territory disputes or making money here. I only want those two things I mentioned earlier.

"If your supporters aren't satisfied, let them come see this statue."

As she spoke, strands of gray-white light spread out and fell on the dead gang leader's body.

The corpse quickly turned into a stone statue.

"No problem with that, right? You'll quietly notify me if they want to move against me, won't you?" Franca turned back to look at the remaining two gang leaders and asked with a smile.

The two gang leaders first showed uncontrollable fascination, then hurriedly responded, "We will! We will!"

Leaving the room, Franca walked toward the dancers and streetwalkers waiting nervously at the stairway.

"Boss..." several girls called out joyfully.

Franca nodded gently and said, "Things will go back to how they were before.

"But I still want to say, this isn't a long-term profession."

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Across from the Théâtre de l'Ancienne Cage à Pigeons, Franca and Jenna sat on a street bench, calmly watching the audience and actors coming and going.

"Not going over to say hello?" Jenna asked.

Franca smiled. "No need, since they're doing fine, there's no need to go over."

"That's true." Jenna nodded slightly.

Franca then turned her head and said, half serious and half joking. "This is left for you-in the future, you'll be the protector of actresses."

After watching for a while longer, they returned to the luxury villa.

By this time, Lumian had already returned and was saying to Anthony, "Help me collect intelligence on the Sick Church."

"The Sick Church..." Franca suddenly understood what Lumian wanted to do and quickly smiled, "I have intelligence sources now too, I'll have them keep an eye out!"

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Chapter 1052: Reluctantly Showing Off

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