

## Chapter 146: Creeping Hunger

“What’s so special about Qilangos’s mystical item?” Audrey asked slightly confidently.

She considered it carefully and suddenly realized that she had a decent ability to locate people in Backlund.

Firstly, her father was one of the most wealthy, connected, and reputable nobles, while she was quite popular amongst the younger generation too. Hence, in the upper-middle class of the society, she had quite a few resources to take advantage of.

Secondly, the two Beyonders that she knew had their own circles as well. Apprentice Fors was originally a clinical doctor, and was now an author. She knew quite a number of people in the literary world and publishing industry, as well as among the middle-class doctors.

Arbiter Xio Derecha had helped many middle-lower class people to coordinate and mediate disputes over a long period of time. She was also quite famous in East Backlund borough among the working class and mafia. She had a lot of hidden channels.

Plus, considering the Beyonders that they knew and their circles of influence, their ability to look for a person wasn’t to be belittled.

Towards Justice’s question, Alger answered almost straightaway without hesitation or thought.

“No one knows the real name of the mystical item, but the

people who have come into contact with it call it the 'Creeping Hunger.' Qilangos uses a living person's soul and flesh to satisfy it every other day. Otherwise, it would consume its owner as a replacement."

"This could be one of the most important clues to seek out Qilangos," Audrey said, creasing her eyebrows.

She felt utter discomfort and extreme hatred towards any evil item that desired a living human's fresh blood and soul.

"Yes, but in a big city with at least five million people, a few vagrants going missing wouldn't be noticed," Alger reminded her. "Ever since he got his hands on the Creeping Hunger, Qilangos has been very difficult to deal with."

"He was originally a Wind-blessed. He possesses great Beyonder power in domains related to water, wind, and the weather. But, later on, people realized that he could drive his targets crazy, enter the dreams of others, summon light to purify a dead soul, sing to strengthen himself, and change his appearance... There's almost nothing that he can't do," Alger described in detail. "We suspect that those are all effects that came from the mystical item, Creeping Hunger..."

Before he finished sharing, Derrick Berg, who had been listening quietly, suddenly blurted, "Shepherd!"

*Shepherd? Sequence 5 of the Secrets Suppliant and Listener pathway? Hmm, among the six-member council in the City of Silver, there is a new elder who's a Shepherd. Sun had mentioned that she's strong enough to fight against a Sequence 4 expert, well—an evil spirit of the same grade... Klein's expression changed slightly, but it was covered by the gray fog. Justice wasn't paying any attention to him either.*

“Shepherd?”

“Shepherd?”

Justice and The Hanged Man asked in unison. One sounded completely confused while the other sounded shocked, as though they had heard the title of Shepherd elsewhere before and knew something about it, but didn't understand the actual situation.

Seeing that everyone was staring at him, Derrick suddenly panicked a little. No matter how quiet, depressed, and vexed he was, he was a boy after all.

He hurriedly explained with a stammer, “What I meant was, the traits that The Hanged Man described were like the Beyonder power of the Sequence job, Shepherd. Every Shepherd can swallow another's soul into their body, including wraiths and evil spirits. They control these souls to do their bidding with a unique method, which allows them to make use of their abilities, just like letting a god's lambs out to graze.

“Hence, no one knows how many powers a Shepherd has. That depends on how many Beyonder souls they have swallowed, and that makes them very scary. They're almost like a High-Sequence Beyonder.

“However, there are people who suspect that for Shepherds there's a limit to the number of souls when Devouring and Grazing, and that the souls inside them could be replaced as well.”

*So that's what being a Shepherd means... The Sequence pathway that the Aurora Order has in its control is enigmatic... No wonder they worship the True Creator, no, the Fallen Creator... Klein was suddenly enlightened, but he didn't nod, taking on the*

appearance that he knew so long ago.

Meanwhile, he sighed inwardly. *Sun, you are a boy after all. This is very important information, very important insight. You could've exchanged it for valuable things, but you just revealed it all! Just like that...*

*Yes, the ability demonstrated by the mystical item Creeping Hunger is similar to a Sequence 5 Shepherd... I wonder if other Sealed Artifacts have the same powers of Beyonders? I wonder which Sequence the Sealed Artifact 2-049, the Antigonus family's puppet, resembles...*

After listening to Sun's explanation, Alger seemed to have sorted out the puzzle in his mind as he nodded in silence.

Audrey got even more curious and pressed, "Which Sequence pathway is Shepherd from? Which number is it?"

"The Secrets Suppliant pathway, Sequence 5." Klein seized the opportunity to answer so as to demonstrate that he knew everything.

"Secrets Suppliant... Aurora Order..." Audrey suddenly recalled Mr. A, who was a suspected Oracle of the Aurora Order, and she immediately felt heavy-hearted.

She started thinking seriously, thinking of what price she could pay in exchange for Mr. Fool to take action and rid off that disgusting fellow effortlessly. However, she couldn't think of anything that would move Mr. Fool into doing so.

*As expected, a figure akin to a god wouldn't be easily moved...*

*There aren't many things and matters that would garner their interest after all...* Audrey sighed.

Putting her impulse aside, she nodded to The Sun gratefully, thanking him for giving them a new perspective on Creeping Hunger, so that they could deal with it more reasonably and efficiently.

“Mr. Hanged Man, I’m willing to accept the mission. But I can’t guarantee if I can find Vice Admiral Hurricane, Qilangos.” Audrey looked opposite her when she spoke.

“There’s no better answer than this. Regardless of your success, as long as you try, I will definitely compensate you with things like secret information or intelligence. And if you succeed, maybe I could provide you the Telepathist’s main ingredients directly. Of course, the prerequisite is that we have to know what it is,” Alger promised generously, which was a rare sight.

“Deal,” Audrey pursed her lips and replied with a faint smile.

Then, Alger created Qilangos’ portrait with Klein’s permission and assistance.

He was one of the seven major pirate admirals. He had a distinctive broad chin, brown hair tied into a bun at the back of his head like an ancient warrior, and green eyes that seemed to hint at laughter, but were abnormally cold..

After they finished their discussion and shared their insights, Klein smiled as he announced the ending of the Gathering. He saw Justice and The Hanged Man get up swiftly from their seats and bow while The Sun mimicked their motions, only slower.

He pressed forward with his right hand and severed the connection, but he didn't leave immediately.

...

In the Berg household in the City of Silver.

Derrick looked at his familiar surroundings and glanced outside at the dark sky that had flashes of lightning. He was momentarily thrown into a trance.

But he soon jolted to his senses. He searched for goatskin and a quill before writing down the Bard formula he memorized.

He looked at it several times and was finally certain that there was nothing wrong with it.

Derrick wasn't worried that possessing the Bard formula and becoming a different Beyonder would gain the suspicion of the upper echelons of the City of Silver. This was because in past exploratory expeditions, members of those elite troops would often collect some formulas, ingredients, and strange artifacts from the monsters in the abandoned and destroyed cities.

During this process, it was normal that people kept some of the loot privately. As long as it didn't involve anything too important, the captains and higher-ups would tacitly overlook it.

Over time, some formulas started going around through non-official channels within the City of Silver. Some became the foundation of strong families from generation to generation. The Things of the Dark surrounding the City of Silver were relatively fixed. Some ingredients could be obtained easily while some

could only be encountered if one went far into the cursed land.

Putting aside the goatskin, Derrick recalled the mysterious Fool's instructions. Hence, in his simple bedroom, he lowered his head and simply prayed,

"The Fool that doesn't belong to this era."

"The mysterious ruler above the gray fog."

"The King of Yellow and Black who wields good luck."

...

Jotun was a very ancient language. It came equipped with the mystical properties demanded by rituals, prayers, and spell casting; therefore, Derrick didn't need to change the incantations into ancient Hermes.

...

"The Fool that doesn't belong to this era."

...

Klein, who was seated at the seat of honor at the long bronze table, suddenly heard prayers reverberating in his ears. He then saw the crimson star that corresponded to Sun blinking.

He didn't try to touch it, but planned to reply to him ten minutes before the next Gathering so that the City of Silver youth would make preparations to be alone.

The most important part was for him to evade the conversion of time and date, to decrease the possibility of damaging Fool's mighty image.

After he confirmed that, Klein wrapped himself up with spirituality and stimulated a descent.

Returning to his room, Klein removed the spirituality wall and took a break before he got ready to head out again.

It wasn't necessary for him to play the role of a Seer, and he didn't have to fix his trip to the Divination Club into his daily schedule. He would only visit occasionally to make some extra pocket money and fulfill his supervision as a Nighthawk.

Originally, Klein wanted to laze around through the entire afternoon, but he suddenly thought of something that he had yet to do. So, he had no choice but to gather himself up. According to his appointment, he had to pay Detective Henry a visit that day and accept the final report about the red chimney investigation.

*Sigh. I've heard that the big timers are all quite busy... I still have to spare some time to go to the Tingen Family Servant Assistance Association with Benson and Melissa to look for a good maidservant...* Klein unwillingly changed his shirt, put on his black tuxedo, and held his silk top hat and silver-inlaid cane before walking out the door like a gentleman.

At Besik Street, under Henry's Private Detective Company, Klein put on a mask and lowered his hat as he went across the street quickly and entered the stairway.