

Chapter 130: Backlund's Secret Gathering

Klein looked at Swain standing before the monster's corpse before looking sideways towards the Mandated Punisher who was helping his semi-conscious partner up by the arm. Klein suddenly felt an indescribable sadness.

It was almost impossible for members of the Nighthawks, Mandated Punishers, and the Machinery Hivemind to be known as heroes. The things they did were never made known to the public but only hidden in confidential dockets. But the danger and pain they endured were ever so real.

Perhaps there would be a day when my enemy will be one of my teammates... Klein sighed silently. He felt the heavy weight that all Nighthawks, Mandated Punishers, and Machinery Hivemind carried.

At that moment, Old Neil let out a sigh.

"Let's go. Let's not disturb them."

"Okay." Klein picked up his cane. Just as he widened his stride, he suddenly noticed that Old Neil was still holding his left hand. He asked, concerned, "Are you hurt?"

Old Neil chuckled briefly before saying, "I got stabbed by one of the shrapnel earlier. If I was still young, I definitely would've been able to dodge it. Luckily, it's just a small cut."

He moved his right hand slightly to let Klein see the tiny wound that was still lightly bleeding on the back of his left hand.

After he confirmed that it wasn't a big issue, Klein walked off along the gangway as he sighed.

"Mr. Neil, you're much calmer than I imagined. Despite being less than two meters away from the monster, you could still chant the incantation calmly and use the charm."

Although the rampaging Mandated Punisher had leaped towards Klein in the form of a monster, Old Neil was physically very close to him the entire time.

Old Neil chuckled at the compliment.

"I'm an experienced Nighthawk. Among the dangerous things that I've done, what happened just now isn't even in my top ten. Once, when I was patrolling Raphael Cemetery with Dunn, I had no idea that a corpse had turned into a zombie and left its tomb to lie in ambush in the shadows of the trees. I passed by without noticing it at all since I was looking for some hidden spot. Heh, you know what I mean. In the end, he leapt onto my back and seized my throat."

Klein felt gripped by terror when he heard the recollection as he voiced out his guess.

"And under such a situation, you were still calm enough to use a charm? Or did you use some spell that a Mystery Pryer could cast quickly?"

Old Neil stole a glance at him and chortled. "No, Dunn managed to drag that zombie into a slumber in time. I'm telling you this story to tell you that, as a Nighthawk, you not only have to believe in yourself, you also have to trust your teammates too."

Klein fell silent for a few seconds. Then, he replied both sincerely and jokingly, “Mr. Neil, you are so wise today.”

Old Neil did a tiny hop and found his footing on the pier. He replied in disdain, “That’s because you only get to know the most trivial side of me usually.”

The two of them left the harbor and walked towards Evil Dragon Bar.

Klein put away his revolver, set his cane aside, and took off his jacket. Under the light of the gas street lamp, he started checking if there was any damage to his jacket.

“How lucky. There are only a few splinters and a patch that got dirtied...” He removed the splinters and roughly patted the dust away. Then, he put it back on.

Old Neil looked at him with a smile and mimicked his tone by adding leisurely. “What a pity, there’s no way to claim compensation.”

Klein was temporarily at a loss for words.

I'm not such a person! He emphasized in his heart.

As the public carriage arrived, Klein took out his silver vine-leaf pocket watch and flipped it open to check the time.

“If there’s nothing else, I have to head home,” he turned to tell Old Neil.

Old Neil nodded slightly and said, “Enjoy your dinner at home. You don’t need to think about the Slumber Charm. I’ll get Swain to compensate me. He’s a rich man after all. Of course, I won’t go today. I have to consider his mood.”

Klein opened his mouth, but in the end, he only said, “...Thank you for your generosity.”

He boarded the carriage quickly and returned to Daffodil Street. It was already past seven in the evening, and the sky had already grown dark.

Klein took out his keys to open the door and saw Melissa taking off her fishnet hat and setting it on the clothes rack. He smiled and did small talk.

“You just got back?”

Then, his mixed emotions suddenly vanished, and he felt relaxed and warm.

“There was a practical lesson in school today,” Melissa explained seriously.

Klein sniffed and smelled the fragrance of food. He was stunned and asked subconsciously, “Then, who’s cooking dinner?”

The moment he finished his sentence, both of them answered the question in unison, “Benson!”

Their tone had a hint of alarm.

Benson, who had heard their conversation, walked out of the kitchen. While wiping his hands on an apron, he said, "Do you have no confidence in my cooking? I remember that before Melissa learned how to cook, you two would wait for me to come home and watch me cook with anticipation. Actually, cooking is so easy. You want potato beef stew? Put in the beef first, then the potatoes, then add some seasoning..."

Klein and Melissa exchanged glances and remained silent.

Putting aside his cane and took off his hat, Klein turned around and smiled.

"I think it's time to hire a maidservant. It's very unhealthy to not eat dinner on time."

"But I don't want to have a stranger next to us when we chat. That'll make me feel uncomfortable," Melissa said, subconsciously finding an excuse to object.

Klein spoke with a smile as he took off his jacket.

"I don't mind..."

Just then, his expression froze, and he stopped what he was doing.

I almost took off my jacket. I still have a revolver at my armpit...

Ahem. He cleared his throat and pretended nothing happened. "Don't mind her. When we get home, we can let the maidservant rest in her room. I doubt any maidservant would dislike resting.

Hmm, we must find a maidservant who's willing to learn how to cook."

He didn't want to endure the torture of a cuisine that left him guessing in the future.

Benson stood at the kitchen and nodded in agreement.

"When we have time, we can go over to Tingen Family Servant Assistance Association. They have a great deal of experience and many resources in this field."

"Alright, it's decided then!" Klein ignored Melissa's unwilling look.

...

Backlund, Empress Borough, Viscount Gaint's residence.

Audrey Hall left the party with her personal maid, Annie. They came to the second floor and entered the bedroom that the Viscount had prepared.

She took off her glamorous dress and her lightweight dancing heels slowly with Annie's assistance. She then put on a black hooded robe that she had prepared ahead of time.

Pulling up the hood, Audrey stood before the full mirror and examined herself.

She saw that more than half her face was covered by the shadow

of her hood, and only her beautiful lips were clearly exposed.

Long black robe, face hidden by shadows, a mysterious feeling... This is something I've been dreaming of wearing all this time!
Audrey thought to herself happily.

Worried, she added a blue boat-shaped soft hat under her hood. With the fine checkered fishnet drooping down, her facial features became even more indiscernible.

“Not bad, that’s it!” Audrey stuffed her feet into leather ankle boots, looked to the side, and told Annie, “Wait for me here. No matter who comes, do not open the door.”

Annie looked at her helplessly and said, “But you have to make sure that your trip doesn’t take more than an hour.”

“You should trust me. I have kept my promise every single time in the past.” Audrey smiled and leaned in towards her personal maidservant. She hugged her and kissed her cheek as etiquette demanded.

Then, she walked quickly and pulled up her hood. Turning around, she exited the bedroom through a secret door.

She walked all the way down and came to the side door of the viscount’s residence where she saw that there was already a carriage waiting there.

Glaint stood amidst the shadows as he glanced at Audrey and complimented sincerely, “By dressing up like this, you are really, yeah—like the description Emperor Roselle often used—very cool.”

“Thank you.” Audrey pulled up an imaginary skirt and curtsied elegantly.

The two of them got into the carriage and left the villa. They arrived at a house about ten minutes away.

Outside the house, Audrey saw Apprentice Fors Wall and her friend, Arbiter Xio Derecha, whom she had been seeing recently.

Fors's slightly wavy brown hair and her light blue eyes showed a natural laziness. She pointed at Xio Derecha next to her and said, “She's an excellent persuader, capable of helping you get things that you want.”

Xio Derecha was slightly shorter, about 150 cm at most. Her facial features were soft, but she seemed pretty young and immature.

Although her shoulder length blond hair was messy and unkempt, and she was in a traditional knight training suit, she carried an indescribable look of dignity and a convincing charm.

Audrey had met her a few times. She smiled faintly and greeted, “Miss Xio, can I trust you?”

“You don't have to worry at all.” Xio Derecha smiled and gestured with her hand.

Just as she walked to follow Audrey and Viscount Glaint, they heard a sudden thud.

Audrey looked towards the source of the sound and saw that a

triangular blade coruscating with a cold glimmer had fallen beside Xio Derecha's leg.

Audrey and Xio Derecha exchanged looks, simultaneously at a loss for words.

After nearly twenty seconds, Xio Derecha quickly squatted and picked up the triangular blade and hid it on her body.

"We have to prevent the occurrence of an accident. Some people lack rationality, and they aren't convinced easily," Xio Derecha explained seriously.

Audrey nodded and replied with a clear voice, "I believe you..."

"These are tools to convince those b*stards to talk to us calmly," Fors added, looking sideways at the lawn.

The quartet didn't continue conversing and walked a few steps forward. They knocked on the wooden door with three long and two short knocks.

The door squeaked and opened. Slowly, using her Spectator state, Audrey looked into the house that had many people sitting around randomly. They employed various methods such as hoods or masks to conceal their looks. Some didn't even bother and exposed their faces openly.

Almost instantly, Audrey noticed a black-robed man on a single seat sofa.

That man wore a hood too, hiding his looks under a shadow.

He looked at all the guests in silence, giving people a feeling that he was somehow in a commanding position.

He is very confident, but his gaze is very disgusting. His gaze moved up and down my body like two slippery tentacles wanting to tear off my clothes... Audrey's senses were sharp. She carefully observed and made a judgment calmly, but she nearly had goosebumps.

Fors introduced him.

“That’s Mr. A, a powerful Beyonder, the leader of this secret gathering.”