

## **Chapter 34: Advance Payment**

In an underground basement without any windows, the burly Alger Wilson sat by a long table with various apparatuses and goatskin parchments on it.

In front of him was a half-consumed candle. The dim, yellowish flame's flickering made the shadows of the objects and table move like a mirage.

Alger's hair was disheveled like seaweed with a deep blue color that resembled black. He wore a robe with lightning patterns embroidered on it. He clasped his hands with his thumbs facing each other while he focused on a bottle of black liquid to the left of the candle.

*Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!*

*Splash! Splash! Splash!*

The sound of tempestuous winds or the crashing of the sea waves howled from inside the sealed bottle. And in spots where the black ink did not sink, a faint fog would swirl. It was as though it grew eyes and a mouth.

Alger cocked his head to glance at the clock hanging on the wall and watched the needle strike three.

He pressed down on his temple as his eyes turned dark. Fascinating colors surfaced from the various items on the table.

At that moment, he discovered a deep-red light appear like a tidal wave from nowhere, drowning him instantly!

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Backlund, Empress Borough, Inside the Hall family's luxurious mansion.

After dismissing her dance teacher, Audrey locked the door and sat straight up in front of her dressing table.

The sun outside was bright and gorgeous. There was a light-brown notebook made of exquisite goat skin. It was flipped open to reveal that it was blank. To its right was a fountain pen with a golden tip and embedded rubies.

Audrey did a test and made sure that she could pick up the fountain pen and write down the formula the moment she left the Gathering.

"I'm so looking forward to it..." She inhaled to repress her excited emotions as she looked at the mirror with puckered lips.

However, she did not see it reflect herself. Instead, a dark red and illusory beam burst out from her body!

...

Above the gray fog stood a majestic divine hall that looked like a giant's residence.

Dark red colors bloomed on both sides of the bronze table. They surged upwards like a fountain before pattering down. It ‘carved’ two blurry figures who sat in the same spots as before.

Audrey, with her soft blond hair and tall, slim build, instinctively looked towards the Seat of Honor. She saw the figure immersed in thick gray fog sitting back. One hand was flat, touching the table’s side while the other hand was stroking his chin.

“Good afternoon, Mr. Fool~!” Audrey shouted with a cheery voice.

Following that, she turned her head and looked at the person opposite her. With the same tone, she said, “Good afternoon, Mr. Hanged Man~!”

*This lady sure is unsophisticated. Is she so sure that I’m a good person? Why isn’t there any fear from her? Is she a noble lady who has been protected well?* Klein smiled and maintained his unfathomable image.

“Good afternoon, Miss Justice.”

As he spoke, he lowered his head slightly and moved his left hand and tapped his glabella twice.

What he saw changed instantly. He saw Justice and The Hanged Man emit the colors of their aura!

And the surrounding gray fog and dark red stars remained the same. Nothing that seemingly did not exist or lustrous brilliances that possessed life was seen.

He shifted his gaze and saw that Justice's aura perfectly matched the colors Old Neil described. What was supposed to be red, purple, blue, or white were their respective colors. Furthermore, they maintained a lustrous brilliance and were of appropriate thickness. It was easy to tell that she was a vibrant young girl.

*The colors of her emotions are red and yellow. That's joy, zeal, and excitement... Klein made a judgment before casting his attention towards The Hanged Man.*

Like Justice, there was nothing special about the colors of The Hanged Man's aura. His emotions were blue mixed in with some orange.

*Calm, thoughtful, careful, and a little pleased?* With this being his first attempt, Klein made a conclusion without much confidence.

Just as he shifted his gaze away, he suddenly realized something strange.

The aura of the Hanged Man's innermost layer was nearly of the same color!

Klein focused his mind and took another careful look. He could faintly see that deep within The Hanged Man's Ether Body was a deep blue, akin to the sea. It felt like a tidal storm.

*His Astral Projection? Or should I say the surface of his Astral Projection? From the looks of it, he's really a Beyonder, and one that's apparently stronger than Old Neil.* Klein analyzed as his mind was filled with questions. "Not necessary. It might have to do with this being a unique environment. It's only because this is my home ground that I'm able to see these things that Old Neil did not manifest."

He turned his head toward Justice again and confirmed that it was a characteristic only Beyonders possessed.

At that moment, Alger also completed his greetings.

Audrey drew a light gasp as she asked in anticipation, “Mr. Hanged Man, did you receive the box of Ghost Shark blood?”

Alger took a look at Klein and saw him tapping his glabella as though he was considering other matters.

“Thank you very much. It perfectly met my expectations. I never expected you to send it to me so quickly. The Ghost Shark blood is not the typical extraordinary creature,” said Alger frankly.

Audrey smiled humbly and said, “I’m very happy to see this outcome.”

As she loved anything to do with mystery from a young age, she had befriended those in aristocratic circles with similar interests. They have exchanged information, books, and rare artifacts among each other. But before this, none of them had ever obtained any supernatural power to become a real Beyonder. Instead, there were a few princes that hinted that they could gift her what she wanted if she became their princess consort.

However, she had obtained the Ghost Shark blood directly from her family’s vault. After all, the inventory only states ‘one big bottle,’ without mentioning how many milliliters or how full it had to be, she believed that pouring a little bit of it would go unnoticed. Even if there was an accident and the matter was exposed, her parents were unlikely to pursue the matter.

Alger looked deeply at The Fool who was enveloped in fog before turning his head back with a smile.

“According to our agreement, I will tell you the formula to the potion, Spectator.”

“Let me prepare myself. Alright, begin.” Audrey inhaled as she focused her full attention.

“Low-Sequence potions are very easy to concoct. Just follow the order that I provide you. Do remember that there can be smaller quantities of the ingredients but not more. It would cause major problems. You should have heard about news of Beyonders losing control. I believe there’s no need for me to repeat it?” Alger first mentioned things to take note of.

Audrey nodded gently and said, “I understand completely.”

While she spoke, she turned her head to look at Mr. Fool. She wished to know if the mystery expert had anything to add; unfortunately, The Fool was sitting silently there like a statue.

Alger thought for a moment before saying, “Having smaller quantities does not mean it should deviate by too much... If you do not have an assistant, I suggest you spend some time familiarizing yourself with chemistry experiments.”

“I have a family tutor for such matters,” answered Audrey without feeling the burden.

After Alger mentioned the furthest extent of the deviation, he recited with great fluency, “Spectator. Sequence 9 potion. 80 milliliters of pure water. 5 drops of autumn crocus essence. 13

grams of cow teeth paeonol powder. 7 petals of elf flowers. A matured Manhal Fish's eyeball. Add 35 milliliters of goat-horned black fish blood.

"The final two items are the main ingredients. They are extraordinary creatures from the sea. You have to be careful."

"Alright." Audrey recalled and repeated, "80 milliliters of pure water. 5 drops of autumn crocus essence, 13 grams of cow teeth..."

"Paeonol powder," reminded Alger.

With his help, Audrey gradually and precisely memorized the formula's order. However, she appeared worried as she mumbled it again and again.

"Do you know about Cogitation?" When Alger saw Justice nod, he continued, "I do not know how much you know about Cogitation. Let me describe it once... After consuming the potion, quickly begin Cogitation to control your spirituality and energy... Make sure to practice every day to truly grasp the powers of the potion. Dig out the meaning it symbolizes and even more of its mysteries. That way, you can avoid the danger of losing control to the greatest extent. And the meaning of a potion mainly lies in its name, such as Spectator!"

Klein silently listened to the conversation and had no plans on interrupting. All he did was secretly memorize and study, but when he heard that, he suddenly had a thought.

Audrey listened to The Hanged Man's explanations attentively, and just as she was about to inquire about something more detailed, she suddenly heard the rapping sound on the table,

She and Alger turned their heads and looked at The Fool. They realized that the mysterious and mighty figure was tapping gently with his fingers. He said in a deep voice, “It’s not about grasping them, but rather digesting them.

“It’s not about discovery, but rather acting.

“The name of a potion is not only symbolic, it’s also imagery. It is the key to digesting.”

Audrey was dazed and confused from hearing that. She was not very clear on what Mr. Fool was trying to express.

She subconsciously eyed The Hanged Man for a reaction from the corner of her eyes. She was surprised to see him jolt and freeze. It was as though an ordinary person had heard a loud and sudden clap of thunder.

“Digesting, acting... Digesting, acting... Digesting, acting, key...” Alger repeated it again and again softly as though he had grasped a key concept or had succumbed to a strange curse.

After a while, he raised his head and said with a hoarse voice, “Thank you, Mr. Fool. Your hint is as valuable as my life. You have enlightened me greatly. Of course, I believe I have yet to fully understand or comprehend it.”

Klein maintained his mysterious and unfathomable image by saying with a smile, “That was an advance payment.”

In fact, he did not truly understand the exact meaning of what was said. He was just certain that Emperor Roselle was more powerful than the typical Beyonder and stronger than The

Hanged Man.”

*Advance payment...* Audrey looked at The Hanged Man’s reaction and knew that the hint from before was precious. As she ruminated over it, she asked, “Mr. Fool, what do you wish for us to do?”

Opposite to her, Alger said with a nod, “What matter might you wish to entrust us with?”

Klein leaned back slightly as he glanced at the two of them before saying in a soft and pleasant voice, “Collect Roselle Gustav’s secret diary on my behalf, even if it’s just one page of it.”