

## Chapter 26: Practice

*Tap! Tap! Tap!* The sound of footsteps echoed through the dark, narrow corridor, which was otherwise silent.

Klein kept his back straight as he kept up with the priest's pace. He did not pose questions or chat idly with him, remaining silent like a windless body of water.

After passing through the heavily guarded passageway, the priest opened a secret door with a key and pointed down a stairwell made of stone. "Turn left at the intersection to reach Chanis Gate."

"May Goddess bless you." Klein gestured the sign of the crimson moon on his chest.

Commoners practiced etiquette, while the religious partook in ritual blessings.

"Praise the Lady." The priest returned with the same gesture.

Klein did not speak further as he walked down the dark stone stairwell with the aid of the refined inlaid gas lamps on both sides of the wall.

Midway, he subconsciously turned back and saw the priest standing at the entrance. He was in the shadows and appeared like an immobile wax statue.

Klein looked away and continued to proceed down. It did not

take long before he hit ground laid with ice-cold stone slabs. This led him to the intersection.

He did not turn towards Chanis Gate because Dunn Smith, who had recently finished his shift, was definitely not there.

He turned right and saw the familiar path. Klein went back up another flight of stairs and appeared inside Blackthorn Security Company.

Seeing doors that were tightly shut or half-closed, he did not rush into them. Instead, he went to the reception and saw a brown-haired girl focused on a magazine with a sweet smile.

“Hi, Rozanne.” Klein came to her side and deliberately rapped the table.

*Knock!* Rozanne stood up suddenly and knocked over a chair and said in a fluster, “Hi, nice weather today. Y-you, Klein, why are you here?”

She patted her chest and heaved a few sighs of relief. She was like a young lady afraid that her father had caught her skiving.

“I need to find Captain,” answered Klein simply.

“...You gave me a fright. I thought Captain came out.” Rozanne glared at Klein. “Don’t you know how to knock!? Hmph, you should be thankful that I’m a tolerant and kind woman. Well, I do prefer the term lady... Is there a reason why you are looking for Captain? He’s in the room opposite Mrs. Orianna.”

Even though he felt uptight, Klein was so amused by Rozanne he smiled. He pondered for a moment before saying, “A secret.”

“...” Rozanne’s eyes widened and while she reeled in her disbelief, Klein did a slight bow before bidding her farewell.

He went through the reception’s partition and knocked on the door of the first office on the right.

“Come in.” Dunn Smith’s deep and gentle voice sounded.

Klein pushed the door and opened before closing the door behind him. He took off his hat and bowed. “Good morning, Captain.”

“Good morning, how can I help you?” Dunn’s black trench coat and hat were hanging on a clothes stand to his side. He was dressed in a white shirt and black vest. Even though his hairline was rather high, his gray eyes were deep, and he appeared much fresher.

“Someone is following me.” Klein honestly answered without any embellishments.

Dunn leaned back and clasped his hands together. His deep gray eyes silently looked at Klein’s eyes. He did not follow up on the topic of being followed and instead, asked, “You came from the cathedral?”

“Yes.” Klein answered.

Dunn nodded gently. He did not comment on its merits or demerits as he switched the subject back. “It might be that

Welch's father doesn't believe the cause of death that we reported and had hired a private investigator from Wind City to investigate the matter."

Midseashire's Constant City was also known as Wind City. It was a region with extremely advanced coal and steel industries. It was one of the top three cities of Loen Kingdom.

Before waiting for Klein to give his opinion, Dunn continued, "It might also be a result of that notebook. Heh, we happened to be investigating where Welch received the Antigonus family's notebook. Of course, we can't eliminate other people or organizations that might be seeking out this notebook."

"What should I do?" Klein asked in a serious voice.

Without a question, he hoped that it was the first reason.

Dunn did not immediately answer him. He raised his coffee mug and took a mouthful, his eyes not showing the sliver of a ripple. "Return the way you came, then do anything you wish."

"Anything?" Klein returned with a question.

"Anything." Dunn nodded with certainty. "Of course, do not scare them off or violate the law."

"Alright." Klein took a deep breath and bade him farewell. He left the room and went back underground.

He turned left at the intersection, and bathed in the light from the gas lamps on the two walls, he arrived silently to the empty,

dark, and cold passageway.

The sound of his footsteps echoed, making him sound more alone and terrified.

Soon, Klein arrived at the stairwell. He went forward and saw a shadow standing there—the middle-aged priest.

The two did not say a word when they met. The priest turned around in silence and made way.

He proceeded silently before returning to the prayer hall. The circular holes behind the arched altar were still as pure and bright, while the darkness and silence of the building's interior remained. There were still men and women lining outside the confessional, but much fewer than before.

After waiting for a moment, Klein slowly left the prayer hall with his cane and newspaper as though nothing had ever happened, successfully leaving Saint Selena Cathedral.

The moment he walked out, he saw the burning sun. He immediately regained the familiar feeling of being observed. He felt like he was prey being eyed by a hawk.

Suddenly, a question surfaced in his mind.

*Why didn't the "observer" follow me into the cathedral? Although I could have still used the dark environment and the priest to conceal my temporary disappearance, would it be hard for him to continue monitoring me by pretending to pray? If he had not done something wrong, there would be no problem walking in with an open and aboveboard manner, right? Unless the person has some*

dark history, making him afraid of the Church or fear the bishop, knowing that he might have the powers of a Beyonder.

*In that case, the likelihood of it being a private investigator is very slim...* Klein exhaled and no longer acted as nervous as he was previously. He took a casual stroll before going around and to the back of Zouteland Street.

He stopped at an ancient-styled building with mottled walls. The address on the door was '3.' Its name was the Zouteland Shooting Club.

Part of the police department's underground shooting range was opened to the public as a way to earn some additional funds.

Klein went in and the feeling of being watched vanished instantly. He took this opportunity to hand over his Special Operations Department badge to the attendant.

After a short verification, he was led underground to a small, confined shooting range.

"Ten-meter target." Klein informed the attendant simply. Next, he retrieved the revolver from his underarm holster and the box of brass bullets from his pocket.

The feeling of being suddenly targeted made his desire to protect himself win over his procrastination. Therefore, he could not wait to come over to practice his shooting.

*Pa!* After the attendant left, he flicked open the cylinder and removed the silver demon hunting bullets. Following that, he filled the cylinder with normal brass bullets.

This time, neither did he leave an empty spot to prevent misfiring, nor did he take off his formal attire and halved top hat. He planned on practicing in his usual getup. After all, it was impossible for him to shout “wait a minute, let me change into something more comfortable” after encountering an enemy or danger.

*Click!* Klein closed the cylinder and rolled it with his thumb.

Suddenly, he held the gun in both hands, raised it up straight, and aimed at the target more than ten meters away.

However, he was in no hurry to shoot. Instead, he recalled his experience at military training [1], how to form a line with the iron-sights, and knowledge about a gun’s recoil.

*Rustle! Rustle!* While his clothes rustled, Klein repeated his aiming and his holding stance. He was as serious as a student taking a high-school exam.

After repeating it several times, he retreated to the wall and sat down on a long, soft bench. He placed the revolver to the side, began massaging his arms, and rested for quite a while.

He spent a few minutes recalling his practice before he picked up the revolver with the wooden handle and bronze cylinder. He got into standard firing position and pulled the trigger.

*Bang! Bang! Bang!* His arm trembled as his body moved back from the recoil. The bullet missed the target.

*Bang! Bang! Bang!* Drawing from the experience he gained, he shot again and again until all six rounds were finished.

*I'm starting to hit the target...* Klein stepped back and sat down again as he exhaled.

*Click!* He swung the cylinder out and allowed the six shells to fall to the ground. Then, without a change in expression, he inserted the remaining brass rounds in.

After relaxing his arm, Klein stood up again and returned to his shooting position.

*Bang! Bang! Bang!* Ringing shots echoed as the target shook. Klein practiced and rested repeatedly. He expended all thirty normal rounds and the remaining five from before. He gradually hit the target and started aiming for the bull's eye.

He swung his sore shoulders and threw out the final five shells. He lowered his head and inserted the demon hunting bullets with the complicated patterns back into the gun, leaving an empty spot to prevent misfiring.

After putting the revolver back into his underarm holster, Klein patted the dust from his body and walked out the shooting range to return to the streets.

The feeling of being observed arose once again. Klein felt calmer than he previously felt as he slowly walked to Champagne Street. He spent four pence on a tracked carriage to return to Iron Cross Street before returning to his own apartment.

The feeling of being spied upon vanished without a trace. Klein took out his keys and opened the door to see a short-haired man nearing his thirties and wearing a linen shirt seated at a desk.

His heart tensed up before relaxing immediately. Klein greeted with a smile, “Good morning—no—good afternoon, Benson.”

This man was none other than Klein’s and Melissa’s elder brother, Benson Moretti. He was only twenty-five this year, but his receding hairline and decrepit appearance made him look nearly thirty.

He had black hair and brown eyes, resembling Klein somewhat, but he lacked the faint scholarly air which Klein had.

“Good afternoon, Klein. How was the interview?” Benson stood up as he grinned.

His black coat and halved top hat were hanging on a protrusion of their bunk bed.

“Horrible,” Klein replied in a deadpan manner.

When he saw Benson stunned, Klein chuckled and added, “In fact, I didn’t even participate in the interview. I found a job ahead of the interview and it pays three pounds a week...”

He repeated what he told Melissa again.

Benson’s expression calmed down as he shook his head with a laugh. “It feels like I’m seeing a child grow up... Well, this job is pretty good.” He sighed and said, “It’s great that the first thing I heard is such good news after being away for work. Let’s celebrate tonight and buy some beef?”

Klein smiled. “Sure, but I believe Melissa will feel the pinch. Let’s

buy some ingredients later in the afternoon? Let's bring at least three soli? Well, to be honest, a pound exchanges for twenty soli, and one soli exchanges for twelve pence. There are even denominations like the halfpence and quarterpence. Such a coin system just goes against logic. It's so troublesome. I think it must be one of the most foolish coin systems in the world."

When he said that, he saw Benson's expression turn stern. Feeling a little unease, he wondered if he had said anything wrong.

*Could it be that in the lost memory fragments of the original Klein, Benson was an outright, extreme nationalist who showed no tolerance for any negativity?* Benson took a few steps and refuted him with a stern expression. "No, it is not one of, but the most foolish coin system."

*Not one of!* Klein was taken aback, but he quickly snapped to his senses. He looked at his brother in the eye and laughed.

Indeed, Benson was great at mocking humor.

Benson lifted the corners of his lips and said in all seriousness, "You should understand that to institute a reasonable and simple coin system, one needs to know how to count and grasp the decimal system. Unfortunately, there are too few talents among those important figures."

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1. This does not mean Zhou Mingrui was a soldier. Students in China are made to attend short military stints during their schooling days for short periods of time.