

Chapter 27: Siblings' Dinner

It's simply sharp and incisive... Klein burst out in laughter. Using the rich experience he had from his previous incarnation, he added another insult. "In fact, there is no evidence to suggest that those important figures have any brains at all."

"Good! Very good!" Benson roared with laughter as he gave a thumbs up. "Klein, you are a lot more humorous than before."

After taking a breath, he continued, "I have to go to the pier in the afternoon. I'm only off work tomorrow. After that I'll have time... to go to Tingen City Housing Improvement Company with the both of you. Let's see if they have cheap and good terrace houses for rent. Also, I need to pay Mr. Franky a visit."

"Our landlord?" the perplexed Klein asked. *Does our current landlord have some terrace houses from pretty good districts under his name?*

Benson shot his brother a glance and said, amused, "Have you forgotten the one-year rental contract we have with him? It has only been six months."

"Hiss..." Klein immediately drew a gasp of cold air.

He had really forgotten the matter!

Although rent was paid once a week, the lease was a year long. If they were to move now, it was equivalent to a breach in contract. If they were taken to court, they would have to compensate large sums of money!

“You are still lacking in societal experience.” Benson touched his receding black hairline and said wistfully, “This was a clause I fought so hard back then. If not, Mr. Franky was only willing to lease it to us for three months each contract. To those with money, landlords would sign leases for a year, two years, or even three years to seek stable income. But for us—the past us—and our neighbors, landlords would have to be constantly worried that something bad might happen, depriving them of their rent. Therefore, they would only sign short-term contracts.

“In that case, they can offer to raise prices according to the situation.” Klein summarized and added, using the original Klein’s memories and his own experience as a tenant.

Benson sighed and said, “This is the cruel reality of today’s society. Alright, you don’t have to worry. The issue with the contract can be easily resolved. To be frank, even if we owe him a week’s rent, Mr. Franky would have immediately thrown us out and confiscated whatever valuable items we have. After all, his intelligence is below that of a curly-haired baboon’s. There’s no way he can comprehend overly complicated matters.”

Upon hearing this, Klein suddenly recalled a particular Sir Humphrey’s meme. He shook his head and said seriously, “No, Benson. You are wrong.”

“Why?” Benson was puzzled.

“Mr. Franky’s intelligence is still slightly higher than a baboon’s,” Klein replied in all seriousness. Just as Benson seemed to smile in response, he added, “If he is on form.”

“Haha.” Benson lost it and burst out in laughter.

After a series of rapturous laughter, he pointed at Klein,

momentarily unable to put his thoughts in words. Only then, he returned to the topic at hand.

“Of course, as a gentleman, we cannot employ such shameless tactics. I will discuss this with Mr. Franky tomorrow. Believe me, he’s easily convinced, easily.”

Klein had no doubts regarding Benson’s point. The existence of the gas pipes was excellent proof.

After some idle chatter between the brothers, the remnants of pan-fried fish from the previous night were made into a soup with some vegetables. During the boiling process, the steam moistened the rye bread.

Smearing a little butter on the bread, Klein and Benson had a simple meal, but they were very satisfied with it. After all the fragrance and sweetness of butter brought them endless aftertastes.

After Benson left, Klein headed to the Lettuce and Meat market with three Soli notes and some spare pennies. He spent six pence on a pound of beef and seven pence on a fresh and succulent fish with few bones. Additionally, he bought potatoes, peas, radishes, rhubarbs, lettuce, and turnips, as well as spices such as rosemary, basil, cumin, and cooking oils.

During this entire time, he continued to feel like he was being watched, but there was no physical interaction.

After spending some time at Smyrin Bakery, Klein returned home and began weight-lifting with heavier items such as books to train his arm strength.

He had planned to exercise by military boxing, which he learned from his compulsory military stint for students. However, he had already forgotten the radio exercise routines from school, much less boxing which was only taught during the military stints. Exasperated, he could only do something simpler.

Klein did not overexert himself since it would lead to fatigue and thus put him in greater danger. He took an appropriate break and began reading the original Klein's notes and study material. He wished to read anything regarding the Fourth Epoch again.

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In the evening, Benson and Melissa sat in front of a desk. The food was placed neatly like children in upper primary school.

The fragrances of the dishes were composed of a rich melody of scents—the soul captivating fragrance of the stewed beef, the obviously tender potatoes, the sweetness of the thick pea soup, the mellow flavors of the stewed rhubarb, and the sweetness of the buttered rye bread.

Benson gulped a mouthful of saliva as he turned around to see Klein placing a crispy fish onto a plate. He felt the fragrance of the oil permeate through his nostrils into his throat and then into his stomach.

Groan! His stomach made a distinct protest.

Klein rolled up his sleeves and held up a plate of fried fish before placing it in the middle of the tidied desk. Following that, he returned to the cupboard and took out two large cups of ginger beer and placed them where he and Benson sat.

He smiled at Melissa and took out a lemon pudding as if he were performing a magic trick. "We'll have beer, while you'll have this."

"...Thank you." Melissa took the lemon pudding.

When Benson saw this, he raised his cup and said with a smile, "This is to celebrate Klein's finding of a decent job."

Klein raised his cup and clinked it with Benson before clinking it with Melissa's lemon pudding. "Praise the Lady!"

Gulp. He tilted his head back and drank it down. The spicy feeling warmed his gullet, bringing him great aftertastes.

Despite its name, ginger beer did not contain any alcohol. It was a mixture of the ginger's spiciness and the sourness of lemon that made it taste similar to beer. It was a kind of beverage that both women and children found acceptable. However, Melissa did not like the taste of it.

"Praise the Lady!" Benson drank a mouthful as well while Melissa took a nibble of the lemon pudding. She chewed at it repeatedly before swallowing it down unwillingly.

"Give it a try." Klein put down his cup and picked up his fork and spoon and pointed at the tableful of food.

He was most pessimistic of his thick pea soup. After all, he had never eaten something so strange on Earth. All he could do was adapt the recipe from the original Klein's memory fragments.

As the eldest brother, Benson did not stand on ceremony as he dug up a spoonful of mashed potatoes and stuffed it into his mouth.

The beaten potatoes were boiled thoroughly and mixed with the faint taste of lard and just enough salt. It whetted his appetite and made him salivate.

“Not... bad... Not bad,” praised Benson vaguely. “It’s much more delicious than the one I had back at work. They only used butter.”

This is one of my specialties after all... Klein accepted the praise. “It’s all thanks to the teachings of the chef at Welch’s place.”

Melissa looked at the beef soup. The green basil leaves, the green lettuce heads, and the radishes were submerged in the colorless soup, covering the tender beef. The soup was clear and its fragrance tantalizing.

She forked a piece of beef and placed it in her mouth to chew. The beef retained a little chewiness despite being stewed tender. The mixture of salt, the sweetness from the radishes, and the spiciness from the basil leaves complemented the deliciousness of the beef.

“...” She seemed to give her approbation, but she could not stop her chewing.

Klein tasted it and felt that although it was delicious, it was not without regret. This was still far from his usual standard. After all, he was lacking in certain condiments and could only use replacements. It was no wonder it tasted different.

Of course, even with the best standards, one could only make do with the dishes they cooked personally.

Suddenly, his heart pained for Benson and Melissa who were stunted in their world view.

After swallowing a piece of beef, Klein picked up a piece of fried Tussock Fish which was sprinkled with cumin and rosemary. It was crispy on the outside and tender on the inside. The char was a perfect golden brown and the saltiness and oil fragrance intertwined as one.

Nodding slightly, Klein tried a piece of stewed rhubarb and found it palatable. It got rid of the cloyed taste of meat.

Finally, he mustered his courage and scooped a bowl of thick pea soup.

Too sweet and too sour... Klein could not help but frown.

However, after seeing Benson and Melissa looking satisfied from tasting it, he began suspecting his tastes. He could not help but down a mouthful of ginger beer to cleanse his tongue.

The siblings were stuffed by the end of the meal. They laid slumped in the chairs for quite a while.

“Let us praise the Lady once more!” Benson raised his ginger beer—which had only one mouthful left—as he said in satisfaction.

“Praise the Lady!” Klein downed the last bit of his beverage.

“Praise the Lady.” Melissa finally put the last bit of lemon pudding into her mouth and enjoyed the flavors swishing through her mouth.

When Klein saw this, he took advantage of his tipsiness and smiled. “Melissa, that’s not right. You should eat the thing you find most delicious at the beginning. That way, you can fully appreciate its most delicious aspects. Tasting it when you are filled and satiated will not do the food justice.”

“No, it’s still as delicious as it can be,” answered Melissa firmly and stubbornly.

The siblings had a happy chat, and after digesting their meals, they cleaned up the plates, cutlery, and stored the oil which was used to fry the fish.

After busying themselves, it was revision time. One refreshed his accounting knowledge while another continued reading the study material and notes. Time was spent to its fullest.

At eleven, the siblings extinguished the gas lamp and went to bed after washing up.

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Klein felt groggy as he stared at the darkness in front of him. A figure wearing a black trench coat and halved top hat appeared suddenly in Klein’s vision. It was Dunn Smith.

“Captain!” Klein jolted awake and knew he was dreaming.

Dunn's gray eyes remained calm, as though he was mentioning something trivial. "Someone has sneaked into your room. Pick up your revolver and force him to the corridor. Leave the rest to us."

Someone has sneaked into my room? The observer has finally taken action? Klein jumped in fright, but did not dare ask further. All he did was nod and say, "Alright!"

The scene before his eyes changed immediately as a swath of colors appeared like the bursting of bubbles.

Klein's eyes opened as he carefully turned his head. He looked toward the window and saw a thin but unfamiliar back standing at his desk, rummaging for something in silence.