

Chapter 17: Special Operations Department

“Blackthorn Security Company.”

Upon seeing the signboard, Klein felt surprised yet found it reasonable.

Man... what do I say about this... He shook his head and laughed before walking up the steps and knocking gently on the half-closed door with his right hand.

Knock! Knock! Knock!

The sound echoed slowly but rhythmically, but there was no response; only a faint sputtering sound could be heard.

Knock! Knock! Knock!

Klein repeated, only to be met with the same outcome.

He switched to pushing the door, making the gap larger as he stared inside—a classic sofa which might have been for serving guests, a soft fabric armchair, and a burly wood coffee table. There was a girl with brown hair behind a table right across with her head drooped.

Even though “Security Company” is just a guise, isn’t this just... just too “unprofessional?” How long has this place been out of business? Right, you guys don’t need any business... Klein drew closer as he complained silently and knocked on the table just beside the girl’s ear.

Knock! Knock!

The brown-haired girl sat up immediately and swiftly took the newspaper in front of her, covering her face.

Tingen City Honest Paper... Nice name... Klein silently read the title of the page facing him.

“The steam train service ‘Soaring Express’ that directly reaches Constant City is starting operations today... Oh come on, when will there be one that goes straight to Brindisi Bay. I really don’t want to take the ship there again, it’s too awful, really awful... Hey, who are you?” The girl with brown hair read pretentiously and gave her opinion. As she spoke, she lowered the newspaper and revealed her bright forehead and light-brown eyes, looking at Klein with a fawning and startled look.

“Hello, I am Klein Moretti, and I am here at the invitation of Dunn Smith,” Klein said as he took down his hat to his chest and bowed slightly.

The brown-haired girl looked to be in her early twenties. She wore a light green, Loen-styled dress. She was accentuated by the beautiful laces on her sleeves, collar, and chest.

“The Captain... alright, wait here for a moment. I’ll go get him.” The girl scurried up and went into the room beside her.

She didn’t even serve a cup of water or anything... The level of service awareness is worrying... Klein smiled faintly as he waited at his spot.

After two to three minutes, the brown-haired girl opened the

door and came out. She said with a sweet smile, "Mr. Moretti, please follow me. The Captain is on watch at the 'Chanis Gate' and is unable to leave at the moment."

"Okay." Klein quickly followed behind. In his mind, he pondered to himself.

Chanis Gate, what could that be?

Going through the partition, the first thing he saw was a small corridor, with only three offices on each side.

Some of these offices were locked tight, while some were opened, revealing someone on the inside who typed non-stop on a heavy mechanical typewriter.

At a glance, Klein noticed a familiar figure: the young officer that had investigated his apartment, the one with the black hair, green eyes, and romantic vibe of a poet.

He was not in official wear; his white collared shirt was not tucked in, making for quite an unruly appearance.

Perhaps he really is a poet... Klein nodded in greeting and was greeted with a smile.

The brown-haired girl pushed opened the left office door at the end of the room and pointed inside, chirping, "We still have to go down a few levels."

This office had no furniture in place, only a grayish-white stone staircase that extended downwards.

The two sides of the stairs were lit up by gas lamps. The stable glow dispelled the darkness and gave a sense of harmony.

The brown-haired girl walked in front, staring at her feet while walking carefully.

“Although I walk here often, I am still constantly afraid of falling down, tumbling down like a barrel. You don’t know, Leonard did such a folly. On the first day of becoming a ‘Sleepless’—the first day where he had not mastered his new powers—he tried to rush down the flight of stairs. And-and he became a cartwheel. Haha, it was hilarious if you think about it. Oh yes, it was the guy that greeted you just now. This was about three years ago. Speaking of which, I have been with the Nighthawks for five years; I was only seventeen when I joined...”

The girl watched her steps as she spoke. Suddenly, she smacked her forehead and said, “I forgot to introduce myself! I’m Rozanne. My father was a member of the Nighthawks, who sacrificed himself in an accident five years ago. I suppose we are colleagues from now on— Err, yeah ‘colleague’ is the right word... we are not teammates since we are not Beyonders.”

“I hope to have the honor, but still it depends on what Mr. Smith has to say,” Klein said as he sized up the enclosed surroundings. He felt that they were going underground—dampness seeped out from the stone walls, dispelling the summer heat.

“Don’t worry, the fact that you came so far means the Captain has agreed. I’ve always been a little afraid of him, even though he is amiable, a fatherly figure. I don’t know why but I’m still afraid.” Rozanne spoke as though there was a piece of sweet in her throat.

Klein answered humorously, “Isn’t being afraid of a father normal?”

“True.” Rozanne said as she held the wall around the bend.

As they spoke, the two finished walking down the stairs and reached a stone-paved floor.

It was a long aisle; both sides of the walls were mounted with gas lamps surrounded by metal gratings. Klein and Rozanne’s shadows were elongated under the illumination.

Klein keenly noticed that there was a “Dark Sacred Emblem” every few meters—the symbol of the Evernight Goddess. A deep black background dotted with sparkling embellishments, as they clustered precisely half the crimson moon.

These emblems did not seem special, but walking between them gave Klein a sense of serenity. Rozanne also stopped talking, unlike her previous talkative state.

Before long, an intersection appeared up front. Rozanne briefly introduced,

“The path to the left will lead to the Saint Selena Cathedral; to the right are the armory, storeroom, and archives. And straight ahead is the Chanis Gate.”

Saint Selena Cathedral? Then, Zouteland Street is just behind Red Moonlight Street? Klein was a little stunned.

Saint Selena Cathedral of Red Moonlight Street was the headquarters of the Church of Evernight in Tingen, a sacred ground where local followers yearned to visit. Along with “Holy Numerics Cathedral” of the Church of the God of Steam and Machinery in the suburbs, and the “River and Sea Cathedral” of

the Church of Storms in North Tingen, they sustained the religious circles in Tingen City and its affiliated towns and villages.

Aware that his status made it unsuitable for him to ask more, Klein only listened silently.

They passed the intersection and moved straight ahead. In less than a minute, a black iron split gate carved with seven sacred emblems was seen.

It stood there, heavy, cold and domineering, like a giant guarding in the darkness.

“Chanis Gate.” Rozanne reminded him and pointed at the room beside them, saying, “Captain is inside. Go on in by yourself.”

“Alright, thank you.” Klein replied politely.

The room Rozanne was referring to was just in front of “Chanis Gate.” The windows were opened, revealing the lit room inside. Klein took a deep breath to calm himself.

Knock! Knock! Knock!

“Come in.” He heard Dunn Smith’s deep and amiable voice.

Klein opened the unlatched door gently. There was only a table and four chairs inside. Dunn Smith with his high hairline, who was wearing the black coat from the previous night plus a gold watch chain around his chest, was reading the newspaper leisurely.

“Come and have a seat. Have you decided? Are you certain you want to join us?” Dunn smiled and asked as he put down the newspaper.

Klein removed his hat and bowed, then he sat beside the table and said, “Yes, I am certain.”

“Then take a look at this deed, heh heh. People like to call it a contract now.” Dunn pulled out the table drawer and took out two contract copies.

There were not many clauses, and most of them had been mentioned by Dunn Smith. The emphasis was on the confidential clause. Violators were tried in the tribunal courts of the Church of Evernight instead of the kingdom’s courts. It was akin to how soldiers and officers were sent to court martial for trials.

A five year contract... Two pounds and ten soli for weekly wages, ten soli as compensation for the risk and confidentiality... Klein read through it and answered resolutely, “I’ve no problem with it.”

“Then sign it,” Dunn said as he pointed to the dark red fountain pen and ink.

Klein used a piece of waste paper to try out the pen before drawing a breath. He signed on both contracts with his name: Klein Moretti.

As he did not have a stamp yet, he could only use his thumbprint.

Dunn received the contract, took out a stamp from the drawer, and stamped on the end of the contract and a few key parts.

With that done, he stood up and returned a contract with one hand, and reached for Klein with the other saying, “Welcome, from now on, you are one of us, and please note that the contract is confidential as well.”

Klein stood up as well. He received the contract, shook his hand, and said, “So, I shall be addressing you as Captain?”

“Yes.” Dunn’s grayish eyes seemed especially deep in the dim surroundings.

After shaking hands, they sat down. Klein glanced at the stamp on the contract, it read: “Nighthawk team, Tingen City, Awwa County, Loen Kingdom.”

“I can’t believe you guys would use the name ‘Blackthorn Security Company’ as a disguise,” he laughed and said.

“Actually, we have other signboards.” Dunn pulled out a piece of paper from the drawer.

It was stamped with the stamps of the city government and the police department. The contents were as follows: “Seventh Unit, Special Operations Department, Awwa County Police, Loen Kingdom.”

“The first four units are the regular police responsible for general security, like the VIP Protection Unit and Key Installations Protection Unit. And from unit five onwards are the ones dealing with supernatural incidents in each city. Our unit is responsible

for incidents related to the followers of Evernight Goddess in Tingen. If there are different types of followers, then we divide the area accordingly; we are mainly in charge of places like the north, west and the Golden Indus region.”

Dunn briefly introduced, “Unit Six of the Mandated Punisher squad under the Church of Storms is in charge of the pier region, the east, and the south. The university area and the suburbs are under Unit Five, which is the Machinery Hivemind squad in Tingen.”

“Right.” Klein had no questions about it. He then laughed. “What happens if someone really comes here due to the ‘Blackthorn Security Company’ signboard and requests for our services?”

“We’ll take those requests; why shouldn’t we? As long as it doesn’t affect our daily operations,” Dunn said slowly and humorously. “Any earnings would be considered additional bonuses, so our members are quite willing to take those jobs. Anyway, the market for trivial and troublesome matters such as finding dogs and cats have been monopolized by private detectives.”

“So how many people are there in this Nighthawks team?” Klein asked since they were on this topic.

“There aren’t many supernatural incidents, so there are even fewer Beyonders. There are only six formal members of the Nighthawks in the entire Tingen City, including me. Heh heh, as for civilian staff, there are six including you.”

Klein nodded his head, and eventually asked the question that he was most concerned about, “So, Captain, what do you mean by Beyonders losing control? Why does it happen?”