

Chapter 29: “Jobs” and Rentals Are Serious Business

Klein tried his best to remain his usual self as he asked with genuine interest, “What abilities do Seers have?”

“Your question is inaccurate; the question should be, ‘what abilities does consuming the Seer potion give?’” Dunn Smith shook his head and chuckled. His gray pupils and face turned away from the moon as his features hid in the shadows. “There are many kinds of things involved—astromancy, cartomancy, spiritual pendulums, and scrying. Of course, it does not mean that consuming the potion will immediately allow you to grasp all of them. The potion only equips you with the qualifications and ability to learn it.

“As they lack direct means of fighting enemies, heh. You can probably imagine that setting up a magical ritual requires a lot of preparation. It’s not suitable for combat. Therefore, in terms of knowledge of mysticism, a Seer will be more learned and professional than a Mystery Pryer.”

It sounds like it matches my requirements as well... However, the lack of means to directly deal with enemies is quite a dilemma... Furthermore, the Church of Evernight likely doesn’t have the subsequent Sequences... The Holy Cathedral likely refers to the headquarters, the Cathedral of Serenity... The means available to low-Sequence Beyonders against their enemies might not be comparable to firearms... Klein fell into deep thought as he racked his brains. He kept going back and forth between Mystery Pryers and Seers. He no longer considered Corpse Collector.

Dunn Smith smiled when he saw this.

“You don’t have to rush into a decision. Tell me your answer Monday morning. Regardless of your choice of Sequence or giving up this opportunity, none of us from the Nighthawks would have any other thoughts on the matter.

“Calm down and ask your heart.”

With that said, he took off his hat and bowed slightly. He slowly walked past Klein and headed for the stairwell.

Klein did not say a word and did not immediately reply. He silently bowed and watched as Dunn left.

Although he was constantly hoping to become a Beyonder previously, he was thrown into a dilemma when the opportunity arose; the subsequent missing Sequences, Beyonders having the risk of losing control, the believability of Emperor Roselle’s diaries, and the illusory murmurs that could corrupt people into madness all mixed together and formed a moat that obstructed his advancement.

He took a deep breath and slowly breathed out.

“No matter how bad it is, it can’t be worse than making an eighteen-year-old high-school student decide on his future career...” Klein gave a self-deprecating chuckle. Gathering his scattered thoughts, he opened the door softly and laid back on the bed.

He laid there with his eyes open, silently looking at the bottom of the top bunk that was dyed with the faint crimson of the moon.

A drunkard staggered outside the window as a carriage sped

down the empty streets. These noises did not break the serenity of the night but instead made it even darker and more distant.

Klein's emotions settled down as he recalled his past on Earth. He recalled how he liked exercising, his father who always spoke loudly, his mother who enjoyed busying herself despite having a chronic disease, his friends who grew up with him, going from playing sports like soccer and basketball to games and mahjong, as well as the person he made a failed confession to... These were like a silent river; it did not have many ripples or deep sentimental feelings, but it silently drowned his heart.

Perhaps one will only learn to cherish things after they have lost them. When the crimson receded and the sky turned golden-yellow from the flaming ball's illumination, Klein had made his choice.

...

He got out of bed and headed to the public bathroom to wash his face to wake himself up. Then, he took a one-soli note to Mrs. Wendy's to buy eight pounds of rye bread with nine pence, replenishing the staple food that had been consumed the previous night.

"The price of bread has begun stabilizing..." He commented after breakfast as Benson changed.

It was Sunday, so both he and Melissa finally had the chance to rest.

Klein, who was already in proper attire, was sitting on a chair and flipping through the outdated newspapers he brought back from yesterday. He said in surprise, "There's a house for rent here: North Borough's 3 Wendel Street, a bungalow with two

floors. There are six bedrooms, three bathrooms, and two big balconies upstairs. Downstairs, there's a dining hall, a living room, a kitchen, two bathrooms, and two guest rooms, as well as an underground cellar... In front of the house are two acres of private land and there's a small garden behind. It can be rented for one, two, or three years, with a weekly rent of one pound six soli. Those interested can head to Champagne Street and look for Mr. Gusev."

"That's our goal for the future." Benson wore his black halved top hat as he smiled to say, "The rent for the places in newspapers is usually a little too expensive. The Tingen City Housing Improvement Company has options that do not pale in comparison to that for cheaper."

"Why are we not searching in the Tingen Housing Improvement Association for the Working Class?" Melissa walked out from her room holding an old, veiled hat. She had changed into a grayish-white long dress that had been mended several times.

She was silent and introverted, but that could not mask her youthfulness.

Benson laughed.

"Where did you hear of the Tingen Housing Improvement Association for the Working Class? Jenny? Mrs. Rochelle? Or is it from your good friend Selena?"

Melissa looked to the side and whispered a reply, "Mrs. Rochelle... While washing up last night, I happened to meet her. She asked me about Klein's interview and I told her roughly what happened. Then, she suggested I find the Tingen Housing Improvement Association for the Working Class."

Benson noticed Klein's puzzled expression and shook his head in amusement.

"They are targeted at the poor. Well, a precise description is that they are a housing association for the lower strata of society. They build and renovate houses that basically have communal bathrooms. They only provide three choices—a single, double or triple bedroom. Do you wish to continue living in such an environment?

"The Tingen City Housing Improvement Company is in the same business as them, but they also provide choices for the lower-middle class. To be honest, we are a little better than the lower-middle class, but we are still quite worse off than true middle-class families. It's not a matter of salary; it's just that we did not have the time to save up."

Klein came to a realization as he put away the newspaper. Picking up his top hat, he stood up.

"Then, let's set off."

"I remember that the Tingen City Housing Improvement Company is on Daffodil Street," Benson said as he opened the door. "They are like the Tingen Housing Improvement Association for the Working Class, known as Five Percent Charities. Do you know why?"

"I don't know." Klein raised his cane and walked to Melissa's side.

The girl with black hair that reached down her back nodded.

Benson headed out and said, "These kinds of housing improvement associations or companies were established as a result of Backlund. They are funded in three ways: One, by requesting donations from charitable foundations. Two, through funding proposals. They receive grants from the government's commission at a special rate of 4%. Third, through investments. By taking a portion of the rent received, they will give their investors 5% returns. That's why they are called Five Percent Charities."

The siblings went down the stairs and slowly walked toward Daffodil Street. They decided to confirm a place before talking to their present landlord, Mr. Franky. They did not want to be in a situation where they were forced to move when they had no place to stay.

"I heard from Selena that there are housing improvement companies that are purely run as charities?" Melissa asked in thought.

Benson chuckled.

"There are, such as the Deweyville Trust which Sir Deweyville donated money to establish. He builds apartments targeted for the working class. He also provides dedicated estate management personnel while only charging rather low rent. However, the criteria for applying is very strict."

"It sounds like you aren't fond of the idea?" Klein acutely sensed it as he asked with a smile.

"No, I respect Sir Deweyville a lot, but I'm certain he does not know what true poverty is. Staying in his apartment is like a priest giving hope. It's not very pragmatic. For instance, tenants have to receive the main vaccines and they have to take turns cleaning the bathroom. They are unable to sublease their

apartments or use it for commercial activities. They aren't allowed to throw their rubbish wantonly and children are prevented from playing in the corridors. Goddess, does he wish to make everyone ladies and gentlemen?" Benson answered in his usual tone.

Klein creased his brows in doubt.

"Doesn't sound problematic. Those are all very reasonable criteria."

"Yeah." Melissa nodded in agreement.

Benson cocked his head and looked at them before chuckling.

"Perhaps I have protected both of you too well that you have not seen actual poverty. Do you think they would have the money for the main vaccines? The line for free charitable organization sets them back three months.

"Do you think their work is stable and not temporary? If they cannot sublet parts of their apartment to receive some extra income, are they to move out when they lose their jobs? Besides, many ladies mend clothes or make match boxes at home to maintain their livelihood. Those are included as commercial activities. Are you going to chase them all out?"

"Most of the poor use all their efforts to survive. Do you think they have the time to discipline their children and stop them from running along the corridors? Perhaps they can only be locked at home until they're old enough, then sending them to places that accept child labor when they are around seven or eight years old."

Ben did not use many adjectives to describe the matter; it caused Klein to shudder a little.

This was how people from low socioeconomic classes lived?

Beside him, Melissa fell into silence. It took a long while before she said in an ethereal tone,

“Jenny no longer wished for me to visit her after she moved to the Lower Street.”

“Let’s hope her father gets back on his feet after that injury and finds a stable job. However, I have seen too many alcoholics use alcohol to numb themselves...” Benson laughed with a somber tone.

Klein was at a loss for words. Melissa seemed to be the same. As such, the siblings walked silently down Daffodil Street and found Tingen City Housing Improvement Company.

The person who served them was a middle-aged man with an amiable smile. He did not wear a formal attire or a hat, but instead, wore a white shirt and black vest.

“You can call me Scarter. Might I know what kind of house you have in mind?” When he caught a glance at Klein’s silver-inlaid cane, his smile widened.

Klein looked at Benson, who was better with words, and gestured for him to answer.

Benson directly answered, “A terrace house.”

Scarter flipped through the files and documents in his hand before smiling.

“There are currently five that haven’t been rented out. To be honest, we are geared more to serving customers—laborers and their children who have housing difficulties where six, eight, or even ten or twelve people squeeze into a house. There aren’t many terrace houses. There’s one at 2 Daffodil Street, one in the North Borough, one in the East Borough... The weekly rent goes from 12 to 16 soli. You can take a look at the detailed introductions here.”

He handed over a document to Benson, Klein, and Melissa.

After reading through it, the siblings exchanged looks and pointed to the same spot on the piece of paper simultaneously.

“Let’s take a look at 2 Daffodil Street first,” said Benson. Klein and Melissa nodded in response.

This place was a district they were familiar with.