

Chapter 23: Side Arm

As Klein walked down Zouteland and while taking in the warm, humid breeze, he suddenly realized something.

He only had three pence of change. If he returned to Iron Cross Street via public carriage, it would cost him four pence. If he were to hand over a one-gold pound note, it would be akin to using a hundred-dollar bill to buy a bottle of cheap mineral water back on Earth. There was nothing wrong with that, but it was just quite awkward to do so.

Should I use three pence to travel three kilometers and walk the rest of the journey? Klein reached into his pocket with one hand as he slowed down his pace, considering other solutions.

That won't do! Soon, he rejected the idea.

It would take him a while to walk the remaining journey. Considering how he was carrying twelve pounds—a massive fortune—it was not safe!

Furthermore, he had deliberately not brought the revolver with him, afraid that the Nighthawks would confiscate it. If he were to encounter the danger that instigated Welch's death, there was no way he could fight back!

Get some change from a nearby bank? No, no way! There's a 0.5% processing fee. That's way too extravagant! Klein shook his head silently. Just the thought of the fees involved pained his heart!

Having ruled out one solution after another, Klein's eyes

suddenly lit up when he saw a clothing shop in front of him!

That's right! Wouldn't the normal course of action be to buy something appropriately priced to get some change? A formal suit, shirt, vest, trousers, leather boots, and a cane were all within budget. They had to be bought sooner or later!

Oh, it's very troublesome when fitting clothes. Besides, Benson knows more about this than me and he's better at bargaining. I should consider it only after he's back... Then should I buy a cane? That's right! As the saying goes, a cane is a gentleman's best choice of defense. It is half as good as a crowbar. A gun in one hand and a cane in the other is the combat style of a civilized person! After debating internally, Klein made up his mind. He turned around and entered the clothing shop, Wilker Clothing and Hats.

The clothing store's layout resembled the clothing stores on Earth. The left wall was filled with rows of formal attires. The middle rows were decked with things like shirts, trousers, vests, and bowties. On the right were leather shoes and boots placed inside glass cabinets.

“Sir, may I help you?” A male salesperson dressed in a white shirt and red vest came over and asked politely.

In Loen Kingdom, rich and powerful gentlemen of high standing enjoyed wearing black suits consisting of white shirts matched with black vests and trousers. Their colors were relatively monotonous, so they required their male servants, salespeople, and service attendants to dress more brightly and colorfully, in order to distinguish themselves from their masters.

In contrast, ladies and mistresses wore dresses of all kinds in glamorous fashions. As such, maidservants would wear black and white.

Klein thought for a moment before answering the male salesperson's question. "A cane. Something that's heavier and harder."

The kind that can crack the skulls of others! The red-vested salesperson sized up Klein furtively before leading him into the store. He then pointed at a row of canes in the corner. "That cane inlaid with gold is made of Ironheart wood. It's both very heavy and hard, and costs eleven soli seven pence. Do you want to give it a try?"

Eleven soli seven pence? Why don't you go rob a bank! Big deal with the gold inlay! Klein was shocked by the price.

With an unperturbed expression, he nodded gently. "Alright."

The salesperson took down the Ironheart wood cane and carefully handed it to Klein, seemingly afraid that Klein would drop and break the merchandise.

Klein took the cane and found it heavy. He tried moving with it and discovered that he could not sway it smoothly as he wanted.

"It's too heavy." Klein shook his head in relief.

This is not an excuse! The salesperson took back the cane and pointed at another three canes.

"This is made of walnut wood, created by Tingen's most famous cane artisan, Mr. Hayes. It's priced at ten soli three pence... This is made of ebony wood and inlaid with silver. It's as hard as iron, costing seven soli six pence... This is made from the core of a white boli tree and also inlaid with silver, costing seven soli

ten pence..."

Klein tried each one of them and found them of appropriate weight. He then tapped them with his fingers to gain an understanding of their hardness. Finally, he chose the cheapest one.

"I'll take the one made from ebony wood." Klein pointed at the cane with the silver inlay which the salesperson was holding.

"No problem, Sir. Please follow me to proceed with the payment. In the future, if this cane is scuffed or stained, you can hand it to us for handling for free." The salesperson led Klein to the counter.

Klein took the opportunity to release the four gold-pound notes from his tight grip and removed two of the smaller denominations.

"Good day, Sir. It will be seven soli six pence." The cashier behind the counter greeted with a smile.

Klein was planning on maintaining his gentlemanly image, but when he extended his hand with the one-gold pound note, he could not help but ask, "Can I get a discount?"

"Sir, what we have is all hand-crafted, so our costs are very high." the salesperson beside him answered. "Since our boss isn't here, we are unable to lower the prices."

The cashier behind the counter added, "Sir, sorry about that."

"Alright." Klein handed the note over and received the black silver-inlaid cane.

While waiting for the change to be given to him, he took a few steps back and distanced himself from them. He swung around his side arm as a test.

Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!

The wind sounded heavy when the cane sliced through the air. Klein nodded in satisfaction.

He looked forward again, prepared to see notes and coins, but was appalled to see the red-vested salesperson retreating far away. The cashier behind the counter had retracted into a corner, leaning close to a double-barreled shotgun hanging to the wall.

The Loen Kingdom had a semi-regulated policy on firearms. To possess a firearm, one needed to apply for an all-purpose weapon permit or a hunter's license. Regardless of which type, one could still not be in possession of restricted military firearms such as repeaters, steam-pressured guns, or six-barrel machine guns.

An all-purpose weapon permit could be used to purchase or store any kind of civilian firearm, but earning the certificate was extremely troublesome. Even merchants of substantial standing might not be approved. A hunter's license was relatively easy. Even farmers in the suburbs could receive approval. However, the license was limited to hunting guns with restricted numbers. People with sizable assets would tend to apply for one to use it for self-defense in emergency situations, such as now...

Klein looked at the two wary salespeople as the corners of his

mouth twitched. He chuckled dryly. “Not bad. This cane is perfect for swinging. I’m very pleased.”

Realizing that he had no intention to assault them, the cashier behind the counter relaxed. He handed over the notes and coins he had taken out over with both hands.

Klein took a look at what he received and saw two five-soli notes, two one-soli notes, a five-pence coin, and a one-penny coin. He could not help but nod inwardly.

After a two-second pause, he ignored the way the salespeople looked at him and unfurled the four notes towards the light to ensure that the anti-counterfeit watermarks were present.

Klein put away the notes and coins when he was done. With the cane in hand, he tipped his hat and walked out of Wilker Clothing and Hats. He extravagantly spent six pence by taking a short-distance trackless carriage before transferring once before reaching home safe and sound.

After closing the door, he counted the eleven pounds and twelve soli notes thrice before placing them into the desk drawer. He then found the bronze revolver with the wooden grip.

Clink! Clang! Five brass bullets fell onto the table when Klein inserted the silver demon hunting bullets which had complicated patterns and the Dark Sacred Emblem into the revolver’s cylinder.

Like before, he only inserted five rounds and left an empty spot to prevent any misfires. The remaining rounds were placed together with the five ordinary bullets in a small iron case.

Pa! He snapped the cylinder in place, giving him a sense of security.

He excitedly lodged the revolver into the holster at his armpit and buckled it securely. Then, he repeatedly practiced unbuckling and drawing the gun. He rested whenever his arms ached, and this continued until sunset when he heard the sounds of tenants walking along the corridor outside.

Phew! Klein let out a foul breath before putting his revolver back into his underarm holster.

Only then did he take off his formal suit and vest. He wore back his usual brownish-yellow coat and swung his arms to relax them.

Tap. Tap. Tap. He heard the sound of nearing footsteps before the twisting sound of an inserted key.

Melissa with her soft, black hair entered. Her nose twitched a little as she swept her gaze towards the unlit stove. The luster in her eyes dimmed slightly.

“Klein, I’ll heat up the leftovers from last night. Benson will likely be home tomorrow.” Melissa turned to look at her brother.

Klein had his hands in his pocket as he leaned against the edge of the desk. He smiled and said, “No, let’s eat out.”

“Eat out?” Melissa questioned in surprise.

“How does Silver Crown Restaurant at Daffodil Street sound? I

heard they serve delicious food,” suggested Klein.

“B-but...” Melissa was still confused.

Klein grinned and said, “To celebrate my new job.”

“You found a job?” Melissa’s voice rose unknowingly, “B-but, isn’t the Tingen University interview tomorrow?”

“Another job.” Klein gave a faint smile before fishing the stacked notes from the drawer. “They even gave me an advance of four weeks’ pay.”

Melissa looked at the gold pounds and soli as she widened her eyes.

“Goddess... You- they- what job did you get?”

This... Klein’s expression froze as he deliberated on his words.

“A security company whose mission is to seek, collect, and protect ancient relics. They were in need of a professional consultant. It’s a five-year contract, earning me three pounds a week.”

“Were you vexing over this last night?” asked Melissa after a moment of silence.

Klein nodded. “Yes, although being an academic at Tingen University is respectable, I prefer this job.”

“Well, it isn’t bad either.” Melissa gave an encouraging smile. She asked half-suspiciously and half-curiously, “Why would they give you an advance payment of four full weeks?”

“It’s because we need to move. We need a place with more rooms and a bathroom that belongs to us,” said Klein while grinning and shrugging.

He felt that his smile was impeccable, just short of the word: “Surprised?”

Melissa was stunned momentarily before she suddenly spoke out in a fluster, “Klein, we are living quite well now. My occasional grumblings of not having a personal bathroom is just a habit. Do you remember Jenny? She lived next door to us, but ever since her father was injured and lost his job, they had no choice but to move to Lower Street. The family of five ended up staying in one room, with three of them sleeping in a bunk bed and two of them sleeping on the ground. They even wish to rent the remaining empty spot to someone...

“Compared to them, we are really very lucky. Don’t waste your salary on this matter. Besides, I love Mrs. Smyrin’s bakery.”

Sis, why is your reaction completely different from how it played out in my head... Klein’s expression went blank when he heard his sister.