

Chapter 135: Portrait of a Baron

“There’s some sort of problem there,” Klein said with a serious tone, pointing at the steps separating the living room and dining room.

He once read in the Nighthawks’ confidential records that if similar situations appeared in one’s spiritual perception, it usually implied that there was something evil and corrupted hidden at the target location. It was best not to interact with it if one wasn’t confident; otherwise, one might lose their life. Sometimes, even a mere glance could result in irreversible damage.

Dunn looked over, and similarly, with his high spiritual perception, he immediately sensed something wrong. He turned to look at Klein and instructed calmly, “Divine and see if we would be successful in our investigation.”

Captain didn’t get me to divine before we entered the castle. He was rather confident... That means that he believes that the hidden thing might be more dangerous than the wraith. Klein nodded in silence. He holstered his revolver and handed his cane to Frye.

He then released the topaz bracelet within his sleeve, held the silver chain with his left hand and silently recited a suitable statement.

Instantly, his eyes darkened as a breeze started spiraling around him.

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After reciting the statement seven times, Klein’s eyes regained their normal color. He saw the dangling topaz rotating clockwise.

It wasn’t very obvious, but it was unmistakably rotating clockwise!

That meant that the investigation would be successful.

Klein, who was already a true Seer, immediately nodded at Dunn and Frye.

“The danger will be manageable by us, or there could be no danger at all.”

Dunn pinned the Mutated Sun Sacred Emblem to the left side of his chest, then pressed down on his hat. He briskly walked toward the steps and expertly started searching for a mechanism.

Frye, who had picked up the gauntlet, handed Klein’s cane back to him. He grabbed his revolver and cautiously scanned the surroundings, as if he was afraid that an enemy would suddenly appear.

I'm still not professional enough... as a Nighthawk... Klein geared himself up and took out his revolver, and turned alert as well.

A few minutes later, it was unknown what the kneeling Dunn Smith triggered as heavy sputtering sounds emanated from the staircase.

The floor split open, revealing a set of steps heading down. A cold and corrupted vibe emanated, seemingly condensing into something corporeal.

Dunn glanced over and removed Sealed Artifact 3-0782 from his chest. He tossed it directly into the trap door.

After a few clanks, it was unknown where the Mutated Sun Sacred Emblem stopped.

If there are dead spirits within, they would definitely toss 3-0782 back out... That would be interesting... Klein stared at the stairs and waited patiently.

The lingering sinister and corrupted feeling soon dissolved away like snow meeting the sun. Warmness and purity blanketed the entrance of the trap door.

“Klein, go down with me. Frye will stay here and prevent other enemies from destroying the mechanism.” Dunn made an experienced decision.

“Alright.” Klein didn’t shrink back from the task. He took two steps forward and arrived next to Dunn. Frye nodded, not letting his guard down.

Dunn went down first, his footsteps reverberating in the silence.

He didn't prepare any sources of light, for a Beyonder that went down the Sleepless pathway, the darkness was not an obstacle, but a blessing.

Their vision wasn't hindered by such an environment.

After taking a few steps down, Dunn suddenly turned around and looked at Klein. "I forgot that you don't have night vision. I'm not used to preparing objects that provide illumination..."

"...Captain, you don't need to mind about me. I have my Spirit Vision." Klein realized that he wasn't shocked at all.

That cool Captain from before was indeed not normal!

In his Spirit Vision, the darkness before him was screened by a gray film. Even though it was very blurry, it was enough for him to make out where the steps were.

Well, the Captain sure is healthy, and his mental state is fine too... Klein carefully extended his feet and made his way down slowly.

The flight of steps wasn't long. It only took about fifteen steps to reach the ground.

Sealed Artifact 3-0782 was lying there, releasing its purity and warmth. It also radiated a faint glow.

Klein could see much more clearly with the help of the illumination. He surveyed the surroundings and noticed that it wasn't a huge basement. It was no longer cold and sinister, but the dampness remained.

In the middle of the basement was a black coffin, with dark red nails driven into the lid.

The lid of the coffin had been pushed open slightly, allowing one to see a headless corpse that was all bone.

Dunn looked around, then bent over to pick up the Mutated Sun Sacred Emblem.

“Captain, this coffin... It was intended to prevent the dead within from becoming a zombie or a wraith.”

Klein looked at the dark red nails in the coffin and the formation they were in. He used his decent mysticism knowledge to determine that this was an ancient ritual to prevent anything the corpse from reanimating.

At the same time, he muttered inwardly. But under normal circumstances, who would have nothing better to do than guard against their loved one from reanimating? Hmm, the people who helped bury the corpse must not be family... And if they placed the coffin in the basement instead of a tomb, they must have been afraid of someone finding the corpse...

Dunn, who had worn Sealed Artifact 3-0782 again, approached the coffin and inspected it.

“The deceased was probably poisoned to death.”

"That means the person who poisoned him must have used ritualistic magic to prevent him from reanimating and seeking revenge. This should have happened about 1300 years ago? He became a wraith in the end... The resentment of this spirit is simply shocking!" Klein also walked in front of the coffin. "Where is his head? That ritual does not call for the head to be sliced off..."

Dunn thought for a moment before saying, "I have a deduction. This wraith didn't exist all the time and only appeared recently. It's only a fifteen-minute walk from the town to the castle. Throughout the years, troublemakers must have frequented this place, but before this incident, there were no rumors of there being a wraith in this ancient castle."

Klein nodded indiscernibly.

"Captain, what you mean to say is that someone came here recently, opened the coffin, and took away the head of the deceased?"

"Yes, the ritual prevents the corpse from reanimating, but it also seals and preserves its resentment within the coffin. When the coffin was opened and the ritual dispelled, this resentment quickly evolved into a wraith with the help of its gauntlet..."

"There's no corpse of the person who opened the coffin, so he's not an ordinary person... Besides, why did he take away the head of the deceased?"

Dunn stared at the skeleton in the coffin. "For resentment to be preserved for such a long time, there should be some reason other than the ritual. He could've been a Beyonder when he was alive, perhaps a descendant one or two generations removed of a Mid-Sequence Beyonder. I am talking about the Mid-Sequencers as defined in the past, Sequence 5 or 6.

“And such corpses are always special. His head might be usable in some kind of ritual or in some other occasion.”

Dunn paused before continuing, “What I said just now was all conjecture. But we can try to verify some of it. We can split up later in town and investigate to see if anyone was injured before in their youth. Well, if they are still alive, it would prove that the wraith only appeared recently.”

“A logical train of thought,” Klein praised. He quickly searched the basement but didn’t find anything else.

He tried using ritualistic magic to make a sketch of the “guest” that entered the basement, but because it had been more than a month since it happened, as well as the disturbed environment due to the frequent appearance of the wraith, there wasn’t much of a result.

He then took Frye’s place, allowing the expert on the dead to conduct further tests.

Fifteen minutes later, as the sun was vanishing below the horizon, Dunn and Frye followed the steps and returned to the hall of the ancient palace.

Dunn felt for the switch to the trapdoor while Frye gave a short description, “The deceased was indeed poisoned to death. The traces near the neck appeared recently, at the very most three months back.”

This means that it's highly probable that someone came here before... Klein nodded in thought.

The three Nighthawks returned to Lamud Town before it got dark and asked for two rooms at an inn. The member that got the Sealed Artifact 3-0782 was to take this dangerous item for a stroll outside the town where no one would be. They would change their shifts once every two hours, and thus only needed two rooms.

After a simple dinner, Klein, Dunn, and Frye immediately split up and covered all corners of the town, asking the residents who had lived in this town for extended periods of time.

In situations like this, their identification documents as policemen proved useful.

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“Officer, why are you asking this? I used to head to the abandoned castle to play when I was young... Injured? Definitely, how could a child not have fallen while playing? I remember, yes—I’ve been cut by a sharp rock on the outer walls of the ancient castle in the past...” A forty-year-old blond man looked puzzledly at Klein, but answered his question honestly.

This was the fourteenth person Klein had asked, of which two vividly remembered being injured in the castle when they were young.

The Captain’s deduction is correct... Klein decided as he put away his identification documents. He smiled and said, “Thank you for your cooperation, I have no more questions.”

He was about to leave when the forty-year-old man called after him, “Officer, are you interested in the ancient castle? I have an oil painting of the first Baron that resided in there. He was the grandfather of my grandfather of my grandfather... Well,

anyway, it was a long time ago. He took away a oil painting from the castle and told me that it was the oil painting of the first Baron Lamud.

“Do you want it? It’s a true antique!”

If it was a true antique, your family would have sold it a long time ago... This guy sure is gutsy, daring to fool even the police. Should I scare him with my gun? Klein lampooned and adopted the attitude of a window shopper and said, “Who knows if it’s a real antique or not? I’ll trust my own judgment.

“Take it out and let me see it.”

The blond man smiled and returned to the room and rummaged for it.

Some time later, he walked out with an oil painting in hand.

Klein casually looked at the oil painting. He saw that the baron had gentle features and bronze skin, his eyes hiding an indescribable range of human experience. He was also wearing a white curly wig.

Huh, he looks a lot like Mr. Azik! Klein’s eyes suddenly opened wide, his gaze subconsciously falling below the right ear of the baron.

He then looked at the unremarkable mole near the ear.

The position of the mole was exactly the same as Mr. Azik’s mole!