

Chapter 73: First Battle

Under the illumination of the afternoon sun, Klein in his dust-coated clothes quickly twisted his revolver's barrel to remove his self-imposed safety. He went into a shooting stance, allowing the light to reflect from the brass body of the revolver.

He held the revolver with one hand, and moved his other arm, cautiously paying attention to anything that could happen around him.

At the same time, he was a little worried for Captain Dunn and Mr. Aiur Harson. After all, both were Nightmare Beyonders who specialized in influencing the enemy from the shadows. He did not know if they were adept at direct combat.

Just as Klein was having these considerations, Aiur Harson slowed down, his expression becoming serene and peaceful.

He opened his mouth and recited a peaceful poem, one that seemed to place a person into the night.

“When once the sun sinks in the west,

“And dewdrops pearl the evening’s breast;

“Almost as pale as moonbeams are,

“Or its companionable star,

“The evening primrose opens anew

“Its delicate blossoms to the dew;

“And, hermit-like, shunning the light [1]”

...

The recital reverberated around them. Klein nearly lost his tense feelings and completely relaxed.

He was lucky that he had experienced something similar before and was not facing Aiur Harson. Thus, he quickly collected himself and entered a half-cogitative state to combat the influence of the poem.

Phew... He let out a sigh of relief. He no longer had any doubts about Dunn's and Aiur's direct combat abilities.

As he had only advanced recently and still did not have a deep understanding of Sequence potions, Klein had forgotten that the Sequence 7 Nightmare was the advancement of Sequence 8 Midnight Poet. They could keep whatever abilities they had before and, in fact, enjoy a small increase in their abilities.

The impression Klein had of Midnight Poets all came from Leonard Mitchell. He knew that this “job” inherited the unique traits of a Sleepless. They were good at combat, shooting, climbing, and sensing. They were also adept in influencing the living creatures around them through the use of various poems. In simpler terms, they were violent poets.

While Aiur was reciting his poem, the large wooden crates stacked up around them seemed to suddenly ripple like water. A man wearing a black tuxedo and halved top hat appeared.

But this man's face was painted in three pastel colors—red, yellow, and white. The sides of his lips were arched high like a clown, forming a ridiculous contrast with his formal wear that was suitable for joining an evening banquet.

Thud! Thud! Thud! The black-haired Lorotta who had been introduced as a sharpshooter charged forward quickly. She had a gun in one hand and had clenched the other into a fist. She made it within inches of the suited clown in a few steps.

The suited clown seemed to be affected by Aiur Harson's poem. His body was swaying, and he had a peaceful expression in his eyes. He did not have any desire to retaliate.

Lorotta tilted her body with a boxing maneuver as she pulled back her fist, then punched toward the suited clown's face.

Bang!

The air crackled as the suited clown shattered suddenly like a mirror, pieces quickly evaporating and vanishing into thin air.

At this moment, the suited clown quickly appeared once again in the shadows of the wooden crates a few steps away. The suited clown's figure outline quickly appeared again.

The person under the influence of the poem was only an illusion! It was a performance!

The suited clown grinned again. It had a comical look as he pressed down on his halved top hat with one hand and pointed a finger gun with the other.

Bang!

The sound of a shot rang from the finger gun. Lorotta fell to the left and rolled on the floor, dodging the attack.

But nothing had happened, except for the fake gunshot.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Dunn and Aiur each lifted their guns and fired steadily. The suited clown dodged adeptly, sometimes to the right and left, sometimes rolling on the ground. It was as if he was an acrobat act in a circus.

Suddenly, Lorotta surprisingly charged forward again. Despite being called a sharpshooter, she was still using her fists.

Bam!

The suited clown could not dodge the attack in time and could only lift his left arm to block the fist.

Seeing the clown stop, Dunn and Aiur did not hesitate to each take aim and pulled the trigger.

At this moment, the arm that the suited clown used to block Lorotta's fist ignited with an orange-yellow flame.

In an instant, the flame enveloped the suited clown and spread towards Lorotta.

Bang! Bang! Dunn and Aiur fired their revolvers, hitting the ball of flame.

The flames burned rapidly and soon, all that was left were black ashes floating in the sky. But the suited clown once again appeared behind the stack of wooden crates close by.

He lifted his right hand and pointed a finger gun once again.

Bang!

Amid the illusory gunshot, Lorotta suddenly stopped in her tracks. She did not charge forward. Mud was splattering in front of her as a bullet appeared.

The suited clown was no longer delivering an illusion with this strike!

It was hard to discern real from fake, reality from illusion.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

The suited clown shot at Dunn and Aiur repeatedly while hiding away and appearing at random times.

Upon seeing this, Lorotta squinted and lifted the dull gold revolver in her left hand.

Bang!

The suited clown suddenly squatted down, avoiding the fatal shot. His halved top hat was sent flying backward, falling to the ground. The bullet had left a visible scorch mark on the hat.

After rolling a few times on the floor, the suited clown scaled the stacks of wooden crates with the agility of a monkey. He shot air bullets out of his finger gun from the high ground.

Aiur Hanson took a few steps back and lowered his gun. He began his recital once again.

“Wastes its fair bloom upon the night,

“Who, blindfold to its fond caresses,

“Knows not the beauty it possesses.”

...

The suited clown jumped repeatedly between the crates. He suddenly raised his hand to scratch his ears and looked at Aiur with a comical smile.

Could he have stuffed his ears? The Sequence potion that the Secret Order possesses sure is weird... Klein observed the fight from far away as he made silent guesses.

Just as his thoughts flashed through him, he suddenly saw a figure appear at the top of a warehouse beside him.

Furthermore, it was running straight inside where Ray Bieber was hiding.

That figure was dressed in a grayish-white uniform, one which workers at the docks wore. His face also appeared to be painted red, yellow, and white.

The suited clown is responsible for distracting Captain and the rest while the other person retrieved the diary? Klein instinctively raised his right hand and shot at the figure on the roof.

He had just taken aim when the figure suddenly squatted, switching from running to rolling on the ground.

Bang!

Klein did not stop pulling the trigger. He saw the figure suddenly pause, blood blooming in a spurt.

The figure looked at him in shock. While bearing the pain, he continued charging into the warehouse.

That felt like a lucky shot... Klein twitched his lips and pulled the trigger once again. This time, the bullet hit the wooden roof beside the figure.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Leonard and Borgia also shot but did not hit the figure.

Klein wanted to criticize how terrible their shooting skills were

as compared to his when he suddenly stopped pulling the trigger.

That's right! Why must we stop him?

Didn't I divine that there is grave danger in the warehouse just now? Wouldn't it be great if we let that guy be the vanguard and step on the land mine for us?

Leonard and that Mr. Borgia must have had the same idea...

With this thought, Klein lifted the barrel of his revolver and shot at the sky.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

As the gunshots rang, the figure managed to reach the innermost region of the warehouse unobstructed.

He lunged downwards, slamming into the roof as he fell down with the collapsing roof.

Immediately following the commotion, the black-haired Lorotta's eyes suddenly turned black. Her left hand began making a strange pulling action.

The suited clown's jumping actions suddenly came to a pause as his ankle seemed to be grasped tightly by an invisible hand.

Dunn did not shoot immediately and instead pointed his revolver downward.

He opened his mouth and by simply using his spirituality to resonate the air around him, he produced a strange, faint and ethereal voice without the use of his throat.

“Thus it blooms on while night is by;

“When day looks out with open eye,

“Bashed at the gaze it cannot shun,

“It faints and withers and is gone.”

...

The suited clown suddenly became limp, as if he had lost the desire to live.

Aiur Harson lifted his handgun and took aim, his finger pulling the trigger immediately.

In that split second, there was an abnormal and tragic wail that came from the warehouse.

“Ah!”

The cry contained immense fear as though he had encountered an unimaginably terrifying matter.

The hair on Klein’s body stood on end. The tragic cries came to a

sudden stop as silence was restored in the deepest parts of the warehouse. It was a skin-crawling silence.

Bang!

Affected by the cry, Aiur only managed to shoot the suited clown in the belly.

Haaa... Haaa... Haaa! The silence was once again broken from the deepest depths of the warehouse. What should have been soft panting sounded. It reached a crescendo that tightened everyone's nerves.

Thump! Thump! Thump! Thump! Thump! Thump!

Inside the black chest, 2-049 had reached a frenzied state.

1. Adapted from John Clare's *Evening Primrose*.