

Chapter 30: Brand New Beginning

2, 4, and 6 Daffodil Street were terrace buildings with multifaceted hipped roofs. Their exteriors were painted grayish blue, and three chimneys stood erected.

The place obviously did not have lawns, gardens, or porches. The entrances directly faced the street.

Tingen City Housing Improvement Company's Scarter took out a bunch of keys and while opening the door, introduced, "Our terrace houses do not have foyers, so you enter directly into the living room. There's an oriel window facing Daffodil Street, so there's pretty good lighting..."

Klein, Benson, and Melissa were greeted by a fabric sofa bathing in the golden rays of the sun, and an area more spacious than their previous two-bedroom apartment.

"This living room can be used as a guest hall. To its right is the dining room and on the left is a fireplace that will keep you warm in winter." Scarter pointed around with great familiarity.

Klein looked around and confirmed that it was a crude, open-style concept. The dining room and the living room were not separated by any partitions, but they were also far from the oriel window, making those spots rather dim.

There was a rectangular red wooden table surrounded by six hardwood chairs with soft cushions. The fireplace on the left wall looked exactly like the ones in foreign movies and TV series that Klein used to watch.

“Behind the dining area is the kitchen, but we do not provide any appliances. Opposite to the living room is a small guest room and a bathroom...” Scarter walked around and described the remaining layout of the house.

The bathroom was separated into two parts. The outer area was where one would wash their face and brush their teeth, while the inner area was the toilet. There was an accordion door that separated them. The guest room was described to be small, but it was as big as the room that Melissa currently stayed in. She was stunned at the sight.

After looking around the first floor, Scarter brought the three siblings to the stairway next to the bathroom.

“Down below is the underground cellar. It is quite stuffy downstairs, so you must remember to let some fresh air in first before entering.”

Benson nodded casually and followed Scarter to the second floor.

“On my left, there’s a bathroom. On the same side, there are an additional two bedrooms. It’s the same layout on my right, but the washroom on this side is next to the balcony.”

As he spoke, Scarter opened the bathroom door and stood sideways so that he would not obstruct Klein, Benson, and Melissa from looking in.

The bathroom had an extra bathtub. Like the other bathroom, there was an accordion door next to the toilet. Although it was a little dusty, it wasn’t dirty, smelly, or cramped.

Melissa looked in a daze until Scarter walked to the bedroom next to it. Only then did she stop looking and follow the rest slowly.

She took another few steps before looking back.

Klein, who was experienced in life, was delighted and excited as well. Even though their landlord often supervised their cleaning up of the bathroom, it still was not clean enough. It was often nauseating, let alone the fact that they would easily encounter a line when they needed to relieve themselves.

The other bathroom was similar. One of the four bedrooms was slightly bigger and was furnished with a bookcase. The rest were about the same size as each other and had a bed, table, and wardrobe.

“The balcony is very tiny, so you won’t be able to dry too many clothes in the sun at a time.” Scarter stood at the end of the corridor and pointed to a spot with a door and lock. “There is a complete underground drainage, gas piping, meter, and other facilities. It is very suitable for you gentlemen and a lady like yourselves. It only requires thirteen soli of rent and five pence for use of the furniture weekly. In addition, there is a deposit that amounts to four weeks of rent.”

Without waiting for Benson to say a word, Klein looked around and asked curiously, “Roughly how much would it cost to buy the house?”

As a transmigrator from the Foodaholic Empire, the desire to buy property still existed within him.

Upon hearing that question, Benson and Melissa were shocked. They looked at Klein as though they were seeing a monster.

Scarter replied calmly and firmly, "Buy? No, we do not sell property. We only provide rental properties."

"I'm just trying to have a general sense of the prices." Klein explained awkwardly.

Scarter hesitated for a few seconds before saying, "Last month, the owner of 11 Daffodil Street sold a limited-period land deed with a similar property sitting atop the land. 300 pounds for fifteen years. It is much cheaper than renting directly but not everyone can fork out such a large sum of money. If one would like to buy it over completely, the owner's posted price is 850 pounds."

850 pounds? Klein quickly made the mental calculations.

My weekly pay is three pounds, Benson earns one pound and ten soli... Rent is thirteen soli and if we eat well every day, we would spend nearly two pounds a week. On top of that, there are expenses such as clothes, transportation, social expenditures, so on and so forth. We can only save less than twenty soli a week. One year adds up to about 35 pounds. 850 pounds would require more than twenty years. Even if we bought the land for a limited period of time for 300 pounds, it would take us at least eight or nine years... That doesn't include getting married, living independently, raising children, traveling, and so on...

In a world without individual housing loans, most people are likely to opt for rental...

Realizing this, he stepped back and stole a glance at Benson. He beckoned him to talk to Scarter about the rent.

As for Melissa's intentions, they were obvious from her bright eyes!

At that moment, Klein suddenly thought of letting Benson loose.

Benson tapped his plain cane and looked around before he said, “We should take a look at other houses. The dining area’s lighting isn’t good, and the balcony is very small. Look, only that bedroom has a fireplace, and the furniture is too old. If we move in, we have to at least change half of these...”

He pointed out faults in a hurried tone, spending ten minutes to persuade Scarter to lower the rent to twelve soli and the furniture usage fee to three pence, while rounding up the deposit to two pounds.

Without further ado, the siblings returned with Scarter to the Tingen City Housing Improvement Company and signed two copies of the contract. They then headed over to the Notary Office of Tingen City to notarize the contract.

After paying the deposit and first week’s rent, Klein and Benson’s remaining money added up to nine pounds, two soli, and eight pence.

Standing before the door of 2 Daffodil Street, they each held a bunch of copper keys. They were momentarily unable to look away; their emotions churning within them.

“It feels like a dream...” After a while, Melissa lifted her head to look at the future “Moretti Residence,” and she spoke with a low yet unsteady voice.

Benson let out a breath and smiled.

“Then don’t wake up.”

Klein wasn't as emotional as they were. He nodded and said, "We need to change the locks of the main door and balcony door as soon as possible."

"There's no hurry. The reputation of Tingen City Housing Improvement Company is very good. The rest of the money is for your formal suit. However, before that, we need to pay Mr. Franky a visit." Benson pointed in the direction of the apartment.

...

The siblings made do with rye bread at home before heading for a terrace apartment on Iron Cross Street. When they knocked on their landlord's door, Mr. Franky declared imposingly while his short frame perched on a sofa, "You know my rules. No one is allowed to be behind their rent!"

Benson leaned forward and smiled.

"Mr. Franky, we are here to give up our lease."

That straightforward? Would negotiating this way work?
Standing beside Benson, Klein was shocked when he heard him.

On the way here, Benson had said that his bottomline was a compensation of twelve soli.

"Give up your lease? No! We have a contract, and there's still half a year left!" Franky glared at Benson as he flailed his arms.

Benson looked at him seriously and waited for a moment before saying calmly, "Mr. Franky, you should understand that you

could have made much more money.”

“Make much more?” Franky asked with interest, touching his skinny face.

Benson sat up straight and explained with a smile, “The two-bedroom unit was rented to the three of us for five soli and six pence. But if you were to rent it to a family of five or six people, with two or three of them working and getting paid, I think they would be willing to pay more to stay there instead of staying at Lower Street where it’s ridden with crime. I think five soli ten pence or six soli would be a reasonable price.”

Franky’s eyes brightened up and his throat moved as Benson continued to say, “Besides, you are certainly aware that rental prices have been increasing in recent years. The longer we stay, the greater a loss you incur.”

“But... I need time to look for a new tenant.” Mr. Franky, who had inherited the apartment building, obviously liked the idea.

“I believe you can find one very quickly since you have the ability and resources to do so. Maybe two days, maybe three days... We will pay for the losses you incur during this time. How about the deposit of three soli that we have paid? It is very reasonable!” Benson immediately decided for Franky.

Franky nodded in satisfaction.

“Benson, you are such a conscientious and honest young man. Alright then, let’s sign the termination of contract.”

Klein was dumbfounded watching this happen. He completely

understood how easy it was to 'convince' Mr. Franky.

That's way too easy...

With the problem of the previous contract resolved, the three siblings first helped Klein buy his formal wear and then got busy with moving house.

They didn't have anything heavy or bulky as bulkier items belonged to the landlord. Thus, Benson and Melissa rejected Klein's idea of hiring a carriage, and instead carried their things themselves. They went back and forth between Daffodil Street and Iron Cross Street.

The hot sun outside the window set in the west, and golden rays shone through the oriel window, scattering across the desk's surface. Klein looked at the rack that had books and notebooks arranged neatly before putting an ink bottle and a fountain pen on the table which he had wiped earlier.

It's finally over... He let out a breath of relief and heard his stomach growl. He loosened his rolled up sleeves as he walked towards the door.

He had a bed that belonged to him. The bedsheet and blanket were white, old but clean.

Klein twisted the doorknob and walked out of his bedroom. Just as he was preparing to say something, he saw both doors on the opposite side open simultaneously as Benson and Melissa came into his view.

Looking at the dust and dirt marks on their faces, Klein and

Benson suddenly burst out into laughter, sounding abnormally cheerful.

Melissa bit her lips lightly but the laughter was contagious. She eventually let out a soft laugh.

...

The next morning.

Klein stood before a full-length mirror with no cracks, seriously smoothing out his collar and sleeves of his shirt.

The outfit included a white shirt, black tuxedo, silk top hat, black vest, a set of trousers, boots, and a bow tie. He felt the pinch of paying eight pounds in total.

However, the effect was great. Klein felt that his reflection in the mirror exhibited greater scholarly qualities and made him look more handsome.

Click!

He closed his pocket watch and put it into his inner pocket. He then took his cane and hid his revolver. He took the tracked public carriage and arrived at Zouteland Street.

The moment he entered the Blackthorn Security Company, he realized that he was so used to his previous lifestyle that he had forgotten to give Melissa extra money but allowed her to walk to school instead.

Shaking his head, he took note of it before stepping into Blackthorn Security Company. He saw the brown-haired girl, Rozanne, making coffee. A rich aroma permeated throughout the office.

“Good morning, Klein. The weather is great today,” Rozanne greeted him with a smile. “To be frank, I have always been curious. In such weather, don’t you men feel hot wearing those formal suits? I know for a fact that Tingen’s summer isn’t as hot as the South’s, but it is still summer.”

“It’s the price of style,” Klein replied humorously. “Good morning, Miss Rozanne. Where’s the Captain?”

“Same old place.” Rozanne pointed inside.

Klein nodded. He went through the partition and knocked on Dunn Smith’s office door.

“Come in.” Dunn’s voice was deep and gentle as usual.

When he saw Klein, who looked quite different in a set of nice formal wear, he nodded and his gray eyes smiled.

“Have you decided?” he asked.

Klein took a deep breath and answered seriously, “Yes, I have made a decision.”

Dunn slowly sat up straight. His expression became solemn but the deep recesses of his gray eyes remained the same.

“Tell me your answer.”

Klein replied without hesitation, “Seer!”