

## Chapter 50: Old Neil's Method of Repayment

Half past seven in the evening, around the Moretti family's dining table.

"Klein, why do you need to be at work so early as a consultant? Would emergency matters at the security company be more dangerous?" Benson forked a potato from a dish of potato-stewed beef as he raised the matter in concern.

Klein carefully spat out the bones from a pan-fried fish and gave his prepared answer.

"A batch of historical documents needed immediate shipping to Backlund. I had to be present to handle the handover and make sure there was nothing missing. As you can guess, the bunch of fist-swinging bastards don't know any Feysac."

Upon hearing his answer, Benson, who had finished chewing his food, could not help but sigh.

"Knowledge is truly important."

Making use of this opportunity, Klein took out the remaining five-pound note and handed it to Benson.

"This is my additional payment I received today. It's time you get some decent clothes too."

"Five pounds?" Benson and Melissa said in unison.

Benson took the note and looked at it repeatedly. He said in both shock and doubt, “This security company sure is generous...”

His weekly salary was one pound ten soli, which meant six pounds exactly every four weeks. He only earned one additional pound from this additional payment!

And with that salary, he had managed to support his siblings, giving them a decent place to stay and allowing them to eat meat two to three times a week. Every year, they could get a few new clothes!

“Are you doubting me?” Klein deliberately returned with a question.

Benson chuckled. “I doubt you have the ability nor the guts to rob a bank.”

“You aren’t someone who can lie,” Melissa answered seriously after lowering her fork and knife.

*I-I’m now someone used to lying...* Klein immediately felt a little ashamed.

Although it was a result of the circumstances of his reality, his sister’s belief in him left him melancholic.

“It was relatively urgent and important today. I also played a crucial role... which is the reason for the five pounds,” Klein explained.

In a way, what he said was the truth.

As for the five pounds that he would be reimbursed with—the one he would use to join the Divination Club—he planned on concealing it. Firstly, if he brought five pounds home again, he would truly scare his siblings, making them suspect he was doing something illegal. Secondly, he had to save to buy additional materials to practice being a Seer and to grasp more mysticism knowledge.

Benson bit off a mouthful of wheat bread in satisfaction and thought for more than ten seconds.

“The work I’m at doesn’t need any decent clothes. Well, to be precise, the clothes at home are sufficient.”

Without waiting for Klein to persuade him, he suggested, “With this additional income, we would truly have savings. I plan on buying a few books on accountancy and studying. Klein, Melissa, I do not wish that my weekly salary remain below two pounds in five years. Heh, as you know, my boss and manager have shit for brains. Their mouths stink the moment they open them.”

“Excellent idea,” agreed Klein. He also took the opportunity to steer the conversation. “Why don’t you read some of the grammar books in my room? To be truly dignified and to earn a handsome pay, that’s something rather critical.”

*Perhaps, in the times to come, the civil servant examinations will appear in Loen Kingdom. Preparing ahead of time would give him the advantage...*

Benson’s eyes lit up when he heard that.

“I’ve indeed forgotten about that. Here, let’s toast to a beautiful future.”

He did not drink rye beer. Instead, he poured clear oyster soup into three cups and clinked his cup with his siblings'.

After drinking the clear soup, he looked at his sister who was wrestling with the pan-fried fish. He chuckled and said, "Aside from Benson's books, I think Melissa needs a new dress too."

Melissa looked up and shook her head incessantly.

"No, I think it's best..."

"To save it up." Klein finished the sentence for her.

"Yeah." Melissa nodded in agreement.

"In fact, if you do not seek the best fabrics and the newest designs, it would not be too expensive. We can save up the remaining money," said Klein in a manner which did not allow for disagreement.

Benson added, "Melissa, are you planning on wearing the old dress again to Selena's sixteenth birthday bash?"

Selena Wood was Melissa's classmate and good friend. She came from quite a good family background. Her elder brother was a practicing solicitor and her father was a senior employee of Backlund Bank's Tingen branch.

However, the so-called bash was only a dinner invitation to friends where they chatted and played cards.

“Alright.” Melissa lowered her head and mumbled a response. Then, she ruthlessly forked a piece of stewed beef.

After a short silence, she suddenly recalled something and looked up abruptly.

“Mrs. Shaud from next door got her maidservant to send a calling card over. She wishes to make a formal visit on Sunday, at four in the afternoon tomorrow. She wants to get to know her new neighbors.”

“Mrs. Shaud?” Klein looked at his siblings, confounded.

Benson rapped the side of the table with his fingers and appeared to be thinking.

“Mrs. Shaud from 4 Daffodil Street? I met her husband before. He’s a senior solicitor.”

“Senior solicitor... Perhaps he knows Selena’s brother,” said Melissa with some hints of delight.

*We are at 2 Daffodil Street...* Klein nodded slightly.

“It’s imperative we get to know our neighbors, but as you know, I still have to be at the company on Sunday. I only have time off on Monday. Please pass my apologies to Mrs. Shaud.”

With that said, he suddenly recalled the neighbors of his former life when he was young, as well as the neighbors in the apartment from Iron Cross Street. He was amused as he sighed lightly.

“To have formal visits... Shouldn’t neighbors get to know each other through natural interaction?”

“Haha, Klein, that’s because you aren’t aware. You have read a lot of newspapers recently, but you have not broached the magazines catered towards families and middle-aged women. They placed families with an annual income of a hundred to a thousand pounds as middle-class. They promoted it as the framework of the entire kingdom and praised how the middle-class doesn’t have the arrogance of the aristocrats and the wealthy, nor are they as crass as the low-income brackets.”

Benson lightly and happily explained, “These magazines impart many simplified ceremonies which the aristocrats practice in their interactions. As such, it becomes a target of the middle-class. Thus, this results in the differences between intimate calls, semi-formal calls, and formal calls.”

As he spoke, he shook his head and chuckled.

“Typically, gentlemen, madams, and ladies who view themselves in this class will be very particular about details. They will visit their neighbors and friends from two to six in the afternoon. It’s known as a morning call [1].”

“Morning call?” Klein and Melissa asked in surprise.

*Why was a visit from two to six in the afternoon a morning call?*

Benson put down his fork and knife, threw his hands up, and smiled.

“I do not know why either. All I did was read the magazines my

female colleague brought. Yeah, perhaps it's because they wear their morning gowns to make the call..."

Morning gowns were a form of formal attire worn during Mass or gatherings. Later, it was considered as formal attire for the day, different from the formal attire for evening functions.

"Alright. Remember to buy some good coffee powder and tea leaves in the afternoon. Buy some muffins and lemon egg tarts from Mrs. Smyrin. We must not ill-treat our neighbors." Klein chuckled as he dipped his remaining bread into the meat sauces, grabbed some potato and put it into his mouth.

...

The next morning was a Sunday morning.

Klein finished the last mouthful of inferior tea, put down the newspapers, and wore his halved top hat. Picking up his silver-inlaid black cane, he sauntered out the door and took a public carriage to Zouteland Street.

He greeted Rozanne who was planning to sleep in the break room after finishing her night duty. After which, he went all the way down to the basement.

After turning a corner, he met a Nighthawk member, Sleepless Royale Reideen.

She looked like a cold lady. Her brows were long and slender, sitting atop large eyes. Her hair was a silky-smooth black.

“Good morning, Madam Reideen,” Klein greeted with a smile.

Royale used her deep blue eyes to glance at him and nodded indiscernibly in return.

The two quickly passed by each other when Royale stopped and said with her eyes trained forward, “Ritualistic magic is a very dangerous thing.”

Ah... Klein was taken aback. By the time he turned around, all he saw was her departing back.

“Thank you.” He frowned and shouted at Royale Reideen’s back.

After taking a left band, he quickly met Old Neil inside the armory, as well as Bredt who should not have been there.

“Let’s go to my place. I’ve already received the corresponding materials. Bredt has agreed to watch the armory for me,” said Old Neil with a chuckle.

Klein was immediately surprised.

“We aren’t doing it here?”

Old Neil held a silver chest and tutted.

“There’s no space here to practice ritualistic magic.”

Klein did not ask further. He followed Old Neil up to the streets and took a public carriage to the North Borough's suburbs.

Old Neil's place was a bungalow. The garden in front of it was filled with roses, gold mint, and other "materials."

The moment he entered, there was a carpeted foyer. There were two high-back chairs and an umbrella rack.

Through the foyer was an expansive living room. The walls were plastered with light-colored wallpaper. The floors were a dark brown color. In the middle of the room was a tiny carpet with floral imprints and placed above it was a heavy round table.

Surrounding the table were comfortable long benches, single-seaters, and a piano.

"My deceased wife loved music." Old Neil pointed at the piano and mentioned in passing, "The sofa and coffee table are in the bedrooms... Let's do the ritualistic magic in the living room."

"Alright," Klein replied cautiously.

After Old Neil put down the silver chest, he laughed and said, "Let me demonstrate to you ritualistic magic. Make sure to observe and remember the ritual."

As he spoke, he took out a fake goatskin parchment from the chest. It was specially made and it had strange pictures drawn on it with black ink that exuded a serene fragrance.

Klein kept watching and finally discovered that Old Neil was

seemingly, likely, possibly drawing an IOU!

When Old Neil filled in the corresponding field with the number “30” and the corresponding “£” symbol, Klein could not help but ask out of puzzlement and confusion, “Mr. Neil, what kind of ritualistic magic are you doing?”

Old Neil coughed and answered very seriously, “I’ll be using magic to settle that debt of thirty pounds today.”

*You can do that?* Klein’s eyes widened as his mouth gaped.

---

1. The descriptions of calling cards and morning calls are facts regarding socializing in the Victorian era.