

## Chapter 124: Wrapping Up Work

Klein was hidden in the shadows of a building dozens of meters away from the target building. He heard the faint sound of gunshots and the howling of violent winds.

*If the enemy runs towards me, should I draw my gun or should I pretend that I didn't see him?* He thought as he shivered in cold sweat.

A Beyonder that could, through various means, cut short the lives of others definitely wasn't a Sequence 9 or Sequence 8 Beyonder. They certainly wouldn't be someone that a Seer like him could fight against face to face. Even if he sacrificed himself, he might not be able to slow the target down enough for Dunn and Leonard to catch up with him.

It was fortunate that the Evernight Goddess, the Empress of Misfortune, seemed to hear her 'loyal' guard's prayers. No one ran towards the location where Klein was hiding.

After a few minutes, he heard a melodious song coming from the target building.

Cocking his ears to the side so he could hear better, Klein confirmed that it was the popular local tune that Leonard Mitchell always hummed. It was filled with base words.

*Phew.* He let out a breath of relief. He held his gun in one hand and his cane in the other. He then walked out of the shadows towards the target building.

The popular local tune was the meeting signal that he had agreed upon with Dunn and the rest!

Klein took two steps and suddenly paused. He leaned his cane against the metal fencing and switched the revolver to his other hand.

Then, he took off the silver chain inside his sleeve and let the topaz pendant hang down naturally.

Klein waited till the topaz stabilized and immediately closed his eyes and entered a Cogitation state. He recited a divination statement, “The singing earlier was an illusion.

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...

After repeating seven times, he opened his eyes and saw the pendant spinning counterclockwise.

“It’s not an illusion...” Klein put away his pendulum, grabbed his cane, and quickly got close to the arch-shaped metal gate leading to the target building. He then passed the black cane to his right hand and held it with the revolver.

He extended his hands to touch the fence, intending to push it open, but he suddenly felt a piercing chill. It was as though someone had poured a bucket of ice down his neck without warning.

Klein hissed and jerked his hands back, his teeth clenched.

"It's just like winter here..." Under the dim starlight and distant street lamp, he looked through the garden behind the metal fencing. He saw the withered branches, fallen flowers, and leaves covered with white frost on the brown soil.

*Amazing!* Klein marveled in his head. He bent his fingers and tapped his glabella to activate his Spirit Vision.

He returned his silver-inlaid cane to his left hand and pushed it against the fence to open the closed gate.

The gate squeaked, and he passed through it sideways. He stepped onto the stone path that led directly to the grayish-blue building. On both sides of the path were twisted plants that seemed to resemble ghouls in the dark.

The scene reminded Klein of various horror stories and paranormal films.

He subconsciously slowed down his breathing and walked faster. However, after just a few more steps, someone suddenly patted his left shoulder.

*Badump! Badump!* Klein's heart skipped, then started thumping rapidly.

He raised his right hand, aimed his revolver, and slowly turned around to look.

In the dim light, he saw a flimsy branch that had nearly fallen off.

"This is what we call 'scaring ourselves?'" Klein twitched the corner of his lips, waved the cane, and knocked the branch off.

He continued moving forward as faint sobs sounded in his ears. Blurry, translucent "shadows" appeared before his eyes.

These shadows had swarmed over after feeling the breaths of a living person and the warmth of flesh and blood.

Klein jumped in fright and immediately ran into the door of the grayish-blue building.

*This is what the Captain meant by "getting a sense of the atmosphere?" It's much scarier than the last time I helped Sir Deweyville... The resentment of that aggrieved spirit is more "rigid" than the shadows. She hadn't taken the initiative to attack back then...* He thought as he walked towards the altar in the middle of the living room. It was a round table full of crudely made puppets. Three unlit candles stood amidst the puppets.

Dunn Smith stood right before the altar with his back to Klein. He took one puppet after another and looked at them.

Corpse Collector Frye looked at the floating shadows and extended his hand in an attempt to comfort them, but all his hand did was pass through them helplessly. The shadows didn't attack him, seemingly recognizing him as one of their own.

When Leonard Mitchell noticed Klein's arrival, he changed his tone, turning his voice softer but charming.

"Calm is the morn without a sound,

“Calm as to suit a calmer grief.

“And only thro’ the faded leaf,

“The chestnut pattering to the ground [1].”

...

In the soothing recitation of the poem, Klein seemed to see a clear lake reflecting the moonlight and a crimson moon hanging quietly, high in the sky.

The restless shadows calmed down and stopped chasing after the warm breath of the living Nighthawks among them.

Dunn put down the puppet in his hand, turned around, and said to Klein, “This is a ceremony for a terrifying curse. It’s fortunate that we’ve already destroyed it.

“First prepare a ritual to comfort the remaining spirits, then try to communicate with the spirits of the dead and see if you can get any clues from them.”

Klein, who realized that he was no longer a burden, immediately held his chest out and said, “Yes, Captain.”

He reached the altar in a few steps and extended his hands to sweep the puppets off of the round table.

At that moment, he noticed from the corner of his eyes that every puppet had a name and a corresponding message.

“Captain, did you discover anyone you know?” Klein asked in passing.

Then, he glanced at Dunn as Dunn looked at him. Both of them fell silent.

*I'm so silly... Why would I ask any questions that tests the Captain's memory!* Klein nearly covered his face and sighed.

*If it were any other boss, they would definitely find an opportunity to make my life difficult because of this. Luckily, the Captain will forget about this... I wonder if that's an advantage or a disadvantage?* He thought, half glad, half joking.

After a short silence, Dunn seemed to finally be capable of differentiating reality from the dreamworld. He replied, “There’s someone you know.”

“Who?” Klein stopped, his hand still extended to put a candle back to where it was supposed to be.

“Joyce Mayer, the survivor of the Alfalfa tragedy,” Dunn replied simply.

*Joyce Mayer? Anna's fiancé...* Klein suddenly thought of Salus in the workhouse. He seemed to have been instigated and misled by someone, causing him to bring forward his rage and committing arson.

Klein retracted his right hand and said in a deep voice, “Instigator Tris?”

“He used the lives that were cut short as a sacrifice, intending to curse all survivors of the Alfalfa tragedy? Because he didn’t know who uncovered his involvement and lodged a police report...”

If Tris took revenge directly, it would have been impossible to wipe out all the targets scattered throughout Tingen. After two or three murders, he would’ve been noticed by the Nighthawks, Mandated Punishers, and the Machinery Hivemind. Then, he would’ve lost his chance to continue his murdering spree. Klein filled in the blanks of why Tris had started all this.

Dunn nodded first, then he shook his head.

“Not all survivors, but only survivors in Tingen. His curse ritual can only affect the people within this range.”

“Besides, the host of the ritual is a female, not Tris.”

Klein creased his eyebrows and asked, “Perhaps it’s an expert that the Theosophy Order sent to help Tris?”

“Yes, the origins of the Theosophy Order might involve the Demoness Sect. It’s fairly normal for their experts to be female.”

Dunn smiled and said in his deep voice, “I agree with your judgment. Although we only encountered that woman and not Tris, there are guesses that we can make. Such as, the woman and Tris don’t stay together. Or, that Tris was out looking for people who are dying soon.”

Klein didn’t say anything further. He set the three candles in place, took out the Full Moon Essence Oil, crimson sandalwood, and other ingredients, and set up the altar quickly.

After he used a silver dagger to make a sealed wall, he started praying to the Evernight Goddess, the Mistress of Repose and Silence. He prayed that the shadows inside and outside the house would be comforted completely.

Unfortunately, in the subsequent attempt to communicate with the spirits of the dead, Klein could only see a little of what the spirits had seen before their deaths. There weren't any useful clues.

After settling the shadows into a peaceful sleep in the dark night, he ended the ceremony and removed the spirituality wall. He then shook his head and told the others,

"The backlash from the disrupted ritual caused severe damage and the remnant images of the host were lost."

Dunn wasn't surprised. He pointed at the stairs and said, "Let's look around on the second floor and give it another try."

"Okay." Klein, Leonard, and Frye nodded in agreement.

The three Nighthawks went up the stairs to the second floor and parted ways to search through each room.

In the end, they met in a bedroom that was filled with a faint aroma. They saw messy dresses lying around and open boxes.

Dunn took up a box from the dressing table and smelled it before asking, "Are these cosmetics?"

"To be exact, they are skin care products. Ever since Emperor

Roselle, they were not lumped together with a broad term,” Leonard explained with a smile. “Captain, as a gentleman, there are certain things you have to know.”

Klein didn’t join their discussion but cast his gaze towards the mirror on the dressing table.

There was an obvious crack on the mirror, and there were shattered pieces on the rug beneath.

“The Beyonder left in a rush. She didn’t destroy it entirely...” he suddenly said in a deep voice. “Maybe I could give this a try.”

“I’ll leave it to you,” Dunn replied in confidence.

Klein quickly brought the candles up from the first floor and lit them in front of the shattered mirror.

Under the dim, flickering candlelight, he took out the items like Full Moon Essence to create a spirituality wall.

After Klein prepared everything, he stood before the mirror that reflected the lights of all three candles and chanted in Hermes,

“I pray for the power of the dark night.

“I pray for the power of the mystery.

“I pray for the Goddess’s loving grace.

“I pray for the mirror to receive a brief restoration, I pray for it to show every person that it reflected in the past month.”

...

As the incantation was being recited, a strong wind suddenly howled within the spirituality wall.

The shattered pieces of the mirror swirled off the ground and returned to their original locations.

The mirror that was covered in cracks suddenly rippled with a gloomy brilliance. Klein wiped his hands over it and a human figure suddenly appeared in the frame. But that figure wasn't Klein.

It was a gentle and sweet looking young maiden with a round face. Perhaps it was because the mirror was broken or perhaps it was because the backlash of the interrupted ritual that affected the second floor as well. Her facial features were blurry and her actual appearance wasn't exactly clear.

But even so, Klein found the person unusually familiar.

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1. Adapted from Alfred Tennyson's "In Memoriam A. H. H. OBIIT MDCCCXXXIII: 11."