

Chapter 97: Combat Teacher

At two in the afternoon, outside of a simple two-storied building that was in disrepair at the outskirts of the North Borough.

Klein, who was in his probationary inspector uniform, looked at the weed-filled garden and the vines that had crept up the walls. He turned his head in surprise.

“My combat instructor lives here?”

Shouldn't a combat artist who was selected by the Nighthawks be exceptional...

Leonard Mitchell, who had guided Klein there, snickered and said, “Don't underestimate Mr. Gawain because of his residence's surroundings. Although he was never conferred an aristocratic title, he was a true knight back in the day.”

Having said that, the poetic Nighthawk, who was dressed in a white shirt, black trousers, and buttonless leather boots suddenly felt melancholic.

“He was active during the waning era of the knights. The warriors donning their armors would storm through enemy ranks despite the gunfire and cannon fire, destroying their enemies and redefining the battle lines. But alas, they were quickly met with the invention of the high-pressure steam guns and six-barrel machine guns. From then on, the knights had to gradually step down.

“Mr. Gawain met the same fate. More than twenty years ago, the

Awwa Knights' Order of Chivalry faced the most advanced weaponry of the Intis Republic army... Sigh, every time I recall this, it seems like I'm touching the dust heaps of history. The poet in me stirs when thinking of this irreversible and fated destiny, but alas, I do not know how to compose the poem."

...Then what's the point in saying so much? Klein acted oblivious to Leonard's self-deprecation and gave a serious suggestion, "My university schoolmate once told me that the composing of poems requires a certain degree of talent. It's best you start by reading the Classical Poems Anthology of the Loen Kingdom."

Leonard's mood changed on a whim. He replied with a light-hearted tone, "I purchased that book a long time ago, as well as other titles, such as the Selected Poems of Roselle. I will work hard to become a true Midnight Poet, Mr. Seer"

Is he hinting at the... acting method? Klein replied, as though he couldn't understand him, "You would still need books on grammar."

"Alright, let's enter." Leonard extended his hand and pushed open the half-closed metallic gates. The two of them then followed the path towards the house.

They were still a distance away from the house when Klein saw a tall man walking out from behind the main door.

He had short blond hair, his brows already laced with white hairs. His facial features looked like they had been ravaged through age, his wrinkles were etched deep across his face.

"What are you doing here?" the aged man asked in a deep voice.

“Mr. Gawain, as per your contract with the police department, this probationary inspector will be learning the art of combat under your guidance,” Leonard explained with a smile.

“Combat? There’s no need to study combat in this era.” Gawain looked at Klein with turbid eyes and said in a dead voice, “You should learn how to draw your gun and shoot. You should master the most advanced weaponry.”

Was this the psychological trauma caused by the six-barrel machine guns and high-pressure steam guns? Klein didn’t give a reckless reply; instead, he smiled and looked at Leonard.

“The art of combat is still a skill a policeman has to master. Most of the criminals we face are not those who must be executed on the spot. Some might not even have weapons. In that case, we have to rely on combat techniques,” Leonard said, obviously prepared for the situation.

With a dark expression, Gawain fell silent for more than ten seconds before saying, “Throw a punch.”

He was speaking to Klein.

Klein, who was not holding his cane, remembered the boxing matches he had seen in his previous life. He raised his arm and threw it forward.

Gawain’s lips twitched indiscernibly. He thought for a moment and said, “Kick.”

Tilting to the side slightly and twisting his hips, Klein tightened his thigh muscles and kicked forward with his right foot.

Cough... Gawain covered his mouth and cleared his throat. He looked at Leonard and said, "I will honor my contract. But based on his foundation, he needs to come here four times a week, three hours each time, for the first month."

"You're the combat expert. It's up to you." Leonard nodded without hesitation. He smiled and said to Klein, "See you at dinner."

After Leonard walked out the metallic gates, Klein asked out of curiosity, "Instructor, how should I begin practicing? Punching, or footwork?"

As a qualified keyboard warrior, he understood the importance of footwork in combat.

Gawain stood akimbo as he shook his head lethargically.

"What you need now is strength training.

"See those? Those are two dumbbells made of steel. They shall be your partners for today.

"Other than that, you also have to practice deep squats, running, and rope-skipping. Let us take those one set at a time."

While Klein was still in a daze, Gawain suddenly raised his voice and said sternly, "Understood?"

"Understood!" At this moment, Klein felt as though he had returned to military training and was facing an inhumane instructor.

“Change out of your clothes. There’s a set of knight’s training clothes on the sofa.” Gawain suddenly sighed. He turned around and walked toward the black steel dumbbells.

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Six in the evening, at a corner table of the Old Will Restaurant.

Other than Frye, who was guarding Chanis Gate, all the members of the Blackthorn Security Company were present. There were six Nighthawks and five civilian staff.

A white tablecloth was draped over the long table. Waiters carried over plates of food, portioned them before serving them to each individual guest.

Klein saw steaks drenched in black pepper sauce. He saw bacon, sausages paired with mashed potatoes, egg puddings, asparagus, and specialty cheeses. He even saw rose-colored champagne. However, he had no appetite. The training in the afternoon had nearly made him vomit.

Noticing the pale, newly-inducted Nighthawk with turbid eyes, Dunn raised the glass of red wine in front of him and laughed.

“Let us welcome our newest official member, Klein Moretti, cheers!”

The cold and introverted black-haired lady, Royale Reideen, the Sleepless Kenley White, the sloppy Leonard Mitchell, as well as the white-haired, black-eyed Midnight Poet Seeka Tron all raised their cups and looked at the new member of their team.

Klein fought back the discomfort of the training and raised his glass of amber champagne. He stood and said, "Thank you."

He clinked glasses with every Nighthawk, tilted his head back, and finished the small amount of champagne.

"Is our Miss Author not going to say something on this occasion?" Dunn smiled as he looked at Seeka Tron.

Seeka Tron was a lady in her thirties. She had average looks, but had an exceptional demeanor, one that was quiet and serene. Coupled with her few strands of graying hair, it added a unique charm to her.

Klein had heard Old Neil mention that this Midnight Poet had taken on a side job as an author and had attempted to submit her works to newspapers and magazines. Unfortunately, only a few smaller newspapers had accepted them.

Seeka smiled and looked at Dunn.

"In order to make the term 'Miss Author' into a reality, Captain, I think you should give me some funds to self-publish my work."

Dunn laughed.

"You should learn from Old Neil and give me a more suitable reason."

"I'm most impressed with Mr. Neil in this department!" Rozanne echoed in-between her mouthfuls of roast mutton.

Amidst the chatter and laughter, Leonard looked at Klein and said with a chuckle, "Are you so tired that you have no appetite to eat?"

"Yeah." Klein sighed.

"If you haven't touched your food yet, I can be of assistance." Leonard acted as though he didn't want to waste any food.

Klein didn't mind. He nodded and said, "That wouldn't be an issue."

And with that, a good portion of the food in front of him was eaten by Leonard and the rest.

Nearing the end of the dinner, the waiters served plates of beef pudding and ice-cream.

Klein tasted ice-cream and found it cold and sweet. It was particularly appetizing.

Before he realized it, he had finished the ice-cream drizzled with a blueberry sauce.

And as a result of this, he started to feel the hunger pangs. It was a hunger which demanded recharging food that came after intense exertion.

Swallowing his saliva, Klein looked to the front, only to see that all the plates were empty. There were no leftovers.

“Let’s end the dinner here, and give Klein a final toast,” Dunn suggested.

Before finishing his sentence, Klein asked, “Captain, may I order another plate of food?”

The group fell silent after hearing such a request, only to break out into chuckles moments later.

“Haha, you’ve finally recovered. No problem, order two plates if you want to.” Dunn shook his head and laughed.

While patiently waiting an unbearable amount of time, Klein heard his stomach growling.

Finally, a freshly prepared black pepper steak was served before him.

His fork and knife danced as Klein finished the medium-done steak in ninety seconds, tears nearly falling from his eyes. The meat juices and the fragrance of the sauce lingered in his mouth.

Sometime later, Klein let out a satisfied sigh as he looked at his empty plate. He put down his knife and fork and took a sip of his champagne.

“Waiter, the bill please.” Dunn turned around and called for the waiter.

The waiter went to the counter, then returned with the check. He gave a thorough breakdown,

“You opened five bottles of Desi Champagne, each bottle being twelve soli and three pence, a small glass of Southville Red Wine for ten pence... Each black pepper beef steak was one soli two pence... Each serving of beef pudding was six pence, the servings of ice cream was one soli each... The total would be five pounds, nine soli, and six pence.”

Five pounds, nine soli, and six pence? That's nearly my weekly salary! A restaurant is indeed much more expensive than eating at home! Klein clicked his tongue upon hearing that. He felt lucky that the Captain had said that he didn't need to pay out of his own pocket. They had some petty cash from bonus earnings!

He calculated the cost carefully and noticed that the most expensive portion of the meal was the alcohol. Five bottles of champagne had cost more than three pounds!

This is no different from Earth... Klein secretly rubbed his stomach and forced down the last of his champagne.

...

The next morning, Klein felt bloated. He tried to get off the bed in his sleepy stupor.

Just as he exerted strength, he was instantly awakened by his aching muscles. He felt as though his body wasn't under his control.

“What a familiar feeling... It's the same as that day after we got punished with frog jumps. Today is a rest day, but I still have to pay a visit to my mentor and see if I can borrow the monograph on the Hornacis main peak from the library at the University...” Klein's lips twitched as he made his way outside with some effort.

He wanted to draw a gasp with every step.

“Klein, what happened to you?” Melissa, who had just come out of the bathroom, sized up her brother suspiciously for his odd posture and slow movement.