

Chapter 119: The True Lower Street

Tingen City, 2 Daffodil Street.

Klein, who had left a note, locked the door and walked briskly towards Leonard Mitchell who was waiting by the side of the road.

Leonard's short black hair had grown a little over the month, and the lack of any grooming made it look messy.

Despite that, his messy hair still complimented his decent looks, emerald-colored eyes, and poetic vibes. It exuded a different sense of beauty.

Indeed, any hairstyle depends on the face... Klein lampooned inwardly. He pointed in the direction of Iron Cross Street and asked, “Is Frye waiting for us there?”

“Yes.” Leonard smoothed his untucked shirt and said casually, “Did you notice any clues when you were looking at the documents?”

Klein held his cane in his left hand as he walked along the side of the road and said, “No, I cannot find anything common in their times, locations, or causes of death. You should know that any rituals involving evil gods or devils must be conducted within a certain time frame or using a special method.”

Leonard touched the custom-made revolver hidden underneath his shirt, by his waist and chuckled.

“That isn’t an absolute rule. In my experience, some evil gods or devils are easily satisfied, as long as they have a particular interest in what is being asked of them.

“Also, a good number of the deaths seem normal. We have to omit them before we can arrive at the real answer.”

Klein glanced at him and said, “That’s why the Captain asked us to investigate once more. To eliminate the normal incidents.”

“Leonard, your tone and description tell me that you have considerable experience in this area, but you have only been a member of the Nighthawks for four years, with an average of two supernatural incidents a month. Furthermore, a large number of those were simple and easy to solve.”

He always felt that Leonard Mitchell was a little weird and mysterious. Not only was he always suspicious of him, believing that there was something about him. In addition, his demeanor also changed from time to time, sometimes quiet, sometimes arrogant, sometimes flippant, sometimes staid.

“Could it be that you’ve also had a fortuitous encounter? An encounter that makes you view yourself as a star in a play?” Klein made a rough deduction based on all the movies, novels, and dramas he had watched in the past.

Upon hearing this question, Leonard laughed and said, “That’s because you’re not a full-fledged Nighthawk yet. You’re still in the training phase.

“The Holy Cathedral compiles a record of all supernatural encounters experienced by cathedrals of the different dioceses and hands it down to its members once every six months.

“Aside from your mysticism lessons, you can submit an application to the Captain and request to enter Chanis Gate to read these records.”

Klein nodded in enlightenment.

“The Captain has never mentioned this to me.”

Klein hadn’t had the opportunity to enter Chanis Gate up to this point.

Leonard chuckled and said, “I thought that you were already used to the Captain’s style. To think that you are still naively waiting for him to remind you...”

Upon saying that, he added meaningfully, “We must be cautious of the Captain if there ever comes a day when he remembers everything.”

Would that mean a loss of control? Klein nodded, his expression serious. He then asked, “Is the forgetfulness unique to the Captain? I had thought that it was a problem brought about by the Sleepless Sequence.”

Burning the midnight oil usually leads to memory loss...

“More accurately, it’s a symptom unique to a Nightmare. With dreams and reality intertwined, it’s often hard for a person to differentiate between what is real and what isn’t. They need to remember what isn’t part of reality...” Leonard wanted to elaborate further, but they had already arrived at Iron Cross Street and found Corpse Collector Frye waiting for them at the public carriage station.

Frye was wearing a round black hat and a trench coat of a similar color with a leather briefcase in his hand. He was so pale that it made Klein suspect if he would soon collapse at anytime. His icy aura made everyone else waiting for the carriage keep their distance from him.

After nodding to each other, the three grouped up silently and walked past the Smyrin Bakery before turning onto the Lower Street of Iron Cross Street.

They were immediately faced with a din. Merchants selling clam soup, seared fish, ginger beer, and fruits were shouting hysterically for attention, causing the pedestrians to involuntarily slow down.

It was already a little past five. People were returning to Iron Cross Street, and the sides of the streets were becoming crowded. Some children were mixed in the crowd, coldly watching everything, placing their attention on the pockets of the pedestrians.

Klein frequently came here for cheap cooked food and was familiar with the streets, especially since he had lived in a nearby apartment in the past. He reminded the group, “Be careful of thieves.”

Leonard smiled. “You need not mind them.”

He pulled on his shirt and adjusted the holster of his gun, revealing his revolver.

Suddenly, all the gazes fixed on them shifted away. The pedestrians around them instinctively made way.

Klein froze for a moment, then caught up to Leonard and Frye with large steps. He lowered his head, trying hard to avoid being noticed by anyone he knew.

Benson and Melissa still had dealings with the neighbors here. After all, they hadn't moved too far away.

The three made their way past the area that was had many peddlers and turned into the true Lower Street of Iron Cross Street.

The pedestrians here were all dressed in old, ragged clothes. They were cautious of strangers wearing bright and beautiful clothes; yet, there was also greed in their eyes, like vultures eyeing a meal, waiting to strike at any time. But Leonard's revolver prevented any accidents from happening.

"Let's first investigate the death from yesterday. We'll begin with Mrs. Lauwis, a lady who glued matchboxes together for a living." Leonard flipped his notes and pointed to a place not far away, "First floor, No. 134..."

As the three of them walked forward, children who were playing in the streets and dressed in shabby clothes quickly hid by the corner of the road. They observed them with eyes full of curiosity and fear.

"Look at their arms and legs, thin as matchsticks." Leonard sighed. He entered building No. 134 first.

Air that was a mixture of numerous scents entered Klein's nostrils. He could faintly detect the stench of urine, sweat, and mold, as well as the smell of burning coal.

Klein couldn't help but pinch his nose. He then saw Bitsch Mountbatten who had been waiting there for them.

Officer Mountbatten had a brownish-yellow mustache and was envious of Leonard's rank of inspector.

"Sir, I have already asked Lauwis to wait in his room," Bitsch Mountbatten said with his unique, shrill voice.

He clearly didn't recognize Klein, who now looked more energized and proper. All he cared about was sucking up to the three officers in front of him as he led them to the Lauwis family on the first floor.

It was a simple apartment. There was a bunk bed laid upright inside the room and a desk filled with glue and hard paper on the right side. The corner of the room was piled full of frames for matchboxes, while an old cabinet sat on the left, acting as a storage space for both clothes and cutlery.

A stove, toilet, and a small amount of coal and timber occupied the two sides of the door, while the center of the room was occupied by two dirty mattresses. A man was sleeping under a torn blanket, leaving no space for anyone to walk.

A lady lay on the lower level of the bunk bed, her skin ice cold. It was clear that she had lost all signs of life.

Beside the corpse sat a man in his thirties. He had oily hair, looked dispirited, and his eyes had lost their luster.

"Lauwis, these three officers are here to examine the body and ask you questions," Bitsch Mountbatten shouted, without any

regard for the sleeping man.

The dispirited man looked up weakly and asked in surprise, “Didn’t someone already examine the corpse and question me?”

He was dressed in a grayish-blue worker’s uniform which had visible signs of being mended multiple times.

“Answer when I tell you to! Why do you have so many questions?” Bitsch Mountbatten berated the man, then turned to Leonard, Klein, and Frye. “Officers, this is Lauwis. The person on the bed is his wife, who is also the deceased. According to our preliminary analysis, she died from a sudden illness.”

Klein and the rest tiptoed to the edge of the bed.

The high-nosed, thin-lipped Frye did not say anything with his cold demeanor. Instead, he patted Lauwis gently, signaling for the man to make way so that he could examine the body.

Klein looked at the sleeping man and asked, “This is?”

“M-my tenant.” Lauwis rubbed his forehead as he said, “The rent for this room is three soli ten pence a week. I’m only a worker at the harbor, and my wife made two and a quarter pence per crate of glued matchboxes. Each crate h-has, up to 130 boxes. We, we also have a child. We can only rent the rest of the space to someone else. We only charge a soli a week for the mattress...”

“I have a tenant who’s helping out at the theater, and he’s not back before 10 at night. He sold his rights to the mattress in the daytime to t-this man. He’s the person who watches over the gate of the theater at night, so he only pays six pence every

week..."

Hearing the other party stammer as he explained, Klein couldn't help but look at the crate in the corner of the room.

One crate had 130 matchboxes and only earned them 2.25 pence, about the cost of two pounds of black bread... How many crates could she manage a day [1]?

Leonard surveyed the surroundings and asked, "Was your wife acting abnormally prior to her death?"

Lauwis, who had been asked similar questions, pointed to the left side of his left chest and said, "From last week, well—perhaps the week before, she said that she felt stuffy in this area and couldn't catch her breath."

The precursor to a heart condition? A normal death? Klein interrupted, "Did you see how she died?"

Lauwis recalled, "She stopped working after sunset. Candles and gas are more expensive than matchboxes... She said that she was very tired and asked me to talk to the kids and let her rest. When I saw her again, she had already stopped breathing."

Lauwis could no longer hide his grief and pain when he said that.

Klein and Leonard asked several questions, but could not find anything unnatural about the death.

After they looked at each other, Leonard said, "Mr. Lauwis, please

wait outside for a few minutes. We are going to conduct a thorough examination of the corpse. I don't think that you'll want to see that."

"Alright." Lauwis stood up anxiously.

Bitsch Mountbatten walked toward the mattress and kicked the tenant, violently chasing him out of the apartment. He then closed the door and guarded the room from the outside.

"So?" Leonard looked at Frye.

"She died of a heart attack," Frye said with certainty, retracting his hands.

Klein thought for a moment before taking out a half-penny, intending to do a quick judgment.

"Mrs. Lauwis's heart attack was due to supernatural causes?" No, that is too narrow, the answer might be misleading... Hmm, "There are supernatural factors influencing Mrs Lauwis's death." I'll use that! He quickly decided on a statement.

As he recited the statement, Klein made his way to the side of Mrs Lauwis's corpse. His eyes turned darker as he tossed the coin.

The sound of the coin reverberated around the room as it fell, straight into Klein's palm.

This time, the portrait of the king was facing up.

This meant that there were supernatural factors influencing Mrs. Lauwiss's death!

1. During the Victorian era, a crate is 144 matchboxes. The labor was worth 2.25 pence. A woman who works the entire day can do at most 7 crates.