

## Inevitability 951

### Chapter 951 Everything as Usual

Lumian looked again at Old Wang and Old Ding, who were wrapped from head to toe in white bandages, carefully examining their condition and the details around them.

“Don't disturb the patients,” the nurse who had led Lumian and the others into the ward reminded them before walking out and returning to the nurses' station.

At this moment, the patient who was presumably Old Ding woke up, influenced by the conversation between his family members and Xu Xinyang, slowly opening his eyes.

Contrasted against the surrounding circles of white bandages, Old Ding's deep brown eyes were noticeably darker than normal, taking quite a while to regain focus.

Lumian didn't notice any abnormalities worth noting.

Xu Xinyang walked to the bedside and greeted Old Ding, who lacked energy and spoke indistinctly.

Lumian listened for about 20-30 seconds, then glanced at the still sleeping Old Wang, and stepped back gradually, inconspicuously and without drawing attention, to the doorway of the ward.

He then examined the doctor and nurse information posted outside the ward:

“Attending Physician: Huang Puda.

“Head Nurse: Qi Fang.”

From the photo, it was clear that Qi Fang was the nurse who had just led Lumian and the others to the ward.

Names not mentioned in the files... The name style is that of “locals” in the dream city, not like “foreigners”... Doesn't seem to be any problem... Lumian returned to the ward and followed Team Lead Xu Xinyang in greeting Old Ding and the two family members again.

They didn't stay long to avoid disturbing the patients' rest.

Walking through the corridor, past the nurses' station, and towards the ward's main door, Lumian casually examined the bulletin boards on both sides of the wall.

One side featured scientific achievements and introductions to some diseases and injuries, while the other side had brief introductions of all the doctors and nurses in this ward, arranged in several rows.

Lumian's gaze fell on the topmost photo.

It was a female doctor with a plump appearance, fairly good features, and slightly brownish eyes, looking to be in her forties.

Her introduction read: “Roland, Associate Dean...”

Lumian's first reaction was "Isn't that Franca's last name?", followed by a sudden chill down his spine, almost making him shudder.

He remembered another Roland.

It was a prominent name he had heard about while investigating the sea prayer ritual in Port Santa of the Feynapotter Kingdom: Matriarch Roland of the Church of Earth Mother!

This was equivalent to the pontiff or pope in other orthodox churches!

The Planter pathway has the Doctor Sequence, and Roland, as the matriarch of the Church of Earth Mother, is most likely an Angel of this pathway, which is equivalent to one of the strongest doctors in the real world. Her corresponding manifestation in the dream city serving as the associate dean and chief surgeon of a hospital, certainly qualifies and aligns with Mr. Fool's subconscious cognition... But the problem is, this is Mushu Hospital... Lumian naturally withdrew his gaze and walked towards the ward exit with Xu Xinyang, his expression unchanged.

He remembered that the information from the Major Arcana card holders didn't mention Roland having a corresponding dream manifestation.

Is it unknown, or considered unimportant, a mere NPC? Is Roland becoming the associate dean of Mushu Hospital woven by Mr. Fool's subconscious dream, representing some of his cognition, or has Roland's dream manifestation been exploited by the Great Mother due to issues with Her own pathway? Or is this one of the "achievements" of Mushu Hospital? If Mother Roland is the associate dean, then who is the dean? Lumian felt he needed to report this to the Major Arcana card holders.

This didn't contradict his idea of first "testing" on his own and gaining personal results. He was worried that if there was a problem with the dream image, it might affect Matriarch Roland in the real world, and wanted to remind the Major Arcana card holders.

Leaving the ward, Lumian curiously asked, "Team Lead Xu, what's the name of the dean of Mushu Hospital? I haven't seen any news about him."

Xu Xinyang entered the elevator area and thought for a few seconds before saying, "Strange, odd, I haven't heard of him either.

"I only know that Mr. Huang used to have a good relationship with this hospital, donated a lot of money to them, and helped establish them."

Money... a lot of money... donations... Lumian thought this must have been done when Emperor Roselle was still corrupted by the Great Mother.

This also made Mushu Hospital financially strong, seemingly not too worried about "money" issues, unlike the Colorful Hostel of the Fantasy Association, which still had to exploit its bestowed and believers for renovation.

While waiting for the slow elevator, Old Xia suddenly asked Xu Xinyang, "Team Lead Xu, do you think Old Wang and Old Ding can recover to their original state? They used to be such good fighters."

"Are you eyeing the positions they left behind?" Xu Xinyang asked with a smile.

In the Intis Group, the Security Department wasn't just about security guards, but also had real security personnel responsible for protecting Mr. Huang's family and important guests, providing security services for jewelry exhibitions, antique exhibitions, arms deals, etc. held by various companies of the group, and protecting important mining sites through cooperation with local armed forces.

Old Wang and Old Ding were security personnel, earning much higher salaries than ordinary security guards, with additional allowances if dispatched externally.

"I'll pass; can't take that risk, and don't have that ability," Old Xia waved his hands repeatedly, looking scared.

Xu Xinyang looked at Lumian and smiled, saying, "Originally, I wanted someone in their fifties or sixties, but the HR department sent me the youngest one. Fortunately, Director Grimm is satisfied."

"Why look for someone in their fifties or sixties?" Old Xia asked on behalf of Lumian, he himself looking to be only in his thirties or forties.

Xu Xinyang chuckled and said, "Security guard is a service position. You're all too young, not smooth enough, and can't bring yourselves to make a scene or throw tantrums.

"Think about it, if you had a conflict with an employee in the building, which one of you would be able to lie down on the ground without any burden, clutch your chest and cry out in pain, saying you can't breathe? A man in his fifties or sixties wouldn't have such concerns, they'd dare to lie down, dare to shout, dare to extort. In that case, would the employee on the other side dare to take it seriously and continue to make trouble? Having an elder is like having a treasure!"

Lumian understood that Xu Xinyang was reprimanding him, thinking that getting into trouble with someone on his first day of work showed inexperience.

Zhao, not catching Xu Xinyang's implied meaning, asked foolishly, "Then why not directly find someone over seventy?"

"What if they really fall ill on duty?" Xu Xinyang scolded Zhao impatiently, "You don't care when it's Mr. Huang's money, do you?"

Zhao giggled, not refuting Xu Xinyang.

At this moment, an elevator finally stopped on this floor, already crowded with people.

Entering the elevator and following its slow descent, Lumian suddenly had a feeling that he and the others were sinking into the dark seabed.

It was an illusion brought on by his spirituality.

The illusion quickly disappeared as the elevator stopped at the next floor.

As the elevator continued to stop at various floors, Old Xia grumbled, "It's a bit cold, isn't the air conditioning too strong..."

You didn't say that when we took the elevator up earlier... Is it because we're currently descending, getting closer to the underground floors? Lumian thoughtfully observed the other people in the elevator, noticing that they all looked slightly pale from the chilly air conditioning and cold wind.

There were no other unusual situations beyond this.

When the elevator stopped on the first floor, Lumian suddenly felt as if it would plummet in free fall, and instinctively stepped out quickly.

The feeling of overly effective air conditioning disappeared instantly.

Lumian raised his hand to pinch his nose, following Xu Xinyang and the others towards the main entrance of Mushu Hospital.

Just now, he had caught a whiff of blood.

Exiting the hospital building, the sunlight, only slightly weaker than before, instantly brought a sense of golden brightness and clarity.

"That's why I hate hospitals," Old Xia muttered.

Lumian half-turned his body, looking at the bustling lobby and the upper floors, summarizing in his mind, There are indeed some abnormal details, but most of the doctors, nurses, and patients here still seem fine...

If they all had problems, this city would have been corrupted to an unimaginable degree long ago, and Mr. Fool's subconscious would surely have reacted...

As thoughts raced through his mind, Lumian suddenly saw a face pressed against a glass window on the twelfth floor.

That face was bound with strips of white bandages, with only the eyes, nostrils, and mouth uncovered.

He seemed to have seen Lumian too, and began to struggle frantically, then was forcibly dragged away from the window area as if being pulled by one person after another from behind.

Before Lumian could react, he had disappeared.

But Lumian recognized him.

He was Old Wang, who had been sleeping the whole time during their visit.

Lumian turned back, pretending he hadn't seen anything.

If not for the appointment with Anderson tomorrow night, he would have wanted to storm the twelfth floor ward right now to rescue Old Wang and see what unexpected changes might occur.

For Lumian, this wasn't something he couldn't do, but it should be done after completing most of the experiments.

In a beef offal hot pot restaurant.

Having booked a large private room with two tables set up, Xu Xinyang held baijiu—a Chinese spirit—and beer, smiling at Lumian and asking, "Can you drink?"

"I can drink a little," Lumian answered somewhat fearfully.

“As long as you can drink, that's fine. Drinking style is working style, drinking etiquette is personal etiquette. Those who don't drink can't fit into our Security Team 2,” Xu Xinyang pointed at the subordinates around and said, “Except for those on duty, dispatched, hospitalized, or on leave, everyone is here. Make a good impression.”

Lumian had heard from Franca that many companies' welcome parties for new employees were mainly to test obedience and haze the newcomers, making them learn to be compliant, with drinking being the most common method.

“I'll... I'll try my best,” Lumian squeezed out a smile with a heavy expression.

Two hours later, amidst various bottles of alcohol piled up on the table and in the corners, Lumian held a bottle of strong liquor, smiling broadly at Xu Xinyang and saying, “Team Lead Xu, drink up, why aren't you drinking?”

“Come on, let's finish what's left.”

Xu Xinyang, his face pale and movements uncoordinated, said, “No, no more drinking. Later, later I still need to go home and pay my dues to the wife.”

Around him, some like Old Xia and Zhao were either slumped over the table or curled up in corners, already asleep. Some had just returned from vomiting in the bathroom, swaying unsteadily. Some gathered in groups, chattering endlessly. Others sat silently, motionless...

## Chapter 952 Items That Can Be Sold

Seeing the situation, Lumian didn't insist; after all, Xu Xinyang still had the important task of paying the bill. He couldn't possibly cover for him, right? He hadn't even received his first month's salary yet!

Lumian then called over to the colleagues who had collapsed at the beginning but had now recovered, arranging for them to send the different drunks home nearby. If there was no one going in the same direction, they would call family members to come pick them up.

After finishing this task, Lumian pulled up a chair and sat down, taking a few sips of liquor as if it were a beverage. This made the few colleagues who were still somewhat sober twitch at their temples.

Is this guy the reincarnation of a wine vat?

Glancing at the still bustling main hall outside, Lumian idly took out his phone and began replying to messages and browsing trending topics.

As he scrolled, he noticed that the content being pushed to him now included a lot of alcohol-related topics, including but not limited to “Which brand of baijiu tastes best”, “Beer tasting”, “Legal liability for alcohol-related accidents caused by pressuring others to drink”, “Civil compensation for alcohol-related sudden deaths by others at the same table”, “Alcohol is a carcinogen”...

Does this count as a form of monitoring? Lumian pondered as his thumb slid across the screen.

When the last drunk was taken away, he stood up and left the hot pot restaurant. He searched for the location of Xinhong District and found it was just over two kilometers away.

Lumian decided to walk back.

It was past 8 p.m. now, and the sky had darkened completely. The scorching breeze had taken on a hint of coolness. The street lamps on both sides were bright, and there were many pedestrians passing by, brushing shoulders without disturbing each other.

Lumian savored this state of being immersed in the crowd yet detached from it, his mind gradually relaxing and unwinding.

He walked past shops playing old songs, crowds dancing to lively rhythms, and a bustling bar street, hearing shouts of “Cheers! Cheers!” coming from inside.

Returning to the rental apartment, Lumian saw Ludwig in the kitchen, standing on a small folding stool, busy preparing food. Anthony sat by the dining table, writing down his observations from the day.

His task was to continue observing Zhou Mingrui and those close to him, watching for any abnormalities or subtle changes after they came into contact with Lumian, Franca, or Jenna.

Seeing Lumian return, Anthony looked up and said, “He insists on cooking himself. He finds preparing his own breakfast and late-night snacks more enjoyable than studying textbooks or doing homework.”

“He's become more human-like,” Lumian said with a chuckle.

He had just sat down when the door opened and Franca and Jenna appeared in the doorway.

“There's an urgent matter we need to discuss together, to complement each other's strengths,” Franca explained succinctly.

Her interaction with Zhou Mingrui today was the kind that only left a certain impression, and this already had experimental results. It wouldn't cause her to be kicked out of the dream or face restrictions.

So before taking further action, she could discreetly touch base with Lumian and the others.

She and Jenna had taken a taxi to a stop one station away and sneaked over using the shadows.

“What's the matter?” Lumian sat up a bit straighter.

“I'm having a private dinner with Zhou Mingrui tomorrow night, thanks to Luo Shan!” Franca pulled out a chair and sat down, asking Lumian with a mix of excitement and nervousness, “This doesn't affect your experiment plans, does it?”

“A little, but it's not a big problem. Taking big steps to try things out first, then working backwards to eliminate possibilities one by one is also a method of experimentation,” Lumian said after a few seconds of thought.

Franca let out a sigh of relief and said, "Then let's discuss how to give Zhou Mingrui hints. This should show some progress compared to before, but not excessively, otherwise we can't rule out options and would have to risk a second attempt later."

Lumian tersely agreed and provided several approaches from a Conspirer's perspective. He then evaluated Franca's contingency plans and explanations, while Jenna helped fill in any gaps from an Instigator's standpoint.

Anthony was responsible for empathizing with Zhou Mingrui's possible psychological activities and instinctive reactions, even role-playing as Zhou Mingrui during rehearsals.

After twenty to thirty minutes of discussion, Franca finally had two feasible plans that were likely to achieve her goals.

"Brainstorming really does work!" she exclaimed sincerely.

Jenna then recounted her experience of selling the painting at the Star Dream Provisions Store, not omitting a single detail.

After listening to the end, Franca thoughtfully took out the Beyonder characteristic obtained from the reanimated Panatiya from her Traveler's Bag.

She showed it briefly before quickly stuffing it back. "Can we sell this thing to the Star Dream Provisions Store?"

"We can't use it for now anyway, so why not exchange it for money and find a way to rent useful items? Whether the mission succeeds or not later, the Major Arcana card holders should reimburse us or help buy it back."

"We can try, but I think that individual probably won't accept it," Lumian said as he also took out an item from his Traveler's Bag.

It was the corpse wax candle obtained from the Blue Avenger.

Looking at this pale yellow candle with a reddish tinge, Lumian thought for a moment before saying, "We discussed before that Demonesses might have symbolic meaning and special uses in the dream city. Now I want to say that Hunters might also have significance: I'm a Hunter, the first person killed was the Oracle who was also a Hunter, and Anderson, who is clearly abnormal now, is also a Hunter.

"Given this premise, items related to Demonesses and Hunters might prove useful later on, and we can't predict which ones. That individual will probably not accept them, instead letting us keep them and wait for the right opportunity.

"Hmm, we can try. If She doesn't accept them, it would provide initial validation for my theory."

Jenna, Franca, and Anthony all nodded thoughtfully.

The four of them then took out many mystical items they weren't currently using, planning to have Jenna take them to the Star Dream Provisions Store to sell the next day.

Looking at these items, Jenna pondered for a few seconds before saying, “That individual is a true deity... Isn't it somewhat disrespectful to bring such a hodgepodge of items of varying value?”

Anthony nodded in agreement with Jenna's statement.

Franca added, “Yeah, it feels like we're treating Her like a junk collector...”

As she spoke, Franca fell silent, as did Lumian and the others.

In the end, they selected only three high-value items.

After discussing everything, Franca stood up, stretching her arms and said, “I'm a bit excited and nervous thinking about substantially hinting at Mr. Fool's dream manifestation tomorrow night.”

“What time is your appointment tomorrow night?” Lumian asked.

“Seven o'clock. Luo Shan said those tech folks rarely leave work on time, so we need to allow for extra time.” Franca also mentioned the meeting place.

Seven o'clock, huh... Lumian raised his right hand and rubbed his chin.

At this point, Jenna carefully said, “Don't be too nervous. You might not even manage to meet up successfully. I've seen posts on those apps where people set a time and place for a date, but their busy boyfriends or girlfriends end up working overtime at the last minute and have to cancel.”

“That's a possibility...” Franca was momentarily dumbfounded.

The next morning, Jenna once again arrived at the Star Dream Provisions Store.

She took a ride-hailing car as before, but this time encountered no obstacles or abnormalities.

Walking up to the checkout counter in the back of the Star Dream Provisions Store, Jenna politely asked, “Do you take this item?”

She placed the Beyonder characteristic from the reanimated Panatiya on the counter.

In the suddenly dimmed environment, the shopkeeper raised her head, looked at it, then shook her head and said, “We don't take this one.”

So you really don't accept it... Does it need to be made into an item, or is it as Lumian speculated, that things related to the Demoness and Hunter pathways will have important uses later? After putting away Panatiya's Beyonder characteristic, Jenna took out the corpse wax candle in a small glass bottle. “Do you take this?”

“We don't take that either,” the shopkeeper said without a trace of impatience on her beautiful face.

Not taking items either... Jenna thoughtfully put away the corpse wax candle.

Then, she took out an item from her Traveler's Bag.

It was a set of silver-white full body armor.

Pride Armor!

Jenna didn't try to hide the special nature of the Traveler's Bag as she placed the Pride Armor sideways on the counter.



The next second, she noticed a faint smile appear on the shopkeeper's face.

Almost simultaneously, the Pride Armor moved.

Like a crab, it moved sideways, clanking towards the entrance of the Star Dream Provisions Store.

However, the silver-white full body armor moved slower and slower, gradually turning upright.

When it was just two or three steps from the exit, it came to a complete stop, motionless.

It seemed to have turned into ordinary armor.

At this point, Jenna and the shopkeeper were both behind it, facing each other.

It showed no reaction.

In her astonishment, Jenna heard the shopkeeper say with a hint of amusement, "I'll take this item. 30,000 still."

So items like the Pride Armor can indeed be sold... But why did the Pride Armor react so strongly at first, and why isn't it even confronting the people behind it now? Though puzzled, Jenna didn't dare to ask.

Lumian, who learned he would be switching to the mid-shift next week, returned to the rental apartment.

He left at 6 p.m., arriving half an hour early at the entrance of Jinxiu Dongfang Community on Sifang Street.

He wanted to scout the environment first, as it might come in handy later.

As Lumian's gaze swept the area, he suddenly saw a familiar figure.

It was Anderson Hood, wearing a black T-shirt with abstract patterns.

Anderson also saw Lumian and walked over, smiling as he said, "I'm in the habit of arriving early."

Lumian responded with a smile, "Me too."

Anderson nodded. "Since we're both early, let's start the tour earlier. The friend you mentioned was indeed yourself."

"If that's what you want to think, I can't do anything about it," Lumian said with a smile, not arguing.

Anderson didn't seem to mind as he turned and led him into the Jinxiu Dongfang Community.

## Chapter 953 Art Studio

Sifang Street was located near a famous scenic spot in Yangdu, part of the old town area. The Jinxiu Dongfang Community was also quite old, with no building exceeding six floors or having elevators installed.

Lumian followed behind Anderson, turning towards the building closest to the community entrance.

As they climbed the stairs, he couldn't help but raise his right hand to pinch his nose.

A mixture of strong odors permeated the air.

Anderson turned sideways and laughed. "The whole building is being renovated."

He had somehow already stuffed two wads of white paper into his nostrils.

"Why is everything being renovated?" Lumian didn't hide his confusion.

Anderson glanced at him and said with a smile, "This gated community is too old. Most owners have moved away and chosen to rent out their vacant apartments. Someone has rented all the rooms in this building, planning to..."

At this point, Anderson paused, his smile becoming more pronounced in the dim stairwell as his voice deepened. "Planning to open a boutique hostel."

Colorful, right? And that person is you, right? Lumian was somewhat mentally prepared for this and frowned slightly as he said, "Isn't there still an art studio in this building? How can you say all the rooms have been rented?"

Anderson tightened the white paper wads in his nostrils. "Is it possible that the person who opened the art studio is the same one who rented the other rooms?"

"The boutique hostel he wants to open is adjacent to scenic spots, hidden in a gated community, with painting as its theme."

Lumian, still pinching his nose, feigned sudden realization and said, "I see."

Due to the strong renovation smells permeating the stairwell, the two didn't slow their pace as they conversed, quickly reaching the top floor, which was the sixth floor.

The doors of both units here were open, and on the wall facing the stairwell was a brightly colored mural. At its center were four characters:

"Mute Art Studio"

"That name is quite... special," Lumian commented sincerely.

By this point, the renovation smells had faded.

Anderson removed the white paper wads from his nostrils and explained earnestly,

"Painting is done with hands, not mouths. 'Mute' represents the studio's expectations for its students: focus, quietness, and dedication."

"That's a great explanation," Lumian applauded.

Anderson wasn't offended and said with a smile, "This isn't my forced interpretation, it's what the studio owner said."

"My sister once taught me dialectics, believing that even the worst words can have a positive side. Do you think that's right?" Lumian asked with a smile.

Anderson nodded. "If you think it's right, then it's right."

He led Lumian towards the door on the left.

Lumian didn't rush in, standing at the doorway to survey the fairly spacious living room.

There was a piece of darkness with only a hint of golden-red "Dawn" in the distance, a "Storm" with deep blue waves surging, "Pilgrims" with numerous blurred figures walking across a wasteland, and a grotesque "Monster" emerging from the seabed alongside "Pirates" trying to save their ship.

The "Pirates" painting suddenly reminded Lumian of the latest volume of "The Great Adventurer". He saw vines growing from the figures' heads, bearing watermelons, while milky white liquid sprayed everywhere on the deck.

Is this recreating Gehrman Sparrow's experience? As Lumian pondered this, he stared for two seconds at the sea monster that resembled a giant leech with its maw full of sharp teeth.

Anderson walked to the easel in the middle of the living room and turned around.

Lumian looked around once more before slowly following him in, "curiously" asking, "Where's the studio owner?"

Anderson raised his right hand and pointed at himself.

"You're the studio owner?" Lumian "surprisingly" confirmed.

Anderson nodded.

Lumian suddenly smiled. "Why aren't you speaking? Has your throat suddenly gone hoarse? Have you become mute?"

Anderson, wearing the black T-shirt, began using sign language.

Lumian couldn't understand what he was expressing even after watching for a while, and thoughtfully said, "I wonder if there's an app for translating sign language..."

Anderson picked up a paintbrush, took a piece of white paper from nearby, and wrote something in dark red.

Unlike Lumian and the others, he could write in the common script of the dream city.

Lumian focused his gaze and saw a sentence written on the white paper: "It's best not to speak in the studio, treat yourself as if you're mute."

Lumian raised an eyebrow, but before he could speak, he saw Anderson grimly add another line in dark red paint: "You just spoke."

Lumian suddenly felt a chill on the back of his neck, as if a cool breeze had blown past.

He didn't turn around, seemingly feeling nothing.

Anderson wrote another passage, the dark red paint appearing to become much brighter: "Do you know this person?"

After writing, he turned the easel around to show the painting on it to Lumian.

It depicted a woman, tall with a slender face, light blue and clear eyes, strikingly beautiful with a peculiar sharpness.

This was Lumian himself.

It was his female form!

Lumian's face broke into a smile as he answered Anderson's question, "I don't know her."

As his voice echoed, something cold and wet suddenly pressed against him from behind.

Lumian quickly reached back to grab it, his palm suddenly erupting with crimson flames.

As the flames compressed layer by layer, he saw what had attacked him.

It was the giant "leech" from the "Monster" oil painting. Its pinkish, nearly transparent body had extended from the painting, its maw opened to its fullest extent, large enough to bite off an adult's head.

13:25

Looking at the densely packed, ghastly white teeth with blood-colored roots, Lumian directly slapped the fireball in his hand, which had turned from crimson to nearly white, onto it.

Boom!

The fireball exploded instantly, enveloping the sea monster that had emerged from the painting.

The shockwave carrying flames quickly swept outwards, threatening to ignite every painting, every easel, and every person here!

At that moment, from the "Storm" oil painting, the azure seawater surged out, pouring into the room with a splash, extinguishing all the flames.

Lumian's figure disappeared from where he stood, reappearing behind the mute Anderson.

His eyes had turned completely iron-black, reflecting a ghastly white.

Lumian clenched his right fist and thrust it out with a smacking sound, striking Anderson's back.

This punch, accompanied by a thunderous explosion, tore through Anderson's flesh, penetrated his body, and hit the oil painting of Lumian's female form and its easel.

The mute Anderson's body suddenly ruptured, quickly thinning and transforming into a portrait painting with a huge hole.

This portrait, along with the oil painting of Lumian's female form, was ignited by crimson flames, turning into black, light ashes in just a few seconds.

As the mute Anderson reverted to a painting, both the azure seawater that had poured into the room and the sea monsters eagerly trying to emerge suddenly vanished, leaving only the motionless oil paintings.

Lumian scanned the room and found that a giant "leech" was indeed missing from the "Monster" painting. The studio floor was covered with water stains and incompletely burned paper scraps.

The place became eerily quiet, with no living beings present except for Lumian himself.

Lumian then went through both rooms that made up the studio, finding no other abnormalities.

Those paintings were no longer eerie or mysterious.

He left the place, going down the stairs to see tenants of the community gathering in small groups, looking around.

They had heard the sound of an explosion earlier but couldn't find its source or any damage to the buildings in the community. They could only attribute it to a high-speed fighter jet passing overhead.

Lumian passed through the group and returned to the community entrance.

Suddenly, a figure was reflected in his eyes.

The figure had blonde hair and blue eyes, wearing a white shirt and black trousers, with hands in pockets, looking like someone watching the commotion.

Anderson!

Anderson Hood!

Upon seeing Lumian, Anderson asked with a surprised expression, "You're already here? Have you already entered?"

Lumian smiled. "I'm in the habit of arriving early."

Anderson smiled as well. "Me too."

As Lumian walked up to him, he asked with a smile, "Did you enjoy yourself earlier?"

"Very much," Lumian maintained his smile, saying meaningfully, "I'd like to do it again."

Anderson Hood nodded slightly.

He was about to speak when he suddenly looked around.

"Maybe next time," Anderson said with a smile, shifting his gaze back. "Let's keep in touch via WeChat."

He raised his right palm, holding his phone.

He didn't mention visiting the art studio or ask if Lumian's friend was interested in taking classes. Lumian didn't bring up these topics either, waving his hand and saying, "I'll be going then."

"See you." Anderson waved back.

Lumian walked past the tutor towards the roadside.

A gray sedan pulled up and stopped in front of him.

Lumian opened the door, got in, and said to Anthony in the driver's seat, "Let's go to Worker's Road."

Anthony nodded and merged into traffic.

Franca, Luo Shan, and Zhou Mingrui had arranged to have dinner on Worker's Road tonight at a taro chicken hotpot restaurant.

As the car drove, chomping sounds continuously came from the back seat.

On Worker's Road, inside the “Yizhou Roast Chicken” taro chicken hotpot restaurant.

Franca and Luo Shan had arrived earlier, choosing a window-side table. They had ordered chicken and taro but hadn't selected any other dishes yet.

Each of them had ordered a bottle of iced soy milk, not finding any issue with Zhou Mingrui choosing such a noisy, lively place that wasn't quite bourgeois enough for a meal.

What mattered was whether the food tasted good!

At nearly 6:50 p.m., Zhou Mingrui, wearing a black shirt, walked in.

“Over here, over here!” Luo Shan waved cheerfully.

Zhou Mingrui weaved through the other tables, came over, and said as he sat down, “Some extra work came up just before clocking out.”

“We agreed on 7 p.m.,” Luo Shan said, not minding at all. She pointed at Franca and said, “This is my neighbor and colleague, Luo Fu.”

Zhou Mingrui glanced at Franca and said with a smile, “We've met before. Let's order first.”

Franca looked outside at the darkening sky, feeling a bit uneasy.

#### Chapter 954 Warning

Since Franca and Luo Shan had already pre-ordered the chicken and taro and requested them to be cooked immediately, the three of them soon began enjoying the steaming hot delicacies.

Franca asked the waiter to fill her dipping sauce bowl with a medium-spicy soup base. She added some minced garlic, chopped green onions, and cilantro, then poured in some oyster sauce. This combination provided saltiness and umami flavors, along with a hint of sweetness, nicely complementing the spicy taste. Franca particularly enjoyed preparing her hotpot dipping sauce this way.

She glanced at Zhou Mingrui and noticed his choices were similar to hers.

Great minds think alike... Franca picked up a piece of taro first instead of chicken. The taro had been pre-cooked to softness in a pressure cooker. After rolling it in the dipping sauce and blowing on it for about ten seconds, she took a bite. It was full of the fragrance of starch and the taro's own flavor. The taro had also absorbed the spiciness of the soup base and the deliciousness of the oil. Combined with the salty umami and slight sweetness of the oyster sauce, it made her salivate quickly, effectively reducing the residual heat.

Franca ate three pieces of taro before remembering to try a piece of chicken.

She would rank this as one of the top 3 vegetarian options in hotpot, along with potato slices and leafy stem lettuce.

The three ate quietly for a while. After filling their stomachs a bit, Luo Shan actively initiated various topics to prevent any awkwardness.

With her livening up the atmosphere, the three chatted quite happily, covering everything from company gossip and rumors to the recent job market and the current situations of former colleagues. The handsome security guard naturally became part of the conversation, with Luo Shan expressing regret that he hadn't been guarding the entrance recently, preventing her from seeing him in person. Unexpectedly, Zhou Mingrui asked about Franca's professional background, curious about why she changed careers right after graduation.

Franca shared her genuine feelings from her student days, "Working like a dog and earning little, while endangering my life; having to slog until your thirties or forties to barely have a decent income. I felt I couldn't endure that hardship, so I changed careers. How many times in life can you be in your twenties?"

Zhou Mingrui expressed understanding. "There's a saying online that those who encourage others to study medicine should be struck by lightning. However, being a doctor is a late-blooming career; the older you get, the more valuable you become. I have a childhood friend who also changed careers right after graduation, but even after working two other jobs, there wasn't much success..."

At this point, Zhou Mingrui suddenly paused, unconsciously frowning before continuing, "He used connections to return to his hometown hospital as an intern doctor."

There's such a childhood friend? The documents didn't mention this... It's clearly not Peng Deng, nor is it that female childhood friend who likes to travel... As Franca pondered this, Zhou Mingrui began discussing medical topics.

Franca perfectly played the role of a former medical student who had changed careers three years ago. She could still discuss basic concepts but had mostly forgotten the more in-depth knowledge.

She wasn't a Savant after all!

Her current identity was almost an exact copy of her actual history, making it easy for her to play the role. The only difference was that she hadn't actually graduated and had changed careers six or seven years ago.

As Zhou Mingrui nodded imperceptibly, Luo Shan glanced at Franca and asked with a smile, "Have you tried that new drink? The one with the great design and a unique name."

Franca smiled back and asked instead of answering, "Have you two tried it?"

Before Zhou Mingrui and Luo Shan could answer, Franca lowered her voice, "I recently heard an urban legend about a mysterious vending machine that randomly appears in different places. It sells gacha boxes of that drink. Some of the drinks in these gacha boxes have special effects, giving the drinker abilities corresponding to the drink's name. The ones sold in supermarkets and convenience stores are just ordinary, normal drinks."

After saying this in one breath without experiencing any abnormalities herself, Franca relaxed a little.

Zhou Mingrui looked at Franca, who had changed into a white T-shirt, loose pants, and white sneakers, with her hair tied back in a ponytail after returning home. He smiled and said, "I've also seen such rumors online."

Franca's gaze fell on Luo Shan's face.

Luo Shan bit her lip and said in a deliberate ghost story tone, “Actually, I've encountered that mysterious vending machine.”

Suddenly, Zhou Mingrui also looked at her.

The three chatted about other things until it was completely dark outside, each feeling very satisfied with their meal.

After saying goodbye to Luo Shan and Franca, Zhou Mingrui walked towards the other end of the street.

The smile on his face gradually settled as various thoughts surfaced in his mind.

They don't seem to be probing me, more like hinting, suggesting, warning me...

Is there really a big problem with the follow-up to the Assassin drink?

It's also possible that because I deliberately chose a crowded and lively place, they couldn't find an opportunity to use their abilities to influence me...

I'll observe for a while and see if there are any accidents or attacks...

If I can confirm their intentions or goodwill, I can find an opportunity to really talk later...

If avoiding doesn't solve the problem, then face it...

Lost in his thoughts, Zhou Mingrui turned into a small alley and walked into the shadows.

On the other side, Franca led Luo Shan towards the nearest shopping mall.

For the next hour, she wanted to stay in a place with more people and better lighting.

Just after leaving the vicinity of the Yizhou Roast Chicken restaurant, walking about a dozen steps along the roadside, Franca suddenly felt dizzy.

The next second, she felt like a deep-sea fish suddenly pulled out of the ocean, desperately trying to breathe but unable to inhale even a trace of air. Her head and body were bizarrely expanding, like a fragile balloon being constantly inflated.

She painfully grabbed her own neck, trying to pull her trachea out of her flesh to directly connect with the air.

Her legs began to weaken, and her body started to fall to the ground. Her thoughts stuttered, and her mirror avatar lost connection with her.

Has the Celestial Worthy noticed me? This thought flashed through Franca's mind.

In the gray sedan parked on the opposite side of the road, Lumian quietly watched as Franca's face turned extremely red, her lips turning blue-black, as she grabbed her slender neck, scratching bloody marks on her fair skin.

Luo Shan stood beside her, looking bewildered and helpless.

Lumian in the passenger seat remained motionless, still quietly watching.

He saw Franca half-fallen on the ground, struggling to open her handbag and having difficulty taking out her phone before she unlocked the screen.



On the screen was a pre-prepared interface, and along with the phone were cosmetics, multi-faceted mirrors, and a small black bag.

In Lumian's vision, Franca's eyes bulged out, her expression painful and fierce as she tapped the phone screen with her thumb.

Then, she completely collapsed, dropping her handbag on the ground.

The items from her bag rolled out, and the small black bag mysteriously disappeared.

After a few seconds, Lumian in the car across the street watched as Franca slowly stood up with empty eyes. He calmly said to himself and Anthony, "Contacting Zhou Mingrui at night and hinting at the existence of Beyonder powers will result in being quickly kicked out of the dream."

## Chapter 955 Aftermath

Trier, inside a luxurious villa.

Franca suddenly opened her eyes and sat up.

Her first reaction was to reach for her waist, feeling the Traveler's Bag about the size of a coin purse.

Phew... Franca let out an unconcealed sigh of relief.

At the last moment, she had proactively withdrawn before being completely kicked out of the dream. Her concern was that her personal items might be lost due to passive ejection, left behind in the dream city, and thus lost in reality as well!

In that situation, she couldn't pin her hopes on Luo Shan picking up and safeguarding her belongings, or on Lumian and Jenna, who were secretly observing, finding an opportunity to retrieve the items—that could potentially implicate them and subject them to the Celestial Worthy's scrutiny.

According to the information provided by the Major Arcana card holders, whether she left actively or passively, her dream persona, woven with the help of the lucky coin and Madam Justice, wouldn't disappear after her consciousness left the dream. The next time she entered, she would still be that person.

Of course, the current "Luo Fu" would revert to an NPC, following the subconscious manipulation of Mr. Fool or the Celestial Worthy, living her life according to her background settings and current social relationships, appearing normal on the surface.

As for whether this "Luo Fu" NPC harbored hidden issues or would contact companions, potentially implicating them in being kicked out as well, the Major Arcana card holders were currently uncertain, as they had always acted separately in their previous entries.

Based on these concerns, before actively exiting the dream, Franca struggled to take out her phone and unlock the screen.

At that moment, her screen was frozen on the "Information Shredder" mini-program, with her finger on the "Clear All Information on This Phone" button.

This was part of the contingency plan. Throughout the meal with Zhou Mingrui, except for the brief ten or so seconds when she showed him her WeChat name, Franca's phone screen had displayed the running "Information Shredder" program. In her own words, after leaving home that evening, she was prepared to "wipe the database and abscond" at any moment. She feared the Celestial Worthy might take the opportunity to scan her contact list, mark suspicious parts, and deal with them specifically.

Franca reached into the Traveler's Bag, unsurprised but still delighted to find that the Beyonder characteristic and corresponding body parts extracted from the reanimated female corpse Panatiya were inside, real and tangible, within reach.

Correspondingly, the Pride Armor had vanished, disappearing into thin air.

Damn, the boundary between dream and reality has really been fooled. I can barely tell which side is the dream and which is reality... Franca was equally unsurprised by this, but still shocked.

Is this the terrifying aspect of a great existence?

If Mr. Fool was willing to maintain it and received certain assistance, the dream city could completely become real, as long as one didn't leave on their own!

From this perspective, the real world might also be the dream of that initial being... Thankfully, It has awakened and split...

Franca, having read many foreign myths before her transmigration, naturally made some associations.

She got out of bed, intending to go to the bathroom to relieve herself.

This was the first thing she did every morning after waking up.

After a few steps, Franca suddenly stopped.

She didn't feel any urge to urinate at all, and instead felt full, as if she had just eaten a good meal.

Franca immediately took out a mirror and used divination to confirm the current date.

Reality had also passed several days, basically consistent with the dream, though there seemed to be a slight time difference—in this bedroom, the tightly drawn curtains let in a bit of twilight, it wasn't completely dark outside yet.

Is the dream city using Backlund time?

We've been in the dream city for over a week, it's impossible not to be hungry or need to use the bathroom in reality... Damn, does eating in the dream mean being full in reality, gaining the corresponding nutrients? Does using the bathroom in the dream equate to using it in reality?

But, but I don't smell bad, and my pants are normal...

That's not what you said earlier... Luo Shan made a sound of agreement.

After the two got into a ride-share car, Lumian's right hand loosened its five fingers, and he nodded at Anthony.

Anthony started the car, drove to the intersection, and stopped again.

From the shadows, Jenna emerged, walking towards the gray sedan as if she had finally waited for her ride-share.

Lumian lowered the car window and, looking straight ahead, said, "Try to minimize contact with her tonight, and it's best to find an excuse not to sleep in Dechuang Garden."

After saying this, without waiting for Jenna's response, he raised the window, and Anthony drove the vehicle into the middle lane.

Jenna's lips bore the marks of her teeth, and her clenched fists finally relaxed.

After seeing Franca's abnormal situation, she knew she shouldn't go to her rescue to avoid implicating herself, but rationality was one thing and emotion was another, especially when Franca seemed on the verge of death during her struggle.

It took great willpower for Jenna to control herself, clearly discerning Franca's state, and waiting for her to withdraw on her own.

Dechuang Garden, Building 5.

Luo Shan said goodbye to Franca on the 15th floor and returned to her own home.

After a while, she heard the doorbell.

Outside the door was Jenna, known as Jian Na in the dream city.

The moment she saw Jenna, Luo Shan opened her mouth, wanting to say something, but then closed it, remaining silent.

Jenna looked around and said in a low voice, "Minimize contact with Luo Fu for the next two days, and don't discuss anything related to Beyond powers with her."

Luo Shan's expression immediately relaxed, and she spoke as if she had been holding it in for a long time.

"I knew something was off with Fu Fu. After we finished dinner with Zhou Mingrui, she suddenly wasn't right. First, she had a sudden illness, and then it was like she became a different person..."

"What, what problem has occurred?"

Jenna considered for a few seconds before saying, "You can understand it this way: interfering with past history has limitations and comes at a cost. Otherwise, we could just go to Zhou Mingrui's house, control him directly, tell him everything in detail, then demonstrate some abilities, provide some evidence, and wouldn't that make him believe initially?"

"I understand now," Luo Shan had a sudden realization. "Fu Fu hinted at the existence of Beyond powers and the problem with the Assassin potion tonight, and was affected by the self-correcting force of history, causing problems, her old condition flaring up?"

"Is she now equivalent to another version of herself, similar to my previous situation?"

“You can understand it that way.” Jenna nodded, not explaining in detail.

She returned to the 23rd floor and saw Franca sitting on the sofa on her phone. After some thought, she said, “I’m going to see Li Lu later, I won’t be back tonight.”

In the identity documents, Li Lu’s father was Li Ming, and his mother was Jian Na.

Franca raised her head and said with a smile, “When will you bring Li Lu over to play? I can sleep on the sofa.”

“It depends on his father’s opinion,” Jenna smiled, packed her toiletries, and left the apartment.

Taking the elevator to the first floor, she took out her phone and sent a message to Lumian:

“Luo Shan still remembers the story we told her, remembers the help we gave her, and shows no changes at present.

“Franca only knows about the things in the background information, remembering only the nominal social relationships.”

The Novel will be updated first on this website. Come back and continue reading tomorrow, everyone!

## Chapter 956 New Speculation

Jenna didn’t actually go to Xinhong District to find Lumian and Ludwig. Instead, she chose a nearby hotel, booked a room, and checked if she would also be kicked out.

Nothing happened overnight. After waking up, she immediately returned to Dechuang Garden and sat in a corner of the lobby, facing sideways towards the door leading to the interior of the residential complex.

After about ten minutes, she saw Franca.

Franca was still wearing her old-fashioned black-framed glasses and dressed in a relatively conservative office lady style.

Seeing this, Jenna breathed a sigh of relief, changed her sitting posture, and turned her back to Franca to avoid meeting her.

The purpose of her early return to the residential complex was to confirm whether the current “Luo Fu’s” behavior style was consistent with the previous Franca. If she had removed her disguise and changed into makeup and clothes that best highlighted her features, maximizing the charm of a Witch, Jenna would have to consider finding an excuse to prevent “Luo Fu” from going to work, delaying her for a day.

Now it seemed that the style of the “Luo Fu” NPC would continue as before.

Tech Building, 10th floor.

Franca sat down at her desk and leisurely made herself a cup of coffee.

At this moment, she saw Zhou Mingrui walk in, so she smiled and said, "Are you looking for Luo Shan? She hasn't arrived yet."

"I thought you two would come together." Zhou Mingrui didn't hide his surprise.

In his view, whether on the surface or secretly, Luo Shan and Luo Fu had a very good relationship and a special connection. They should be the type to wait for each other and go to work together.

Franca smiled and said, "I asked her, and she said she had something holding her up and told me not to wait for her."

"I see..." Zhou Mingrui nodded and turned to walk out of the Administrative Department.

During this period, he had been coming to ask Luo Shan about various company news more frequently than before, leading to some idle people in the Administrative Department spreading rumors about him and Luo Shan.

Zhou Mingrui walked at a moderate pace to the entrance of the Administrative Department, unable to wait for Luo Fu to ask him to wait.

He actually came to find Luo Fu today, not Luo Shan. He originally thought she would take this opportunity to hint at something again, but unexpectedly, Luo Fu didn't even have the thought of chatting with him casually, being polite but somewhat distant.

Zhou Mingrui frowned slightly, not turning back to look again, and left the Administrative Department directly.

Something feels a bit off... He had just grumbled inwardly when he saw Luo Shan walking over with a pancake and a cup of five-grain soy milk.

"Good morning," Luo Shan greeted cheerfully.

"Good morning," Zhou Mingrui smiled, "I just went to find you, but you hadn't arrived yet. Luo Fu said you were held up by something."

Luo Shan looked around. "Want to ask me about something again?"

The two chatted casually for a few sentences, each walking towards their own department's office.

"Without Huang Tao's cooperation, we can't keep him through promotion and salary increase for now. We must solve this problem before he actually resigns."

Lumian read it carefully and felt that Grimm, or rather the children of the Great Mother in the dream city, hadn't thought about how to cooperate with the Celestial Worthy to turn Zhou Mingrui into a Witch for now. They were more focused on monitoring, observing, and trying to keep Zhou Mingrui staying within the Intis Group where they had great influence, not resigning and leaving.

It feels like what the children of the Great Mother are currently doing is maintaining balance and obtaining the latest intelligence changes at any time...

This basically matches the judgment of the Major Arcana cards and me regarding the intentions of the evil gods...

After muttering to himself for a couple of sentences, Lumian stood up and began pacing in the office.

He was thinking about how to use Grimm and other children of the mother, and also about the matter of Mr. Fool drinking the Assassin potion.

Frankly speaking, when he learned that the Celestial Worthy induced Mr. Fool to drink the Assassin potion, attempting to make him gradually become a Witch, change gender, and thus cause cognitive issues, Lumian felt it was a bit absurd.

In his view, gods were all divine, and except for a few pathways that needed to emphasize gender, they shouldn't care whether they were male or female. Those ancient beings who had lived for thousands or tens of thousands of years might be even more so.

Would Mr. Fool really have cognitive issues because of becoming female?

Recalling that Mr. Fool required to be referred to as “he” rather than “He,” Lumian reluctantly accepted this reason.

At the same time, he also suspected that the Celestial Worthy wanted to use the conflict of symbolically non-neighboring pathway Beyonder characteristics to drive Mr. Fool mad, thus gaining the upper hand and achieving victory—the Demoness pathway was not adjacent to the Seer, Apprentice, or Marauder pathways.

After killing the reanimated female corpse Panatiya and learning about her mission, Lumian's internal balance leaned more towards the speculation that the Celestial Worthy wanted to use the conflict between non-neighboring pathways.

Panatiya was supposed to make Zhou Mingrui fall in love, and after he drank the Witch potion and changed gender, stay by his side. Wasn't this equivalent to helping Zhou Mingrui, helping Mr. Fool stabilize his mental state?

This was somewhat contradictory to the speculation of using gender change to cause cognitive issues for Mr. Fool.

And if stabilizing the mental state was for Zhou Mingrui to drink higher sequence Demoness potions, accumulating more madness, it seemed more reasonable.

Now, following this line of thought, Lumian had new questions: Why did it have to be the Assassin potion, the Demoness pathway?

As long as it was a potion from a pathway not adjacent to Seer, Apprentice, or Marauder, it could achieve the purpose...

Does becoming female early on indeed have its effect, bringing mental hidden dangers?

Combining this with the fact that most of our team are Demonesses, and the Celestial Worthy specifically brought a Demoness marionette into the dream city, does this indicate that inducing Zhou Mingrui to drink the Assassin potion, rather than other non-neighboring potions, has hidden reasons?

Lumian immediately went through various specialties of the Demoness pathway in his mind.

In just a few seconds, he thought of a term: "Mirror Person"!

Becoming a Witch not only changes one into a female but also creates a corresponding, fixed Mirror Person.

From this Sequence onwards, Demonesses can use mirrors to create avatars and use corresponding magic.

And from Lumian's current experience, Mirror People were more extreme, more vicious, more sinister.

What the Celestial Worthy actually wants is to make Mr. Fool have a Mirror Person, and then by doing certain things to the Mirror Person, or making the Mirror Person do certain things, achieve the goal of winning this confrontation? Confusing the real with the fake, turning the fake into real? Lumian fell into deep thought.

At this moment, his phone vibrated, and the new incoming message was from Anderson Hood.

## Chapter 957 A Special Ability Once Obtained

"A name that leaves a deep impression on you" sent a "Hi" emoji: "Want another round of fun?"

"Hope it's more exciting than last night," Lumian replied using voice input, bringing the phone close to his mouth.

Nearby, Old Xia glanced at him, his eyes full of envy and longing.

Young people sure have exciting lives...

No wonder he has a 7-year-old child at just 22...

Too bad I don't dare...

Soon, Anderson replied to Lumian: "You pick the place, somewhere suitable for discussing secrets."

"Alright," Lumian didn't refuse.

"Let's set the time for 6 p.m., I like sunlight." Anderson sent an "OK" emoji.

After Lumian replied "No problem," the former strongest Hunter of the Fog Sea asked in text: "Why is your WeChat name 'The Idiot', do you think you're not smart enough?"

Lumian chuckled. "I really like tarot cards, and I think The Fool card is super cool. Calling myself 'Idiot' is a kind of an imitation."

"Sometimes, people like to use high-sounding reasons to cover up their own issues. This is a phrase I've been fond of lately, and I'll share it with you too." Anderson replied, sending a "Bye-bye" emoji.

Lumian didn't respond further.

After resting for a while, he and Old Xia started patrolling the floors again.

When they reached the 10th floor, while patrolling inside the Intis Group, Lumian saw Zhou Mingrui coming out of the public restroom.

As their eyes met, Lumian nodded slightly, as a greeting.

Zhou Mingrui hadn't run into him these past couple of days, and since security guards patrolling the floors was indeed routine work, he didn't show any alertness and responded with a nod.

As they passed each other, Lumian naturally checked the surroundings for any fire hazards.

He hadn't thought about using this opportunity to hint at the existence of Beyonder powers to Zhou Mingrui during the day. Firstly, they weren't close enough to chat, and even if he tried hinting, the other party might not be willing to listen. Secondly, he needed to wait until Franca being kicked out of the dreamscape truly ended, otherwise it would be impossible to distinguish whether subsequent anomalies were aftereffects of last night's reminder or caused by today's probing.

Seeing that Li Ming, this security guard, didn't make any strange gestures or say anything odd, Zhou Mingrui's doubts dissipated a bit more.

At 6 p.m., sunlight still illuminated the small square in front of the mall, lighting up those facilities for children to play.

Inside a glass-sealed cylinder, six sets of seats were slowly rotating.

In the middle of the cylinder, various colored plastic balls were constantly being sprayed out, flying in all directions. Ludwig was using a fishing net with a handle to catch them.

Lumian sat next to him, like a real parent, and the adjacent set of seats belonged to Anderson.

Anderson didn't have children, but he sat there at ease, occasionally raising his net to catch a ball, completely without the shame or embarrassment of an adult who had entered a children's ball pit without bringing a child.

At this time, except for the three of them, no one else was present; everyone else had gone home for dinner.

"No," Lumian answered honestly.

Anderson nodded with a look of caring for an uneducated youngling. "Moreover, that dream is interesting and fun. As humans, we need to frequently change our forms of entertainment.

"I told Danitz in the dream to be careful of me turning into a mute at night, but unfortunately, he didn't understand my hint. If I could get some things and disguise myself as Edwina, he would probably be more proactive in using his brain to ponder what I said."

"You painted the mute painter in the painting? You also possess the painting skills that were qualitatively changed?" Lumian asked about last night's events.

Luo Shan also painted another self, and after Franca helped burn it, her condition improved significantly...



Is Anderson using me to “adjust” his own state?

Anderson clicked his tongue and said, “Don't you use the same body during the day and at night?

“The changes in the body are common.”

Lumian pondered and asked, “In the dreamscape, the Painter shouldn't be able to make what he paints truly come off the paper, there are too many obstacles.”

All abilities should be suppressed to Sequence 7 level, but yesterday's Anderson could freely move around the residential district and could still speak before entering the studio.

Anderson smiled and said, “Dreamscapes always have some special cases and exceptions. If the dream owner symbolizes loopholes, then his dream will inevitably have some loopholes. This is a manifestation of part of his symbolism in the dream, unless he consciously controls it, it can't be avoided.

“The mute Anderson originally didn't exist, he's just another state of mine, but he's also hidden in the dream owner's thoughts and cognition. So once I paint him, he doesn't need to invade from the outside to become real, but he can't leave the studio and is very weak.”

Mr. Fool's manifestation once knew a mute Anderson, or imagined Anderson becoming mute?

Lumian nodded slightly and asked, “So the one who led me into the studio was you yourself?”

Anderson smiled obviously and said, “Of course, after I entered the studio, while you were looking at those oil paintings, I left through a pre-prepared painting and activated the mute Anderson painting.

“That's my studio, equivalent to a Hunter's home ground, there would definitely be additional arrangements.

“I changed my clothes and pants afterwards, so you didn't recognize me?”

“Why did you change your clothes and pants?” Lumian probed.

Anderson smiled again. “Just kidding.”

Is this Anderson's style... Do all successful Hunters have a tendency for pranks? Lumian accepted Anderson's explanation. If it were him, he might do the same thing.

Anderson glanced at the entertainment facility that was almost out of time.

“Now it's my turn to ask, right?

“What do you want to do by coming here?”

This didn't seem like a question, more like a confirmation.

“To wake up the dream owner in the best and most humane state,” Lumian answered simply.

Anderson suddenly smiled. “A few days ago, a foreigner came to the cram school to visit. He was as real as you guys.”

“What's his name?” Lumian asked, outwardly calm.

At this moment, the balls stopped spraying, and the rotation of the seats quickly slowed down until it stopped.

Anderson stood up and said with a smile, “Zaratulstra.”

## Chapter 958 Inside and Outside the Dream

It's that Zaratulstra again... Did he go to the Dream Tutoring Classes to wait for Zhou Mingrui, or did he have another purpose? Lumian held Ludwig's hand as they walked out of the seating area. While waiting for the staff to open the door of the amusement facility, he smiled at Anderson and asked, “Did you chat with him?”

Anderson put his hands in his pockets and smiled. “He said he wanted to deeply influence one person and eliminate some people.”

Is the one he wants to deeply influence Zhou Mingrui? And who are the ones he wants to eliminate? Why did Zaratulstra talk about this with Anderson? Was one of his purposes for going to the Dream Tutoring Classes to find Anderson, to find the mute Anderson representing the Fantasy Association? Does this symbolize the cooperation between the Celestial Worthy and that evil god of the Fantasy Association? Lumian walked towards the now-open door, casually saying, “People like Danitz?”

What he wanted to ask was whether the people Zaratulstra wanted to eliminate were dream characters like Oracle Danitz, or outsiders like himself.

Anderson gave a thumbs up, walking down the few steps at the entrance. “At the time, I couldn't understand why they dealt with Danitz first. What role could he play? Maybe he was just lucky, and they had to first finish off the lucky one.”

In a situation where everyone is suppressed to Sequence 7, luck is indeed very important... From Anderson's words, was the death of the Oracle done by Zaratulstra and the mute Anderson together? The mute Anderson's involvement means he himself was also involved, with a chance to secretly sabotage and influence the progress of things. So, is that why we discovered the Oracle's body earlier, instead of it being sent to the morgue at Mushu Hospital according to the planned schedule, to “resurrect” and return? Lumian nodded thoughtfully.

He felt that Anderson had used the mute dream manifestation to interfere with Zaratulstra's actions, resulting in the other party only achieving the goal of eliminating Danitz, without successfully utilizing the Oracle's body.

Lumian was now unsure whether Zaratulstra was more Zaratul or more Loki, so he directly used the dream name to refer to him.

Damn, it was you, Anderson, who did it. No wonder you called the police immediately... This also explains why we stumbled upon the death of the Oracle. It wasn't a coincidence... Lumian cursed inwardly for a couple of sentences, passing by Anthony without retrieving his phone. Anderson did the same.

Taking advantage of the few people playing in the small square, he looked at the advertisement displayed on the mall's big screen and asked a question one would typically ask during a stroll.

“What do you want to do by opening the Colorful Hostel?”

“As soon as you come in, someone hands you a sum of money, hands you a hotel that's still under renovation, would you refuse? When faced with sugar-coated bullets, isn't it a normal choice to eat the sugar coating and throw back the bullet?” Anderson smiled and asked in return.

“But many times, the sugar coating can also be poisonous, or you might not have time to throw back the bullet. You wouldn't want it if someone forcibly put a child in your belly, would you?” The temporary Child of God of the Great Mother, Lumian, spoke from experience.

Anderson was stunned for a second, then smiled and said, “If it's really put in, you have to keep it even if you don't want to. If you can't get rid of it later, you can only cultivate a good father-son or father-daughter relationship.”

Lumian changed the question. “What does the behind-the-scenes hand that made those people give you money and the hotel want to do?”

Anderson turned his head to look at him and said with a smile, “Isn't that why I've come to find you?”

Lumian's thoughts raced, vaguely understanding the meaning in Anderson's words: one of the goals of that evil god of the Fantasy Association was to hinder the Celestial Worthy and maintain the balance of the dream. It was precisely because Anderson grasped this key point that he actively contacted Lumian and others, speaking so plainly.

Anderson looked ahead again, walking towards the food gathering area behind the mall.

“I saw a funny saying online before.

“The saying goes, ‘I'm afraid of my brother suffering, but I also don't want my brother owning a Range Rover.’”

“That's interesting.” Lumian felt Anderson didn't need to hint so obviously, he could understand completely.

Anderson continued, “A hotel always has guests, coming from different places.”

At this point, he suddenly pointed at the spray painting on a shop sign.

Grouès was one of the confidants of Louis Gustav, the leader of the Emperor Party.

This progress is a bit fast; you haven't been a Witch for long, haven't you... Franca didn't ask about Niceea's current feelings, and asked calmly, “Did Grouès say anything?”

Seeing that her superior didn't inquire about her journey and actual experience of becoming a mistress, Niceea's inner conflict, embarrassment, and irritation subsided considerably.

She recalled and said, "He said Louis has been troubled lately, seeming very irritable. The reason seems to be that he can't contact some important figure."

"Which important figure?" Franca asked.

"Grouès doesn't know either, only that there is such an important figure, an important figure that gives Louis a lot of confidence." Niceea shook her head.

Unable to contact the mirrored Emperor Roselle? Franca suddenly had such a thought.

She nodded slightly.

"Find a way to figure out who that important figure is, and grasp the substantial movements of the Emperor Party."

After saying this, her figure quickly faded and disappeared from the chair.

Niceea quietly watched the lady leave, raised her right hand, and slowly caressed from her cheek to her lips.

Franca directly returned to that luxurious villa, without going to report to the Demoness of Black that she had fully digested the Affliction potion.

Let alone whether the Demoness Sect would reward her with the Despair potion in a situation where she hadn't made new achievements, even if they would, she couldn't possibly really perform the ritual, so it was better to stall for now.

After dinner, close to midnight, Franca stood up and walked towards her room.

The slightly short Madam Judgment escorted her to the room while instructing, "For the second return to the dream, operating under the previous identity, the current experience is that there won't be much difference from the first time. But by the third time, we've found that some attempts that wouldn't have gotten us kicked out of the dream before will also result in being kicked out, as if we've been simply marked by that Celestial Worthy.

"So, you need to pay attention now to whether there are subtle changes compared to last time, to determine whether becoming an object of attention starts from the second entry into the dream or the third. Also, don't make any radical probes in the next few days, you've just been kicked out and need to wait a while."

"Mm, I'll be careful." Franca remembered that this had been mentioned in the documents.

After going upstairs and reaching the door, Madam Judgment further said,

"We can't give you many things to take into the dream, because we've used them in the dream and they've also been marked.

"If you want to make money, there's another way: have one person apply for a job at the Hall Film Company, a subsidiary of the Hall Group. Although Miss Justice can't

enter the dream anymore, as a Dreamweaver and Major Arcana card holder, she can still exert a little influence on the dream.”

“Understood,” Franca responded with a smile, “Thank you all.”

She then entered the room, lay down on the bed again, and gripped the lucky coin in her palm.

She had tried yesterday, if she didn't put the lucky coin beside her, she would just fall asleep normally and dream normally, occasionally flashing fragments of the dream city, like sights and sounds from “Luo Fu”.

Franca closed her eyes and regulated her breathing.

## Chapter 959 Weekend

Dechuang Garden, Room 2303.

Jenna accompanied “Luo Fu” as they watched TV in the living room, occasionally scrolling through her phone. The two conversed very little.

Suddenly, she noticed “Luo Fu” turn her body and say with bright eyes, “I'm back again!”

Jenna didn't respond immediately, because “Luo Fu” and Franca had very similar personalities.

Franca then picked up her phone and said to Jenna, “Quick, quick, send me another copy of the Information Shredder.”

Hearing “Information Shredder”, Jenna finally confirmed that it was really Franca who had returned.

At this moment, Franca unlocked her screen and found that WeChat had already been redownloaded by “Luo Fu”, and Jenna, Luo Shan, and several employees from the administrative department had been re-added, but not “The Idiot”, “An Ruide”, or “Li Lu”.

After a quick glance, Franca hurriedly tapped into her WeChat wallet.

Her expression suddenly froze. “The money, my money... it's gone!”

Jenna's pupils dilated as she quickly leaned over, discovering that Franca's WeChat wallet balance was “0.00 yuan”.

“It didn't delete all the information on my phone, including the money in my online wallet, did it?” Franca hurriedly downloaded a banking app again, taking some time to complete the login and check her balance.

She let out a long sigh of relief, patting her chest.

“Thank goodness, the bulk of it is still there. That gave me such a fright.”

After her exclamation, she explained to Jenna,

“The money in my bank account is still there!”

Jenna glanced at her bank card balance and asked thoughtfully, "How much money did you originally have in your WeChat wallet?"

"138 yuan," Franca answered smoothly. "I had over 300 yuan in Alipay too."

The Alipay app had already been downloaded back by "Luo Fu". She tapped in to check and found there was still over 100 yuan.

"Uh..." Franca flipped through the transactions and finally confirmed that this 100+ yuan was later transferred from the bank card by "Luo Fu", with some spent on takeout orders. The previous 300+ yuan had indeed vanished into thin air.

Jenna amusingly pressed her hand to her chest and said, "You only lost about 500 yuan, but you acted like you lost all 120,000+. You scared me to death."

The 60,000 earned from selling items was currently with Jenna, and she had transferred half to Lumian and Anthony.

"Don't say such unlucky things. 500 yuan is a lot, it's enough for us to buy so many things at the wholesale market!" Franca thought for a moment and said, "I need to transfer some to Lumian and Anthony. We should each keep some separately, in case it all gets exposed at once. I've realized that this is like a game—when you get kicked out of the dream, you might drop equipment and money, and you might not even be able to pick it back up. Mm, we shouldn't put all our eggs in one basket."

"The money in the bank card is still there, but what was on the phone is gone?" Jenna pondered and said, "Because at that time you only cleared the phone information with one click, not the bank card information? The loss of money should be an issue with the Information Shredder, right?"

Franca nodded slowly. "This mini-program is really powerful. I suspect it even deleted the corresponding information and backup information on the servers. Only in this way could it deal with mystical photos and prevent our chat records from being found..."

At this point, Franca frowned slightly and said, "I asked Madam Magician and Madam Judgment. They know every high-ranking member of the Church of Steam, but none of them is called Stiano."

"Anthony's feeling at that time must have been correct. Stiano should have a close connection with the Church of Steam." Jenna also showed a puzzled expression.

"They seem to have suspects. They said they would tell us through the Star Dream Provisions Store after confirmation," Franca suddenly looked around, pointed at the ceiling, and said in a lowered voice, "Could it be that one? Only a mini-program made by Him could be so powerful, and besides, He can enter with real consciousness."

After repeatedly reviewing the compiled data for a long time, he planned to find an opportunity to scout the location after accompanying Ludwig to tutoring class tomorrow.

For the rest of the time, he took out the new ice board he had made and, for the umpteenth time, scrutinized the information on each dream character and the preliminary findings from their team's observations and interactions with these characters.

The next day, at Dream Tutoring Classes.

Lumian escorted the slowly moving Ludwig to the door of the Beginner English class.

Anderson glanced at him and greeted, "Want to join for some enlightenment?"

"No need, I'd rather learn painting," Lumian replied simply, pushing Ludwig towards Anderson.

Anderson didn't speak to him further, taking Ludwig's hand and walking back into the classroom.

Lumian sat down opposite, patiently waiting just like last time.

Before long, he saw Zhou Mingrui again.

Zhou Mingrui was wearing a white T-shirt with patterns, looking much more youthful and sunny than when he was at work.

Zhou Mingrui wasn't surprised at all to see him here, as if he had been mentally prepared. He nodded slightly as a greeting.

Lumian didn't engage in small talk, only politely responding.

More contact, less closeness, to lower the target's vigilance!

Moreover, Franca's probing last night had quite good results, successfully making Zhou Mingrui wary of the aftermath of the Assassin beverage. Now he needed to give him some time to digest such bombshell news.

From this perspective, Franca being kicked out of the dream this time was worth it.

After watching Zhou Mingrui turn into the classroom, Lumian withdrew his gaze and started using his phone.

At this moment, he suddenly had a premonition and raised his head, looking towards the front desk of the tutoring center.

He saw Principal Ai Nana, wearing a white long dress, accompanying an elderly man inside.

Behind them were several employees of Dream Tutoring Classes and unfamiliar faces Lumian hadn't seen before.

Lumian's gaze fell on the elderly man, noticing he was wearing a black formal suit, his hair completely white, with long and dense white whiskers on his face, and blue eyes so deep they were almost without light.

Lumian's eyes narrowed slightly. He had seen a portrait of this elderly man before: Zaratulstra!

He's come to Dream Tutoring Classes again? Lumian quietly stood up, retreating along with other parents to avoid this group of people.

Ai Nana led Zaratulstra to stop at the door of the Business English class, introducing the relevant situation.

Zaratulstra's gaze subsequently turned towards those students.

At this point, Lumian had already retreated to the depths of the corridor, stopping next to the fire alarm, and glanced up at the surveillance camera that could capture this area.

He watched Zaratulstra from the corner of his eye. If the other party made any unusual movements or tried to talk to Zhou Mingrui, he would first knock out the surveillance camera from a blind spot, then punch the fire alarm to make the scene chaotic, causing everyone to rush out of Dream Tutoring Classes.

During this process, he would play the role of a panicked parent, constantly obstructing Zaratulstra's various actions while carrying Ludwig.

## Chapter 960 Psychiatric Ward

Using the cover of the parents in front, Lumian discreetly observed Zaratulstra's every move.

After listening to Ai Nana's introduction for a few minutes, Zaratulstra nodded, left the door of the Business English class, and turned to look at the other training classes currently in session.

He didn't do anything... Lumian was puzzled, but remained vigilant.

It wasn't until Zaratulstra finished touring Dream Tutoring Classes and Ai Nana escorted him and his entourage out, returning to teach the Business English class, that Lumian sat back in his original seat and silently said to himself, He's leaving just like that?

Was he simply here to recognize Zhou Mingrui, complete the initial contact, or did he secretly do something that I didn't notice? For example, has he already controlled Ms. Ai, or discreetly used some ability to achieve his predetermined goal from just a few meters away?

After thinking it through, Lumian picked up his phone and sent a message to Jenna: "Ask Luo Shan to remind the target via WeChat to pay attention to his condition today, not to drink water he brought to the tutoring class, and to buy new water later."

This was to indirectly and subtly remind Zhou Mingrui, and at the same time, it was an experiment to see if hints conveyed through dream characters during the day would bring any anomalies to themselves.

A few minutes later, Zhou Mingrui, who was listening attentively to the lecture, felt his phone vibrate in his pocket.

He took out his phone, lowered his head, unlocked the screen, and saw a message from Luo Shan: "Remember to examine yourself three times a day, and don't drink water you've brought outside."

What does this mean? I can't make head or tail of the message. It's puzzling... Zhou Mingrui first grumbled to himself, then perceived the hidden reminder.

He hadn't yet fully determined whether Luo Shan was good or bad, whether she had more good intentions or bad intentions towards him, but the hint to frequently examine his own condition and not drink the current water wouldn't cause any harm even if he followed it.

In such matters, it's better to believe something existed than to doubt its existence!



Zhou Mingrui replied with an “Okay” and stuffed the phone back into his pocket, raising his head again.

He didn't look at the bottle of mineral water he had placed on the table again.

Outside the classroom, Lumian once again scrutinized Zaratulstra's recent behavior.

He just looked at Zhou Mingrui from a few meters away for a while, without trying to get closer...

Whether or not he did anything secretly, this behavior makes me feel that he doesn't dare to deeply engage with Zhou Mingrui, to do some things in front of that person...

Combined with Franca's morning description of the feeling of being kicked out of the dream and the overt and covert struggles in the lottery incident, it can be seen that Mr. Fool has a certain control over the dream, at least not much weaker than the Celestial Worthy. In this situation, if Zaratulstra stimulates him and his identity is discovered or locked onto, he is likely to be made into a marionette or kicked out of the dream...

In the dream city, it's not just us who need to be careful, the Celestial Worthy's subordinates also have to follow the same rules...

Thinking of this, Lumian's train of thought became much clearer.

He stood up and began pacing in the corridor, thinking about the details of some issues while waiting for the possible consequences of indirectly reminding Zhou Mingrui.

Walking to the end of the passageway, he casually glanced outside through the window.

He suddenly saw that across the street, Zaratulstra walked out of the building accompanied by a young girl, followed by his entourage and many unfamiliar faces.

Lumian was very familiar with the appearance of that young girl.

The Major Arcana card holder, The Hermit, Queen of Stars Cattleya!

In the dream city, Ma'am Hermit's role is Huang Jiajia, roommate of Miss Bernie Huang, and because she lost a bet, she always calls Bernie Huang ‘dad’... Mr. Fool's subconscious weaving of relationships is quite interesting...

Only then did he send a message to “Intis Group Grimm”: “Time and place.”

Just a dozen seconds later, Grimm responded: “I'll wait for you at the entrance of Mushu Hospital.”

Mushu Hospital... Lumian frowned slightly.

Under the blazing sunlight, Lumian saw Grimm standing in the shade of a tree.

The security director of the Intis Group had changed into a light-colored striped shirt and was wearing sunglasses, disguising himself quite well.

“What's the matter?” Lumian walked past Grimm, heading straight into Mushu Hospital.

Grimm followed behind him to the side, saying with a smile in his voice, “You'll know when you see it. This should be one of the purposes Mother wanted you to come here for.”

The way you're talking, it feels like you've dug a trap in front and are waiting for me to fall in... Lumian nodded slightly, not asking further.

Wouldn't asking too much reveal that there's actually no connection between me and the Great Mother?

Grimm quickened his pace, overtaking him, and led the way in front.

He led Lumian around the main building to a three-story building behind it, surrounded by high walls, with a lawn and garden.

"This is the psychiatric ward," Grimm introduced, verifying his identity with the security guard and passing through the iron gate.

Lumian nodded thoughtfully.

The two quickly entered the building, and just as they climbed to the second floor under the nurse's guidance, they heard a patient banging on the iron door and shouting, "Let me out!

"I'm not sick! I only lost after fighting with two supreme beings to the edge of the universe, and you caught me, I'm not sick!

"This is my marionette, this is my paper figurine, look, I have them all with me, I'm not crazy!

"I've divined it, there's no danger, really no danger. That voice is normal, haven't you heard it?

"Let me out! Let me out!"

Lumian raised his right eyebrow.

Which Seer pathway Beyonder is this? At least a Marionettist...

Lumian immediately associated this with the Marionettist who hadn't intervened when they killed the reanimated female corpse, and thought of the madman found in the garbage dump near Moon Plaza the next morning, who had been sent to the hospital.

Is this the Marionettist who went mad? So he was sent to the psychiatric ward of Mushu Hospital... What voice did he hear? Did that cause him to go mad? As Lumian pondered, his footsteps didn't stop. He followed behind the nurse and Grimm all the way to the end of an empty corridor.

The nurse stood at the door of the deepest ward and said to Grimm and Lumian, "The patient is inside. You can look at him through the window, but don't reach your hands in."

After saying this, she turned and left, without providing any further warnings.

After watching the nurse disappear at the stairwell, Grimm smiled at Lumian and said,

"Child of God, Li Keji is inside."

Li Keji... Frank Lee? Although Lumian had already anticipated this, he was still shocked.

