

## Chapter 123: Beyond Battle

Vines grew all over the dilapidated garden outside the glass windows. The river flowed softly, reflecting the stars in the sky as warm glows suffused out of the nearby buildings.

Everything was silent, as if awaiting the arrival of night.

Trissy, who had ordinary features which combined to make her look surprisingly beautiful, retracted her gaze and walked quickly towards the clothes rack to retrieve a long black robe fitted with a hood.

She quickly put the robe on, fastened the buttons and belt before pulling the hood over her head, transforming herself into an Assassin.

Trissy raised her right hand and swiped her face, immediately turning her appearance under the hood blurry.

Right on the heels of that, she grabbed a handful of shimmering powder from the hidden pouch near her waist and scattered it over herself while reciting an incantation.

Trissy's figure started to disappear bit by bit, her outline vanishing like how pencil marks were being erased by an eraser.

She silently left the bedroom after completing her concealment spell. She moved to the opposite room and then opened the non-grilled window.

With a light leap, Trissy stood on the window sill and looked over the grassy plains to the back of the building. She looked down at the steel fence that had seemingly fused with the night. There, she saw Corpse Collector Frye who was silently making his way over the fence.

She took in a deep breath and fluttered down like a feather, stepping onto the grassy field without a sound.

Frye, who was wearing a black trench coat, cautiously surveyed the surroundings with his custom revolver in his hand, seeking out vengeful spirits or evil spirits that might appear.

He could see such entities directly!

Trissy approached Frye silently, made her way behind him. It was unknown when a dagger smeared with 'black paint' appeared in her hand.

*Poof!*

She struck quickly, plunging the dagger into Frye's lower back.

But at this moment, the scene in front of her shattered, as if everything was an illusion.

Trissy realized that she was still standing on the window sill, still looking over the grassy field and the steel fence.

Except this time around, it wasn't only Corpse Collector Frye who was standing outside the fence. There was also Leonard Mitchell who was aiming straight at the window sill, as well as Dunn

Smith. The captain of the Nighthawks was hunched over as he pressed down on his glabella, his eyes closed as formless ripples spread outwards from him.

Trissy's pupils constricted. She understood that everything that had happened was just a dream. She had fallen asleep unknowingly!

*Bang! Bang! Bang!*

Leonard and Frye fired three shots, accurately hitting the invisible target who was still waking up from her reverie.

*Crack!*

Trissy's figure started to appear, first cracking, then completely shattering into fragments of a rough silver mirror!

Inside the building, Trissy, who had used a substitution spell, turned around to escape. She followed the corridor and the steps, sprinting all the way to the first floor.

*Whoosh!* A cold sinister wind blew across the first floor, one that could freeze a person. Formless, transparent figures were numbly pacing around every corner of the building in a daze.

Trissy, who had lost her concealment, felt her temperature drop every time she passed through the spirits. She could no longer control her shivers when she finally reached the sacrificial altar.

The altar was a round table, with a figurine of a deity carved out of bone placed in the center.

This figurine was about the size of a grown man's head, with only a mere indication of her eyes, but the figure was that of a beautiful woman.

Her hair extended from her head to her heels, each strand clear and thick, as if they were poisonous snakes or tentacles.

There was only one eye situated at the tip of every strand of hair, some closed, others open.

There were many puppets strewn around the figurine. The craftsmanship of the puppets was crude. Names and relevant information were written on the puppets; for example, Joyce Mayer.

There were three candles on the table, flickering with a yellowish-green flame despite the cold, sinister winds.

Trissy bowed at the deity's figurine and quickly recited her incantations.

She then pushed away the puppets and extinguished the flames of the candles before picking the figurine up.

*Whoosh!*

The winds howled fiercely as they shook the closed windows violently.

*Clank! Creak!* Shards of glass flew around in all directions.

Frye, who had just made his way to the other side of the building, didn't dare to barge into the sacrificial altar recklessly. He shivered, feeling his blood turn cold and frosty. It was making his actions visibly slower.

Suddenly, he felt tightness around his heels as though they had been grabbed by something invisible.

An accentuated sense of coldness spread upwards from the point of contact. A Sequence 9 Beyonder would have turned completely numb by now. But as a Corpse Collector, Frye was no stranger to such situations.

He turned his revolver to the side of his heels and pulled the trigger. It was as if he could see who the enemy was, and exactly where it was.

*Bang!*

A silver demon hunting bullet pierced the air, causing a shrill howl in response.

The formless figure dissipated and Frye regained his ability to move.

Elsewhere, Dunn Smith, who wanted to reach the second floor by avoiding a frontal assault on the altar, was similarly affected by the cold winds. His body froze as he stopped right outside a shattered window.

*Whoosh!* The curtains behind the window lifted suddenly and engulfed Dunn, as if a monster had just opened its mouth to devour its prey.

The curtain wrapped around Dunn's head, seeming to have been imbued with life. Dunn's facial features began to press through the constricting cloth.

Dunn, who was about to be suffocated, stomped down with both feet. He straightened his knees and twisted his waist, loosening the curtain's grip with raw strength alone.

He grabbed a corner of the curtain around his head with his left hand and yanked it away before tossing it toward the ground.

*Bang!*

He fired a shot at the other half of the curtain behind the window, stopping it from attempting another assault on him.

The curtain stopped immediately as a dark red liquid oozed out from it.

*Whoosh!*

On the field, Leonard Mitchell was reciting his poems and was also hit by the cold sinister winds infused with the intense sensation of death. His teeth chattered, making it hard for him to enunciate his poems.

The messy weeds in the garden suddenly extended, wrapping themselves around his heels. A black shadow hurled itself at him along with the violent winds.

Leonard, whose body had become rigid, failed to fire in time. He could only pull back his shoulder and raise his arm.

*Thud!* The black shadow smashed into his forearm, the thorns on its body piercing his skin.

It was a pretty, bright-red flower, its origins unknown.

In pain, Leonard tossed aside the flower dyed with his blood.

*Bang!* He fired a shot at the spreading vines, causing dark red liquid to ooze out.

*Tap! Tap! Tap!* Leonard quickened his pace and charged towards the shattered window on the first floor where the altar was situated behind.

The vines retracted abruptly from where he had previously stood, as if hiding from something invisible.

Trissy took advantage of the chaos created by destroying the altar and a suspension-style ritual to conceal herself once again. She managed to fool the Spirit Visions of the Nighthawks and escape the pincer attack before making her way to a spot behind the three Nighthawks.

She extended her right hand, immediately causing a cold wind to blow. It carried the flower dyed with Leonard's blood right into her palm.

Trissy did not stop. With the flower in hand, she nimbly made her way over the steel fence and escaped in the direction of the Tussock River.

Leonard, who had just entered the first level, turned his head

abruptly, as though he was listening to something.

His expression changed. He frantically pulled up his sleeve and looked at the wound caused by the flower.

With his constitution, the wound had already stopped bleeding. There was only some red swelling that remained.

Leonard's expression became grim. He pinched his left index finger and pulled his fingernail straight out!

His face contorted in pain, but he did not pause. As he recited something silently, he sliced open the coagulated wound with the fingernail. When the fingernail was dyed with his dark red blood, he pulled out a few strands of hair from his scalp and wrapped the fingernail with his hair.

Beside the Tussock River, Trissy slowed down. She shot her gaze toward the flower in her hand.

She was chanting something as a ball of black, illusory fire suddenly appeared in her palm.

The flames enveloped the flower, burning it to ashes.

After completing this, Trissy jumped into the river and submerged herself.

At the same time, Leonard tossed the blood-stained fingernail wrapped in his hair to the corner. He saw it burn and release a foul stench.



The fingernail and hair disappeared quickly, leaving only some dust behind.

Leonard heaved a sigh of relief. He entered the first level through the window and said to Dunn and Frye who were destroying the altar, "The target has escaped. But it's alright, our primary objective was to stop the ritual."

Dunn sighed and looked at the puppets on the table.

"She was very cautious and very powerful. She sensed us approaching her ahead of time, otherwise... she should be, at the very least, a Sequence 7 Beyond.

"Give Klein the signal. Ask him to come over."

Through the brief interaction in the dream, he had determined that the enemy was female.