

## Chapter 163: Various Signs

*What?* Klein was left dumbfounded when he heard Rozanne's question. He recalled in his daze, "I previously visited Old Neil's place just last month. I saw a piano in the living room and he told me that his deceased wife loved music..."

As he spoke, Klein suddenly became alarmed as he began having unpleasant thoughts.

Rozanne knitted her beautiful brows and said with uncertainty, "Perhaps I remembered wrong... No, Mrs. Orianna and I frequented Old Neil's place during the earlier half of the year. There was no piano in his living room back then. I clearly remember asking him why he chose to remain single. His answer was that he hasn't met a lady that he wished to marry..."

*There was no piano during the earlier half of the year, and he answered the question of why he chose to remain single...* Klein tightened up and asked in a deep voice, "Rozanne, how long has it been since you visited Old Neil's place?"

"Not ever since Kenley became a Nighthawk, and Viola chose to resign as a clerk. I've been either burning the midnight oil or catching up on sleep, so how could I have the time to visit him? It's been... since the beginning of June." Rozanne became a little lost upon receiving the question, so all she did was answer honestly.

Klein's heart sank as if he sensed something was wrong.

He fished out a halfpence from his pocket and held it between his thumb and middle finger.

He took a deep breath and quickly decided on a divination statement.

“There’s something wrong with Old Neil’s current situation.

“There’s something wrong with Old Neil’s current situation.”

...

His pupils quickly darkened as he recited the statement silently and entered Cogitation.

*Ding!*

He flicked his thumb, pushing the brass coin into the air and allowing it to spin.

*Pak!* The coin fell right into Klein’s open palm.

This time, the portrait of George III was facing up.

The portrait signified that it was correct, that it was positive.

That meant that there really was something wrong with Old Neil’s current situation!

As Klein clenched the coin, he suddenly remembered the translucent pair of cold and ruthless eyes without any brows that he had seen behind Old Neil when he had just become a

Beyonder and was experimenting with his Spirit Vision.

Old Neil had explained that the pair of eyes was a characteristic of ritualistic magic!

*That's right, I also saw an almost formless human figure by the door at the periphery of the light. The color of its aura was identical to the surrounding darkness... Also, after I completely digested the Seer potion, I secretly changed the way I activated my Spirit Vision to the tapping of my left molar. I happened to look at Old Neil and he suddenly coughed violently... Scene after scene appeared in Klein's mind, turning his expression grim.*

Rozanne looked at him and asked in fear, "Did Old Neil lose control? No way, even though he's petty and stingy, and wants to be reimbursed for all of his expenses, he's still a good person. He rarely gets angry. No way, he wouldn't lose control..."

"I cannot be sure, but I think that Old Neil is on the brink of losing control." Klein consoled Rozanne. He quickly made his way past the partition and opened the door to the Captain's office.

Dunn Smith was startled by the sudden intrusion, nearly choking on his coffee.

"What happened?" He didn't blame Klein, his expression instantly becoming stern.

Klein answered simply without hiding anything, "Captain, my divination tells me that there's something wrong with Old Neil.

"Last month, Old Neil told me that his late wife loved music, but

today, Rozanne told me that he's remained single all this time.

"Also, on the day that I became a Beyonder, I saw a pair of mysterious eyes looking over everything behind Old Neil. There was also an almost transparent human figure near the door spying on us. He told me that those were characteristics of ritualistic magic.

"I felt that something was off and, thus, attempted a divination."

After Dunn finished listening intently, he stood up immediately. As he walked over to the coat rack, he asked in puzzlement, "Why didn't you directly divine if Old Neil had lost control?"

"Over the past month, Old Neil hasn't acted any differently from ordinary Beyonders. He even worked with me to help Swain deal with a Mandated Punisher who had lost control. I've also observed the colors of his aura from time to time and noticed that he's relatively healthy other than his frailty that's due to his age. Thus, I think that he's only close to losing control. He could still be saved," Klein explained his point of view in one breath.

Dunn put on his black hat and trench coat before nodding.

"A very reasonable deduction... Let's go pay a visit to Old Neil now, and oh—try not to agitate him if possible.

"After that, we can attempt to control him and use ritualistic magic to stabilize his condition to prevent it from getting worse."

*Control...* Klein had an idea when he heard this term.

“Captain, could we use Sealed Artifact 3-0611?”

He had been thinking about how he could resolve Old Neil's problem and save him, but he hadn't arrived at an answer as he had been too flustered, too uneasy, and too worried. He was reminded by Dunn Smith's words and recalled that the Sealed Artifact might be useful.

“Number: 0611.

“Name: Peaceful Hair Strands.

“Danger Grade: 3. Considerably dangerous. It has to be used carefully. It can only be applied for operations that require three or more people.

“Security classification: Official Nighthawk member or above.

“Sealing Method: No direct contact with living organisms.

“Description: A simple decoration formed with many strands of black hair.

“As long as contact is made with a living being without any protection, the living being would lose all their desires and emotions, including, but not limited to: Hunger, Anger, Grief, Pain, Envy, Jealousy, Hate, Joy, Satisfaction, Greed, etc.

“It has been ascertained that living beings under 0611's influence will even lose the desire to break contact with it. They will silently stay in their spot until the end of their life.

“If an external force is used to break contact between the person and 0611, then the person will gradually recover. But experimental data suggests that the prerequisite to this is that the person has not been in contact with the Sealed Artifact for more than two hours.

“Once the contact lasts for more than two hours, the victim would become silent for eternity.

“The highest Sequence tested is Sequence 5.

“You can avoid contact by means such as wearing gloves.

“The strands of hair do not have any living traits. It doesn’t have any inclinations of escaping the seal.

“Appendix: These strands of hair appeared during a failed advancement. It was something left behind when a Captain of the Nighthawks failed to advance to Sequence 6.”

The grayed-eyed Dunn nodded after he heard Klein.

“Great suggestion, I nearly forgot about 3-0611. Find Royale in the recreation room. I’ll retrieve the Sealed Artifact from Chanis Gate and submit the application after we come back.”

*That’s the way, no time to waste!* Klein didn’t dawdle. He immediately went to the recreation room and shouted for the usually expressionless Sleepless Royale.

“What’s the mission?” Royale asked calmly.

Klein exhaled and said in a serious tone, “Pay Old Neil a visit.”

“Pay Old Neil a visit... he?” Royale opened her eyes wide as she had an ominous feeling.

“It’s not confirmed yet.” Klein shook his head gently.

Royale didn’t speak any further. They slipped into silence, turning the mood heavy.

A few minutes passed, and Dunn finally returned from the basement.

He was wearing black gloves and had a tangled mess of black hair in his hand.

Compared to the Mutated Sun Sacred Emblem, the Peaceful Hair Strands didn’t look particularly weird. It would be glossed over by people if it were tossed on the road somewhere.

After calling for the chauffeur Cesare, the four of them made their way to Old Neil’s house.

The wheels of the carriage rolled across the asphalt road that was wet from the rain. The carriage interior was more silent than the night.

It was unknown how much time had passed until Dunn sighed.

“Old Neil did have a partner that he was about to be engaged with when he was younger, but she suddenly became terminally

ill. Old Neil risked divulging the secrets of the Beyonders and tried using ritualistic magic to save her, but he didn't succeed. Old Neil back then was just a beginner in mysticism.

"According to the records, the Nighthawks back then were all on alert, afraid that Old Neil would lose control because of this. But luckily, he managed to find his sanity and looked normal."

*Let's hope that this is a false alarm as well...* Klein couldn't help but draw a crimson moon before his chest and prayed, "May the Goddess watch over him."

Dunn and Royale followed suit.

"May the Goddess watch over him."

...

The sky started to turn brighter as the dark clouds receded. The Nighthawks arrived in front of Old Neil's bungalow.

After getting Cesare to drive the carriage far away, Dunn collected himself and walked towards the main door, cane in one hand and Sealed Artifact 3-0611 in the other.

Klein pressed down his hat as he and Royale followed behind the Captain. They made their way past the rose and gold mint garden.

When they reached the door, Klein took a step forward and pulled on the rope connected to the bell within the building.

*Clink! Clang!*

A pleasant chime resounded in the house as it broke the heavy silence.

*Clink! Clang! Clink! Clang!* Klein pulled several times, then politely took a step back without making any further attempts.

The three Nighthawks waited patiently for a few minutes, but they didn't hear any footsteps approaching the door.

"Perhaps Old Neil went to visit a doctor and isn't at home." Klein forced a smile.

He hadn't finished his sentence when a melody came from within the building. It was the music from a piano. It was like a silent lake veiled by a thin mist beneath the moonlight.

Dunn's expression became abnormally stern and grave. Klein's heart sank as well.

Just as he was about to do another divination, he suddenly saw liquid flowing out from the gap beneath the door.

The stream of liquid was transparent and pure at first before being dyed crimson, a crimson similar to that of blood. It was an intensely dark crimson red.