

Read Lord of the Mysteries – Chapter 163 – Various Signs

Chapter 163: Various Signs

Translator: AtlasStudios **Editor:** AtlasStudios

What? Klein was left dumbfounded when he heard Rozanne's question. He recalled in his daze, "I previously visited Old Neil's place just last month. I saw a piano in the living room and he told me that his deceased wife loved music..."

As he spoke, Klein suddenly became alarmed as he began having unpleasant thoughts.

Rozanne knitted her beautiful brows and said with uncertainty, "Perhaps I remembered wrong... No, Mrs. Orianna and I frequented Old Neil's place during the earlier half of the year. There was no piano in his living room back then. I clearly remember asking him why he chose to remain single. His answer was that he hasn't met a lady that he wished to marry..."

There was no piano during the earlier half of the year, and he answered the question of why he chose to remain single... Klein tightened up and asked in a deep voice, "Rozanne, how long has it been since you visited Old Neil's place?"

"Not ever since Kenley became a Nighthawk, and Viola chose to resign as a clerk. I've been either burning the midnight oil or catching up on sleep, so how could I have the time to visit him? It's been... since the beginning of June." Rozanne became a little lost upon receiving the question, so all she did was answer honestly.

Klein's heart sank, as if he sensed something was wrong.

He fished out a halfpence from his pocket and held it between his thumb and middle finger.

He took a deep breath and quickly decided on a divination statement.

"There's something wrong with Old Neil's current situation.

"There's something wrong with Old Neil's current situation."

...

His pupils quickly darkened as he recited the statement silently and entered Cogitation.

Ding!

He flicked his thumb, pushing the brass coin into the air and allowing it to spin.

Pak! The coin fell right into Klein's open palm.

This time, the portrait of George III was facing up.

The portrait signified that it was correct, that it was positive.

That meant that there really was something wrong with Old Neil's current situation!

As Klein clenched the coin, he suddenly remembered the translucent pair of cold and ruthless eyes without any brows that he had seen behind Old Neil when he had just become a Beyonder and was experimenting with his Spirit Vision.

Old Neil had explained that the pair of eyes was a characteristic of ritualistic magic!

That's right, I also saw an almost formless human figure by the door at the periphery of the light. The color of its aura was identical to the surrounding darkness... Also, after I completely digested the Seer potion, I secretly changed the way I activated my Spirit Vision to the tapping of my left molar. I happened to look at Old Neil and he suddenly coughed violently... Scene after scene appeared in Klein's mind, turning his expression grim.

Rozanne looked at him and asked in fear, "Did Old Neil lose control? No way, even though he's petty and stingy, and wants to be reimbursed for all of his expenses, he's still a good person. He rarely gets angry. No way, he wouldn't lose control..."

"I cannot be sure, but I think that Old Neil is on the brink of losing control." Klein consoled Rozanne. He quickly made his way past the partition and opened the door to the Captain's office.

Dunn Smith was startled by the sudden intrusion, nearly choking on his coffee.

"What happened?" He didn't blame Klein, his expression instantly becoming stern.

Klein answered simply without hiding anything, "Captain, my divination tells me that there's something wrong with Old Neil.

"Last month, Old Neil told me that his late wife loved music, but today, Rozanne told me that he's remained single all this time.

“Also, on the day that I became a Beyonder, I saw a pair of mysterious eyes looking over everything behind Old Neil. There was also an almost transparent human figure near the door spying on us. He told me that those were characteristics of ritualistic magic.

“I felt that something was off and, thus, attempted a divination.”

After Dunn finished listening intently, he stood up immediately. As he walked over to the coat rack, he asked in puzzlement, “Why didn’t you directly divine if Old Neil had lost control?”

“Over the past month, Old Neil hasn’t acted any differently from ordinary Beyonders. He even worked with me to help Swain deal with a Mandated Punisher who had lost control. I’ve also observed the colors of his aura from time to time and noticed that he’s relatively healthy other than his frailty that’s due to his age. Thus, I think that he’s only close to losing control. He could still be saved,” Klein explained his point of view in one breath.

Dunn put on his black hat and windbreaker before nodding.

“A very reasonable deduction... Let’s go pay a visit to Old Neil now, and oh—try not to agitate him if possible.

“After that, we can attempt to control him and use ritualistic magic to stabilize his condition to prevent it from getting worse.”

Control... Klein had an idea when he heard this term.

“Captain, could we use Sealed Artifact 3-0611?”

He had been thinking about how he could resolve Old Neil’s problem and save him, but he hadn’t arrived at an answer as he had been too flustered,

too uneasy, and too worried. He was reminded by Dunn Smith's words and recalled that the Sealed Artifact might be useful.

“Number: 0611.

“Name: Peaceful Hair Strands.

“Danger Grade: 3. Considerably dangerous. It has to be used carefully. It can only be applied for operations that require three or more people.

“Security classification: Official Nighthawk member or above.

“Sealing Method: No direct contact with living organisms.

“Description: A simple decoration formed with many strands of black hair.

“As long as contact is made with a living being without any protection, the living being would lose all their desires and emotions, including, but not limited to: Hunger, Anger, Grief, Pain, Envy, Jealousy, Hate, Joy, Satisfaction, Greed, etc.

“It has been ascertained that living beings under 0611's influence will even lose the desire to break contact with it. They will silently stay in their spot until the end of their life.

“If an external force is used to break contact between the person and 0611, then the person will gradually recover. But experimental data suggests that the prerequisite to this is that the person has not been in contact with the Sealed Artifact for more than two hours.

“Once the contact lasts for more than two hours, the victim would become silent for eternity.

“The highest Sequence tested is Sequence 5.

“You can avoid contact by means such as wearing gloves.

“The strands of hair aren’t equipped with the capability to live. It doesn’t have any inclinations of escaping the seal.

“Appendix: These strands of hair appeared during a failed advancement. It was something left behind when a Captain of the Nighthawks failed to advance to Sequence 6.”

The grayed-eyed Dunn nodded after he heard Klein.

“Great suggestion, I nearly forgot about 3-0611. Find Royale in the recreation room. I’ll retrieve the Sealed Artifact from Chanis Gate and submit the application after we come back.”

That’s the way, no time to waste! Klein didn’t dawdle. He immediately went to the recreation room and shouted for the usually expressionless Sleepless Royale.

“What’s the mission?” Royale asked calmly.

Klein exhaled and said in a serious tone, “Pay Old Neil a visit.”

“Pay Old Neil a visit... he?” Royale opened her eyes wide as she had an ominous feeling.

“It’s not confirmed yet.” Klein shook his head gently.

Royale didn’t speak any further. They slipped into silence, turning the mood heavy.

A few minutes passed, and Dunn finally returned from the basement.

He was wearing black gloves and had a tangled mess of black hair in his hand.

Compared to the Mutated Sun Sacred Emblem, the Peaceful Hair Strands didn't look particularly weird. It would be glossed over by people if it were tossed on the road somewhere.

After calling for the chauffeur Cesare, the four of them made their way to Old Neil's house.

The wheels of the carriage rolled across the asphalt road that was wet from the rain. The carriage interior was more silent than the night.

It was unknown how much time had passed until Dunn sighed.

“Old Neil did have a partner that he was about to be engaged with when he was younger, but she suddenly became terminally ill. Old Neil risked divulging the secrets of the Beyonders and tried using ritualistic magic to save her, but he didn't succeed. Old Neil back then was just a beginner in mysticism.

“According to the records, the Nighthawks back then were all on alert, afraid that Old Neil would lose control because of this. But luckily, he managed to find his sanity and looked normal.”

Let's hope that this is a false alarm as well... Klein couldn't help but draw a crimson moon before his chest and prayed, “May the Goddess watch over him.”

Dunn and Royale followed suit.

“May the Goddess watch over him.”

...

The sky started to turn brighter as the dark clouds receded. The Nighthawks arrived in front of Old Neil's bungalow.

After getting Cesare to drive the carriage far away, Dunn collected himself and walked towards the main door, cane in one hand and Sealed Artifact 3-0611 in the other.

Klein pressed down his hat as he and Royale followed behind the Captain. They made their way past the rose and gold mint garden.

When they reached the door, Klein took a step forward and pulled on the rope connected to the bell within the building.

Clink! Clang!

A pleasant chime resounded in the house as it broke the heavy silence.

Clink! Clang! Clink! Clang! Klein pulled several times, then politely took a step back without making any further attempts.

The three Nighthawks waited patiently for a few minutes, but they didn't hear any footsteps approaching the door.

"Perhaps Old Neil went to visit a doctor and isn't at home." Klein forced a smile.

He hadn't finished his sentence when a melody came from within the building. It was the music from a piano. It was like a silent lake veiled by a thin mist beneath the moonlight.

Dunn's expression became abnormally stern and grave. Klein's heart sank as well.

Just as he was about to do another divination, he suddenly saw liquid flowing out from the gap beneath the door.

The stream of liquid was transparent and pure at first, before it became dyed crimson, a crimson similar to that of blood. It was an intensely dark crimson red.

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Chapter 164: Miserable Wretches

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The color of fresh blood was reflected in Klein's eyes as they intently locked onto the flowing liquid.

Just then, there was a light cough from within the house. Old Neil spoke with a raspy voice, "Dunn, why are you here?"

Dunn's gray eyes were extremely deep. His mellow voice replied calmly, "I heard that you're sick, so we came to visit."

There was a sudden silence in the house. A few seconds later, Old Neil roared in anger and terror, "No! You're lying!"

Without waiting for Klein and company to say a word, his tone suddenly became weak.

"Yes, I know my condition isn't quite right."

Old Neil... Klein closed his eyes, but the bloody liquid that was seeping through the gap of the door didn't cease.

Then, Old Neil raised his voice and said, “All this time, I’ve never hurt anyone, nor have I thought of hurting anyone! I never—I never betrayed the secrets of the Nighthawks, one even one! At the most—at the most, I’ve made claims for undeserving expenses. I really haven’t committed any evil!”

“Klein!” He suddenly shouted like he usually did. “I told you about the maxim of the Mystery Pryers, ‘Do as you wish, but do no harm.’ I still live by this saying. I’d rather be patient—I’d rather endure than do things that will harm others...”

With that said, he pleaded sincerely, in fear, “Dunn, Royale, Klein, go back. Go back. Wait till tomorrow—by tomorrow, I’ll be back to normal. I swear—I swear to the Goddess, I wouldn’t harm anyone. Really!”

Dunn closed his eyes and asked extremely gently, “What do you plan on doing? What have you been trying to do all this while?”

“Me?” Old Neil was confused at first before he described with a tone filled with hope, “I’m trying to resurrect Celeste. Dunn, I found a way, I’m on the right track!”

“You should have heard about it. Back then, I made a mistake during the ritualistic magic to treat her illness, so I failed. I failed to save her. I now know it was because I had yet to master mysticism. But now, I now have enough knowledge and experience to complete everything! It’s regrettable that I wasn’t inspired by the maxim of the Mystery Pryers and Daly’s example. I missed the best opportunity. If-if I was a High-Sequence Beyonder, all of this would become extremely easy.” As he spoke, Old Neil’s voice sounded tearful, “No, I cannot give up again... Dunn, go back. Go back, please. I beg of you.”

Klein clenched his teeth as he heard the Captain ask emotionally, “How do you plan on resurrecting Celeste?”

Old Neil instantly became very excited.

“I’ll use the ‘Alchemical Life’ method to create an immortal body for her. Dunn, you might not know of it, but Sequence 4 Beyonders from the Church of Mother Earth are good at this. The corresponding Sequence in the Savant pathway can barely do it as well. Yes, I will complete it with the aid of God’s favor.

“Then, I’ll summon her spirit from the spirit world and pray for God’s help to combine her spirit and body together.

“Isn’t it a great idea?”

Dunn lifted the corner of his lips forcefully and said, “Yes, it’s a great idea. Old Neil, let us in. Perhaps we can help you.”

“... Dunn, are you still not willing to let me off the hook?” Old Neil pleaded, “Go back, just go back. I’ll return to normal tomorrow, really. Dunn, I swear I’ll never steal your coffee beans again. Klein, Royale, I swear I won’t make you help me with my undeserved claims! Really!”

In Klein’s and Royale’s blurry vision, Dunn lowered his head before lifting it up again. “Old Neil, you’re misunderstanding. We’re here to visit you. You are our teammate. You’re sick, and you aren’t well. We definitely needed to visit you. Open the door. Let us see you, so that we can be certain. If you’re really okay, we’ll return immediately. As you know, there are especially many missions recently. We have to monitor the asylum while we take care of various other sudden incidents.”

Old Neil hesitated for a moment before saying, “There’s really nothing serious about my condition, really. I’ll recover by tomorrow.”

The bloody water that flowed out through the gap under the door went down the stairs, towards the stone path, and onto the garden’s soil.

“Old Neil, we’ve known each other for about fifteen years now, right? We’ve worked on countless missions together. I’m really concerned and worried for you. I have to see you with my own eyes before I’ll be at ease,” Dunn said gently.

“... Alright,” Old Neil pouted. “There’s really nothing wrong with me.”

With a creak, the door opened slowly. Klein quickly wiped his eyes and allowed his sight to return to normal.

Then, he saw that the carpet in the lobby was red and sticky, covered in blood and hair.

He looked forward and up, only to realize that the living room’s floor, ceiling, round table, piano, and chairs were all covered in the same disgusting, sticky and hairy liquid.

Old Neil’s head hung in the air, connected to the ceiling by a thick liquid. His forehead and cheeks each had a pair of eyes. They were cold and ruthless eyes with no eyelashes.

The piano’s keys were dancing on their own, playing a melodious tune.

“Dunn, look. I’m really okay,” Old Neil said with a radiant smile.

“Royale, Klein, you think so too, right?”

The moment he opened his mouth, Klein saw the same thick, hairy, and bloody liquid flowing inside it.

Dunn's gray eyes shimmered as he chatted like everything was normal.

“Old Neil, where did you learn the Alchemical Life and resurrection ritual from?”

Old Neil replied excitedly, “I heard it. I tried the first part, and confirmed its authenticity! It's a gift from God! He kept describing it in my ears. He kept describing, He is—He is...”

Old Neil's voice came to a halt. More than ten seconds later, he continued in fear and in apparent loss, “He is the Hidden Sage...”

The Hidden Sage? Isn't that the non-anthropomorphic god that the Moses Ascetic Order believes in? The god that was resurrected, bringing about evil and corruption... The Moses Ascetic Order has the complete Mystery Prayer Sequence... Klein's heart stirred as many thoughts came to him.

Upon mentioning the Hidden Sage, Old Neil seemed to finally awaken. He looked around vacantly and observed everything.

In the indescribable silence, his six eyes looked towards Dunn, and he said with a bitter smile, “So it turns out—it turns out that I've already become a monster...”

Without waiting for Dunn and the others to reply, Old Neil suddenly revealed a smile, one of groveling, fear, and cowardice.

“Let me go. I'll go deep into the mountains and won't appear again. I'll never harm anyone. I'll only attempt my ritual quietly, really. Let me go, please. I beg of you.”

Just then, Klein felt something illusory shatter before his eyes.

Then, Old Neil's four cold-looking lashless eyes flashed with a dark glow and locked onto Dunn. His expression suddenly turned cold.

"You're pulling me into a dream!"

"No, it's useless! My eyes can see through all of that!"

The sticky blood that covered the ceiling, floor, and walls started squirming, like a giant opening its mouth to swallow Klein and company. Old Neil's head grew blurry like overlapping afterimages.

Klein didn't fumble for his revolver; instead, he extended his hand into his pocket and planned to use his Slumber Charm.

Suddenly, everything calmed down before him. The sticky, bloody liquid suddenly turned placid like a still lake.

Old Neil lost his coldness, hatred, desire, and all other expressions. He became quiet and peaceful.

It was unknown when Dunn had thrown Sealed Artifact 3-0611 into the blood.

The four lashless eyes on Old Neil's forehead and cheeks slowly closed, seemingly having lost the desire to keep them open.

Any living creature that came into contact with the Peaceful Hair Strands would turn peaceful and lose all motivation until the end of their life.

Dunn, Klein, and Royale drew their guns at the same time and aimed at Old Neil's head.

Then, Old Neil revealed a look of extreme fear. He was struggling, his strong desire to live fought against the effects of Sealed Artifact 3-0611.

The four extra eyes disappeared. The wrinkles at the corners of his eyes and mouth were still deep, his hair was still white, his crimson eyes were still turbid, just like when Klein had first met him.

“Dunn, do you remember the time I saved you...

“Royale, do you remember when I helped you redeem your family’s lives...

“Klein, do you remember how I taught you mysticism every day? Do you remember when we talked about how to make claims? Do you remember how I made you hand-ground coffee? Do you remember when we fought against a Mandated Punisher Rampager?”

...

The illusory pleading echoed in Klein’s ears, and his right hand that was holding the revolver trembled. He found it difficult to pull the trigger.

Bang! Bang!

The two silver demon hunting bullets flew out and penetrated Old Neil’s head one after another.

Klein watched as the familiar, abnormal face revealed a hopeless expression. He saw the man’s skull tear open, the red and white within spurting in all directions.

The sticky blood that coated their surroundings started shrinking as it flowed back into Old Neil's broken head that had fallen to the ground. Dunn and Royale lowered their guns simultaneously, and all was silent.

Klein looked at everything before him—Old Neil's "corpse" was becoming a ball of rotten flesh. He saw that there was a pair of eyes, crimson and crystal clear, yet incredibly pained amidst the blood and flesh.

He felt like everything that had happened was just a dream and found it impossible to bring himself into believing the sequence of events and how it had ended.

He stood dumbfounded as he saw Dunn take two steps forward, his figure stooped.

Dunn looked at Old Neil's "corpse" and muttered heavily, "We are guardians, but also a bunch of miserable wretches that are constantly fighting against threats and madness."

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Chapter 165: Epitaph

Translator: AtlasStudios **Editor:** AtlasStudios

"We are guardians, but also a bunch of miserable wretches that are constantly fighting against threats and madness."

Dunn's words echoed throughout Old Neil's house. They reverberated across the corroded floor, the walls, and ceiling, as well as within Klein's mind and soul.

He'd never had a stronger impression of that sentence than the one he had now.

He felt that he wouldn't forget this feeling for as long as he lived, even if he were to return to Earth.

Amidst the still atmosphere, Dunn walked towards Old Neil's "corpse" and kneeled down. He took out a white handkerchief from the pocket of his windbreaker and covered it over the dark red, crystalline eyeball which looked pained.

At this moment, Klein noticed that the keys of the piano had stopped moving. A faint, translucent figure appeared.

This... Klein, who had activated his Spirit Vision before entering the house, froze.

He hadn't noticed this strange "soul" until now!

Was it because he was distracted by Old Neil, or was it due to Old Neil's abilities after he lost control? Klein saw the formless figure evaporate quickly, vanishing before his very eyes. He had a faint idea of what was going on.

Suppressing the heavy feeling in his heart, he heard the Captain order, "Search Old Neil's house carefully for possible clues."

"Alright." When Klein spoke, it took him a minute to recognize his own voice. His voice was raspy and deep, as if he had the flu.

"Alright," Royale also replied.

The condition of her voice is about the same as mine... It's like our nostrils are blocked... Klein looked at his female teammate, who

typically didn't have much of an expression. It was as if he was knowing her for the first time.

Placing his cane on an umbrella rack near the door, he made his way around Sealed Artifact 3-0611. He took heavy steps into the living room and up to the second floor. He then searched every room for possible clues.

Old Neil employed someone to clean the rooms regularly, so the rooms weren't as messy as one would expect of a bachelor. Everything was in order, as if there was a female presence in the house.

Half an hour later, Klein found a few handwritten notes on a bookshelf in Old Neil's room. The notes recorded a weird, mysterious ritual:

“Alchemical Life.

“The materials required include: 100ml of spring water from the Spring of Elves (Golden Spring on Sonia Island), 50 grams of Star Crystal, half a pound of pure gold, 5 grams of phlogiston, 30 grams of red iron... And a large quantity of fresh blood from living people.”

Old Neil annotated beneath the part about fresh blood from the living.

“I can consider drawing my own blood, accumulating it little by little and preserve it using ritualistic magic.”

I can consider drawing my own... Klein closed his eyes and crushed the notes.

...

On Thursday morning at nine, the time of the moon. Raphael Cemetery.

Klein was wearing his black formal suit and holding onto his cane. He stood silently in a corner of the cemetery.

He had stuffed a neat white handkerchief in his breast pocket and was holding onto a Slumber flower.

Dunn, Frye, Leonard, and Kenley were carrying a black coffin that stored Old Neil's corpse. They slowly walked to the front of the tombstone and silently lowered it into the grave.

As she saw the brown soil being tossed into the grave, Rozanne, who was wearing a black dress and a white flower in her hair, wept.

“Can someone tell me if this is all happening for real?”

“Why did he lose control, why did he consume the potion, why did he become a Beyonder, why must there be wraiths and monsters, why is there no safer way? Why, why, why...”

Klein silently listened on until Old Neil's coffin was completely buried in the soil, until all signs that he existed were buried deep within the earth.

“May the Goddess bless you.” He drew a crimson moon in front of his chest, then took a few steps forward and placed the Slumber flower in front of the tomb.

“May the Goddess bless you.” Dunn, Frye, and the others tapped at their chests in a clockwise fashion.

Klein looked up, straightened his back, and saw the black and white photograph on the tombstone.

Old Neil was wearing his classic black hat; his white hair was peeking out around the edges. The wrinkles beside his eyes and mouth were deep, his dark red eyes a little turbid.

He was so peaceful, no longer feeling grief, pain, or fear.

There was an epitaph carved underneath the photograph. It came from the contents of the last entry in Old Neil's diary: "If I cannot save her, then I shall accompany her."

The morning breeze blew gently. The silence and emptiness of the Raphael Cemetery hung over everyone.

...

In the afternoon, Klein took a form signed by the Captain to the armory.

He opened the half-closed door and saw Bredt with a thick, black beard behind the table.

Klein froze visibly before handing the form over.

"Fifty rounds of ordinary bullets."

During his request, he glanced at the tin can on the table. He felt as though he could smell the fragrance of the hand-ground coffee and hear the cheeky words in his ears, "But why must you wait till you have spare cash? You can apply to Dunn and get him to approve of the expenses!"

...

Bredt noticed Klein's expression and sighed.

“I can understand what you’re feeling right now. I, myself, cannot believe that Old Neil would leave us like that. Sometimes, I even feel as though this is a dream conjured by the Captain.”

“Perhaps this is the destiny of many Nighthawks,” Klein replied with a bitter smile.

After this incident, he felt much more disappointment and hatred toward the upper echelons of the Church for keeping the “acting method” a secret.

“Let’s hope that there will be fewer such tragedies, may the Goddess bless us.” Bredt drew a crimson moon in front of his chest. He took the application form and walked into the armory.

...

Bang! Bang! Bang!

The smell of gunpowder filled the air. Klein vented his frustrations onto the target he was shooting at, until he finished shooting the bullets that he had requested. He then collected himself and took a public carriage to Gawain’s house.

He completed sets upon sets of exercises, as if he was torturing himself, until Gawain told him to stop.

“Combat practice isn’t there for you to harm yourself.” Gawain looked at Klein with his turbid green eyes.

“I’m sorry, Teacher. I’m a little down today.” Klein exhaled and attempted to explain.

“What happened?” Gawain asked without a ripple of emotion.

Klein thought for a moment, then gave a simple reply, “A friend of mine passed away suddenly.”

Gawain was silent for a few seconds. He stroked his blond mustache and said with a fleeting voice, “I once lost 325 friends in the span of five minutes, amongst them were 10 that I could trust with my life.”

Klein sighed in realization. “That is the cruelty of war.”

Gawain shot a glance at him and let out a self-deprecating laugh.

“The cruelest thing of all is the fact that I can never exact revenge for them. I can never fulfill their dreams, and the answer eludes me forever.

“As for you, you still have such a chance. Even though I don’t exactly know what happened, I know that you’re still young. You still have many opportunities.”

Klein was silent for a moment. He took in a breath and collected himself.

“Thank you, Teacher.”

Gawain nodded and said without any expression, “Take a ten-minute break, then do ten more sets of the exercises you were doing just now.”

“...” Klein was momentarily unsure what expression he should show.

...

Friday morning, in the recreation room of the Nighthawks.

Klein, Seeka Tron, and Frye were seated around the round table, but they weren’t playing cards. One of them was flipping through newspapers, the

other was looking out the oriel windows in a daze, and the last was holding onto a pen, wanting to write something but failing to do so.

The room was quiet. No one spoke, and no one joked around. The atmosphere was heavy.

Phew... Klein exhaled. He lowered his newspaper and planned to focus on reading the materials he had found.

At that moment, Dunn Smith knocked and entered the room. He looked around before saying, "Klein, come out for a moment."

What happened? Klein, who had a premonition of what was happening, stood up and made his way out of the recreation room.

Dunn stood at the entrance of the stairway leading to the basement. He turned and looked at Klein.

"The person that the Holy Cathedral sent is here."

The person examining me is here? Klein's nerves tensed.

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Chapter 166: Examination

Translator: AtlasStudios **Editor:** AtlasStudios

There was a cold breeze blowing from the basement, providing a hint of relief for Klein's tense emotions.

It's finally here.

Once I pass this stage, I won't have to worry about being examined like this for at least half a year...

Once I advance to Sequence 8 and become a so-called "Clown," I'll possess actual combat strength. With the aid of divination and my Flaring Sun Charms for backup, I'll have a chance of surviving even more relatively dangerous situations...

Since I was waiting for the Holy Cathedral's examination, I haven't even dared to withdraw the three hundred pounds that Miss Justice transferred to the anonymous account. Just in case they audit my financial situation and find out that I'm in possession of a large sum of money from an unknown source...

...

Just as Klein's thoughts flashed through his mind uncontrollably, Dunn Smith smoothed his sleeve and said in a low voice, "The person in charge of the examination is one of the nine high-ranking deacons of the Nighthawks, Crestet Cesimir. The Holy Cathedral attaches great importance to you."

"A high-ranking deacon?" Klein blurted in surprise.

In general terms, the thirteen archbishops and nine high-ranking deacons made up the upper echelons of the church. It was said that there was no lack of High-Sequence Beyonders among them!

The twenty-two ladies and gentlemen were all equal in terms of their rankings. They only followed the orders of the Evernight Goddess, and they were only answerable to the Pope.

Dunn took a whiff of the cold wind from the basement before nodding faintly.

“Yes, he’s a high-ranking deacon. But you don’t have to be nervous. Crestet is only a Sequence 5, and has yet to enter a demigod state. So, you don’t have to be too afraid or reverent.

“Oh, his title in the Beyonder world is the ‘Goddess’s Sword.’ As he possesses a holy item, his combat strength is similar to a newly advanced Sequence 4 Beyonder.

“I just chatted with him. He was very friendly.”

If I read between the lines, Captain is telling me that he only said what was necessary. He doesn’t want me to be nervous and go according to the plan... Klein nodded thoughtfully and asked, “Where should I meet the high-ranking deacon?”

“The alchemy room where we concoct potions,” Dunn replied simply, as a hint of gloominess flashed across his face.

The alchemy room where we concoct potions? The laboratory where Old Neil made my Seer potion? Klein slowly let out a breath and returned to the Nighthawks recreation room and took his outerwear from the clothes rack.

He put on the black windbreaker, placed his hands into his pockets, and walked down the winding stairs that connected to the basement. Then, he took a left turn at the cross junction.

Very quickly, Klein saw a secret door under the light of the elegant gas lamps that lined the walls. He saw that the long tables in the room had been moved aside to open up a large space in the center of the room.

There were two classic high back chairs facing each other with less than a meter in-between them.

There was a man in his thirties wearing a black windbreaker and a white shirt seated on the chair that was facing the door.

His golden-brown hair was cut very short, and his blackish-green eyes were as dark as a forest on a moonless night. The collars of his shirt and windbreaker were put up, and his entire chin was hidden within the shadows.

“Hello, Your Grace.” Klein bowed.

Crestet Cesimir had his right leg crossed over his left as he leisurely leaned back into his chair. He smiled and replied, “Hello, Klein. You may sit over there.”

He pointed at the high back chair opposite him.

By the side of his leg was a suitcase made of silver. It was about the size of a violin case.

It can carry a sword with an appropriate length... Klein walked forward and sat at his appointed seat.

Crestet rested his right index finger on his upper lip as he thought for a few seconds.

“I plan to first examine how well you’ve mastered your potion. That’s not a problem, right?”

“Not at all.” Klein shook his head with utmost confidence.

“Very confident.” Crestet smiled, but maintained his previous posture. All he did was intently watch Klein.

Klein suddenly felt the light from the surrounding gas lamps vanish, as though they were swallowed by the rich darkness.

He suddenly became exhausted, as though his biological clock had struck the time for sleep.

But, his mind was extremely tense, making it impossible to relax. It was just like when he was unable to sleep peacefully due to over-exhaustion.

The silent “night” filled his surroundings as Klein heard the noise of dripping water from a tap that wasn’t closed properly. Then, he heard the conversations in the Blackthorn Security Company and the movement of the wind blowing through the stairway.

Besides that, he didn’t see anything that he shouldn’t see, nor did he hear any noises that he shouldn’t be able to hear.

“Excellent.” Crestet’s hypnotic voice dispersed the darkness, and the light from the gas lamps inside and outside the alchemy room came into Klein’s sight again.

Klein suddenly shook off his exhaustion and returned to his previous energetic self.

He affected me without me realizing it... Is that what a Sequence 5 Beyonder is capable of? This is the horror of a high-ranking deacon? He recalled what had happened and felt a little frightened.

Crestet Cesimir clasped his hands and put them on his knees. He bent down slightly, and his lips were blocked by his collar.

“You passed the test. You achieved a level beyond outstanding in your mastery of your potion.

“I’ll need to observe to see if there are any hidden dangers in your mind, to make sure that the potion’s remaining spirit hasn’t changed your character subconsciously or left some problems behind.

“You have three minutes to prepare.”

Klein immediately nodded and said, “Alright.”

He secretly took a breath and allowed himself to enter Cogitation to remove various negative thoughts.

Crestet didn't speak again. He took out a silver pocket watch from the inner pocket of his black windbreaker and flipped it open.

Then, he attentively watched the second hand move.

Three minutes later, Crestet closed his pocket watch and said with a smile, “I'll begin singing.”

Singing? Klein wore a look of confusion.

Before Klein could reply, Crestet started humming a lovely melody.

The melody reverberated in the alchemy room and gradually lost its harmony and went out of tune.

Squeak! Scratch! Zing! Klein heard the noise akin to the scratching of blackboards with nails, the sound of bubble wrap rubbing against each other, electric drills drilling, and various other annoying noises.

The noises intensified and turned more and more chaotic. They made him want to vent his frustrations and cause destruction.

But Klein, who frequently experienced the mad ravings and terrifying screams, restrained his urges very quickly.

He displayed annoyance, tension, frustration, and insecurity at appropriate times.

Being in too perfect of a state would end up being a problem!

It was unknown when Crestet Cesimir had stopped singing. The noises in the alchemy room disappeared and room the was awash with tranquility and silence.

Silence sure is great! Klein exclaimed in his head.

“Very good, excellent. There are no latent problems in your soul. Of course, if you wanted to beat me up or stuff my mouth with something, that’s only normal.” Crestet’s mouth was blocked by his collar so Klein could only determine his emotions through his tone.

“No, I wouldn’t dare,” Klein admitted honestly.

Crestet smiled and said, “Congratulations, you have passed all the tests. Now it’s time for the question and answer session.”

His green eyes suddenly darkened. His gaze was deep, as though he could see through flesh, and looked directly at the spirit.

“Go ahead,” Klein replied, sitting straight.

Crestet maintained his earlier posture and casually asked, “You said that your experience in the Divination Club allowed you to quickly master the potion?”

“Yes,” Klein answered frankly but didn’t describe further.

Crestet nodded slightly and said, “And you said that your inspiration came from the maxim of the Mystery Pryers and also Daly’s example?”

“Yes.” Klein confirmed this first before explaining in detail, “I found out from one of my teammates who was a Mystery Pryer that those who

abide by the maxim of the Mystery Pryers have a lower probability of losing control than normal. After that, I heard that Madam Daly once said that she wanted to be a real Spirit Medium, and that she is a genius that leveled up to Sequence 7 within two years.

“After noticing both situations, I thought I could give it a try, I attempted to be a real Seer and outlined some principles for a Seer. The outcome was better than I expected. I mastered the potion very quickly. Your Grace, I’m not sure if you have had a similar experience. When I fully mastered the potion, there was a very special, very magical feeling...” Klein described his experience as if he only vaguely understood the “acting method.”

The man he had been when he was on earth would’ve been nervous and embarrassed to speak so many half-lies before such a powerful Nighthawk. But ever since he transmigrated to the current world, he had lied so much that he was used to it. He could do it flawlessly.

The darkness in Crestet’s eyes disappeared, and his gaze returned to normal. He smiled and said, “Don’t worry, it’s not an illusion.”

From his answer, Klein couldn’t see any doubt or scrutiny, so he felt at ease.

“Dunn endorsed your experience. I believe that you really are a genius, with a logical mind and sharp senses,” Crestet complimented. He then asked, “Did you share your experience with your teammates?”

“Of course,” Klein admitted frankly. “I hope that I can help them lower the risk of losing control. We’re teammates, comrades that face danger together. I don’t have any reason to hide the truth. But for the same reason, I didn’t tell the clerks.”

Crestet uncrossed his right leg and sat up straight. His thin lips were exposed from the shadow of his collar.

He lifted the corner of his lips and said, “Although you haven’t even been with the Nighthawks for two months, I believe your understanding towards partners is much better than many others.

“Hmm, I plan to share more information with you, but according to the Holy Cathedral’s rules, you have to swear to the Goddess that you won’t reveal the contents of our conversation to anyone that doesn’t know about this.

“That should be fine, right?”

I passed the test? Klein was delighted. He nodded without hesitation.

“No problem!”

Although I won’t be able to teach others the “acting method,” I can let Miss Justice and Mr. Hanged Man do so indirectly!

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“Alright.” Crestet Cesimir nodded. He leaned forward. “Then swear upon the Holy Artifact.”

As he was saying this, he bent down to lift the silver suitcase by his foot.

Holy Artifact? The Holy Artifact that earned you the title of the Goddess’s Sword? Klein looked at the actions of the deacon curiously.

Crestet placed the suitcase on his knees, his dark green eyes instantly turning black.

He lifted his hand then pressed down. The cover of the silver suitcase which resembled a violin case suddenly dissolved and receded like the tide.

At the same time, Klein felt that the light around him was being drawn forward as if it was being absorbed by the suitcase.

Apart from the lights from the classic lamps that lined the walls, as well as the silver splendor that spiraled within the suitcase, the alchemy room turned pitch dark. The scene looked extremely strange.

Pa!

With a crisp snapping sound, Crestet Cesimir opened the suitcase, revealing the pure white bone sword that lay within.

Yes, a bone sword. The moment Klein saw the sword, he knew instinctively that it was mainly made out of bone!

The short sword silently released a pure white glow in the pitch dark alchemy room, as if it were a moon hanging high in the night sky, or a lighthouse in the middle of a storm.

It looked as though the sword had no defects on its surface, but a closer examination would reveal that the surface of the sword was laced with layers of symbols and icons. These mysterious patterns intertwined to form the body of the sword.

Klein observed the holy sword, suddenly realizing that he couldn't look away!

His vision was being drawn towards the sword as his brown eyes slowly lost their luster.

Crestet lifted the suitcase, moving the sword away from its original position.

Klein instantly snapped out of his trance and finally freed himself from the nightmare he couldn't escape before.

He cast his gaze to the side and asked gravely, "Your Grace, do you need me to put my hand on the holy sword?"

"Yes, come over." Crestet's voice was melodious as if he was singing a lullaby.

Klein stood up, still looking to the side as he took small steps forward. As it was dark, he couldn't see where the legs of the deacon were, nor his old leather boots.

"Stop," Crestet spoke calmly.

Klein immediately halted and stood on the spot. He took a quick glance at the pure white bone sword through the corner of his eyes before retracting his gaze again, in fear.

With that mere glance, he bent down and extended his right hand, accurately placing it atop the holy sword.

A cold feeling swept through his skin and into his mind. The distracting thoughts and feelings of worry instantly eased, as if he was sitting on a roof in a noisy village, smelling the scent of the harvest and admiring the starry night sky.

"Recite after me," Crestet said solemnly.

"Alright." Klein nodded.

He then heard the deacon speak in Hermes.

“Oh Evernight Goddess, nobler than the stars and more eternal than eternity.

“I swear to you in my real name and my spirituality.

“I, Klein, will never reveal the details of the ‘acting method’ to those who do not know of it from this moment forth.

“If I go against this, I shall accept any punishment you deem fit.

“Please witness my oath.”

Klein collected himself and made the oath in Hermes, following Deacon Cesimir’s lead.

He had the faint feeling that a connection has been established between him and a faraway being through the pure white bone sword.

After retracting his right hand, he drew a crimson moon on his chest.

“Praise the Lady!”

“Praise the Lady!” Crestet smiled and bowed in response.

Immediately, he closed the cover of the suitcase and pressed down heavily with his right hand.

The darkness was instantly lit up as the light from the lamp once again filled the entire room.

Klein noticed that the black eyes of Deacon Cesimir had regained their usual blackish-green.

He made his way back to his chair and frowned. He asked in puzzlement, “Acting method?”

Crestet cleared his throat. Without answering the question directly, he instead smiled and said, “You might feel a little confused and not understand what I’m about to tell you, but I cannot explain why that is so, for that involves the secrets of the Church.”

You will only have the right to know after you become an archbishop or a high-ranking deacon... Klein looked at Cesimir and added inwardly before Cesimir could say it.

“You will only be permitted to know after you become a core member of the Church, such as an archbishop or a high-ranking deacon,” Crestet emphasized.

Klein nodded sternly.

Crestet placed the silver suitcase back beside his foot and crossed his legs.

“In the long history of time, the Church has had generations upon generations of genius Beyonders slowly figuring out a way to avoid losing control.

“And the core to this method is the name of the potion. It’s not only critical; it’s also the key.”

After looking at Klein’s thoughtful expression, Crestet continued, “We have realized that the names of the potions all point to a certain group, and this group has their own approach and operates in unique ways. In simpler terms, there are a set of rules that come with the name of the potion, different rules for different potions. When we follow these rules strictly, the risk of losing control is reduced to a minimum.”

“Similar to my set of Seer principles?” Klein took the opportunity to ask.

This explanation isn't as simple or understandable as the one I gave to Justice and Hanged Man... Klein silently criticized.

“Yes.” Crestet gave an affirmative answer. “When we follow the rules of the potion, we become more and more like the group described by the name of the potion. In other words, we are acting as the job that the name of the potion points us toward. That is the ‘acting method.’ You must remember, the spirituality of every individual is special, unique. Even though the core rules must be followed by the people who consume the same potion, there are always certain variations to the rules that are unique to the individual. Thus, the experiences of others can only serve as a guide.”

That is a point that I didn't realize... Klein said sincerely, “Thank you for informing me. I will remember that.”

Crestet laughed.

“These are the experiences accumulated over the generations.

“After using the ‘acting method,’ we not only gain mastery over the potion, we're also digesting it, just as we would our food. When you truly digest the potion, you will feel a unique, mysterious sensation, understood?”

“I understand. ‘Digestion,’ this term is very appropriate...” Klein pretended to be deep in thought.

After Crestet explained the method in more detail, Klein weighed his words as he asked, “Your Grace, since the name of the potion is not only

the core, but also the key, then how did the first Beyonders obtain them? I heard that it was recorded on the Blasphemy Slate?"

"Yes, that is correct," Crestet replied frankly. "But the Blasphemy Slate was inscribed with the ancient names. The names of the potions which we use today were derived in part from divine revelations. Some were also consolidated by the experiences of the Beyonders themselves."

Klein nodded slowly. He pursed his lips and asked, "Your Grace, since the 'acting method' is so effective, why wouldn't the Church tell every Nighthawk about it?"

"I have said that it is a secret of the Church. You will understand the reason behind it once you become an archbishop or a high-ranking deacon," Crestet answered, unfazed. "Alright, return upstairs and tell the rest of the Nighthawks to come down one at a time. I have to carry out the final step of the examination."

That's to keep Frye and the others from divulging the 'acting method'? Klein thought as he stood up, he then bade farewell, following the Nighthawks' etiquette.

He made his way past the corridor and up the stairs, returning to the Blackthorn Security Company. He saw Dunn smoking his pipe near the entrance of the basement.

With a smile, Klein took the initiative to say, "There shouldn't be any more problems; His Grace wants me to inform Frye and the others to head down for a conversation with him."

"Yes, that is the last step. That means that there were no problems." Dunn put away his pipe and headed to the recreation room to tell the rest.

As he watched Frye and Seeka enter the basement, Klein suddenly recalled something. He said in a hurry, “Captain, are we going to have to get Royale who’s guarding over Chanis Gate, and Leonard who’s watching over the asylum? Oh, and Kenley, who’s on break.”

Dunn froze and pinched his forehead.

“I forgot...”

He paused for a moment, then chortled. “But the matter shouldn’t be too complicated. One of the advantages of having a high-ranking deacon examine you is that there’s no need to send a telegraph to the Holy Cathedral, or engage in a cumbersome exchange of letters. He can make the decision on the spot and hand the formula to the Clown potion as well as the main ingredients to you.”

“That’s not too bad.” Klein couldn’t contain his excitement.

...

An hour and a half passed. As Kenley walked out of the alchemy room, his expression full of puzzlement, Klein was once again called downstairs. He met the high-ranking deacon once again, the Goddess’s Sword, Crestet Cesimir, a second time.

This time, the golden-brown-haired and blackish-green-eyed deacon wasn’t seated. He stood there, allowing the breeze in the basement to blow at his black windbreaker.

Crestet’s collars stood tall, hiding his chin in the shadows.

He looked at Klein and smiled.

“Nighthawk Klein Moretti, I announce in the name of the Goddess that you have passed the examination of the Holy Cathedral.

“Congratulations. With your contributions, you can immediately advance to become a Sequence 8 Beyonder!”

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Phew, I finally passed... I passed it just like that...

When Klein heard Crestet Cesimir’s announcement, he let out a breath of relief despite being mentally prepared for it. It felt surreal, as though it was a dream.

He had assumed that the examination would be tougher and lengthier, but when he thought carefully about it, he realized that what had just happened was what should’ve happened. If he had taken the normal three years to digest the Seer potion instead of doing it in a month, the examination wouldn’t have even been conducted by the Holy Cathedral. The Tingen Nighthawks’ captain would’ve been responsible for it instead.

I thought they would investigate my family and friends... Hmm, perhaps Cesimir arrived in Tingen two days ago and completed that in secret... I also thought that the examination would require me to complete some task. Heh, I was really overthinking it. The goal of the examination is merely to determine the level of digestion for the potion, as well as detect any latent dangers, and see whether I’m aware of the “acting method” and if I shared my experience with others... These thoughts flew past Klein’s mind. He flashed a sincere smile.

“Thank you, Your Grace. Praise the Lady!”

Crestet nodded gently and said, “To advance is to serve the Goddess better, so that you can protect our fellow believers better. You must remember this—trust me—it’ll help you fight the temptation of losing control.”

“Temptation...” Klein ruminated over the word.

Crestet sized Klein up with his green eyes and said sternly, “The ‘acting method’ can help you digest the potion and lower the risk of losing control, but it’s not the be-all and end-all. To a certain extent, you can even confuse playing the role and your own existence. You know, there are many actors in the theater that develop severe psychological issues. At a certain level, you might really go insane.”

Remember that you’re only acting... The only point of note concluded by the City of Silver is identical to what Deacon Cesimir said... Klein nodded thoughtfully in agreement.

“In addition,” Crestet emphasized, “Not only is losing control related to the potion, it’s also closely related to your emotions and mental health. The most important thing for a Beyonder is to control yourself. Only then will you be able to withstand the temptations of evil gods and devils, resisting emotions like greed and jealousy, and the erosion of desire. Of course, I don’t mean that you should get rid of all your emotions and desires, because that is something that no human or even demigod can do. Yes, perhaps only some special Sequences are able to achieve that sort of state.”

Klein suddenly thought about Old Neil. He couldn’t help but ask in reply, “We must keep our emotions and desires at a reasonable level, and not allowing them to drive us to do something irrational and abnormal?”

Crestet nodded solemnly.

“Yes.”

After he answered, there were wrinkles at the corner of his eyes.

“That’s all I wanted to warn you about. Now, I’ll pass you the Clown potion formula and the relevant ingredients.”

He bent down and put his silver suitcase on the long table. He then turned around and moved a few steps, blocking Klein’s view.

When the surrounding lights strangely vanished again, Klein suddenly understood that the formula and ingredients were in the suitcase that stored the holy artifact. It was simply because his gaze was attracted by the pure white bone sword which was why he didn’t notice or perhaps, he couldn’t notice, the other items in the suitcase.

After a few minutes, the light of the gas lamps lit up the alchemy room again. Crestet picked up his suitcase and moved away, presenting the items on the long table to Klein.

Among them, the most eye-catching item was the palm-sized gray goat horn. It looked like a miniature version of a normal goat horn and was crystal clear, swirling with colors. There were faint layers of unique patterns.

Next to the goat horn was a blue rose. There were red veins on the petals that connecting them together. It seemed to form a human face with a smile.

Hahaha, woowoowo, hahaha, woowoowo... Klein heard illusory laughter and crying diffused with each other, and he saw pieces of gray halos floating in midair.

A crystal of the single horn of a matured Hornacis gray mountain goat and a complete stalk of a human-faced rose. The main ingredients of the Clown potion! He nodded indiscernibly and took a few steps towards the long table.

“80 milliliters of pure water, 5 drops of tornapple juice, 7 grams of black-rimmed sunflower powder, 10 grams of golden cloak grass powder, 3 drops of poison hemlock...” Klein looked at the unfurled goatskin parchment and compared the written content with the formula that he had memorized.

After he confirmed that there was nothing wrong, he recalled the demonstration Old Neil did.

He took a deep breath and exhaled slowly to collect his emotions. With the apparatus in the alchemy room, he distilled some pure water needed by the potion.

In the potion formula, pure water referred to water that was distilled over and over again.

Then, he washed a black metal pot and threw in the supplementary ingredients one after another. He was as skillful as back when he had done chemistry experiments in high school.

As the Beyonder ingredients hadn't catalyzed just yet, he didn't see any obvious changes in the liquid in the metal pot. At most, he only saw powder floating on the surface of the liquid.

When he was done with the preparations, Klein cast his gaze at the two main ingredients and gratefully thought, There's no description of the exact size or weight of the required gray mountain goat's single horn crystal or the human-faced rose. Perhaps a whole horn and a complete

rose have no differences, regardless of their weight, allowing them to meet the requirements... Yes, in the world of mysterious Beyonders, this is definitely possible...

If so, I don't have to worry about putting in excessive amounts of the main ingredients!

After a few seconds, Klein picked up the human-faced rose and threw it into the metal pot.

When the strange flower touched the liquid, it immediately produced a sizzling sound. The surrounding illusory laughter became shrill.

Hahaha, hahaha!

Klein didn't delay any further as he immediately grabbed the crystalline mountain goat horn and threw it into the metal pot.

Poof!

The terrifying laughter disappeared all of a sudden, and the surrounding gray halos slowly converged into the metal pot.

Klein lowered his head and saw the liquid in the pot was colored in a mix of gold, yellow, and red. However, the three colors remained extremely distinct at their boundaries.

There were bubbles churning and fizzing from the liquid, but they failed to escape from the pot and ended up bursting silently.

The scene reminded Klein of Sprite, the carbonated drink from his previous incarnation.

This actually looks like a delicious drink... A thought popped into his head that aligned with the characteristics of his culture.

Suppressing his nervousness, excitement, and anticipation, Klein poured the liquid from the black metal pot into a glass bottle.

What shocked him was that there wasn't a single bit of the potion left in the metal pot.

It really is a potion that turns people into Beyonders... Klein raised his right hand, and he looked at the beautiful-looking tri-colored liquid.

Crestet Cesimir, who had been silent the entire time, suddenly smiled and said, "Don't worry. At the very least, I didn't notice any problems with the concoction of your potion.

"I've been waiting here to ensure that no accidents happen after you consume the potion. Don't worry, as long as it isn't anything serious, I should be able to save you."

Okay. Klein nodded and placed the Clown potion back onto the long table.

Then, he took off the silver chain inside his sleeve and let the topaz pendant hang down naturally, a slight distance above the liquid.

To Beyonders of any other occupation, pendulum divinations could only divine a yes or no answer. Of course, when there wasn't enough information, the divination wouldn't yield any useful answers at all. When the pendulum didn't spin, it was called a failed divination.

As a Seer, Klein's pendulum could also vaguely determine the degree of the "yes" or "no" answer.

Klein's eyes grew dark as he recited, "This potion is harmful.

"This potion is harmful."

...

Seven times later, he opened his half-closed eyes and saw the topaz pendant spinning clockwise, but very slowly.

Clockwise means a positive response. In other words, it means that the potion is harmful... However, it spins slowly, which means that it's only slightly harmful... Yes, potions can bring about a loss of control, so there's the possibility of harm. A low level of harm means there is nothing wrong with the potion... Klein let out a breath of relief and wound the pendulum on his left wrist before covering it with his sleeve.

At that moment, Crestet couldn't help but sigh.

"... You really are a professional Seer."

"I must fully utilize my advantage, but I can't rely on it too much and think that it's all-powerful," Klein replied softly and took up the Clown potion bottle.

After drinking it, I'll become a Sequence 8 Beyond...

The thought flashed in his mind and Klein didn't hesitate. He raised the bottle, tipped his head, and gulped down the potion.

Bitter! So bitter!

It sucks, totally!

He instantly realized what it meant to look good on the outside, but rotten on the inside. His face had contorted as a result of the potion. He wanted to puke, but he couldn't.

Then, Klein realized that his face was flushed red. As for the rest of his body, they were experiencing a similar reaction.

He was convinced that he looked like a steamed lobster. As for his spirit and mind, they felt like they had been extracted into a thin needle, fusing with the potion, drop by drop, as it stabbed into each and every one of cells.

It was a feeling that needed no microscope to observe his cells. Klein stood there and "saw" the intruder invade his body's most minute areas.

For a few seconds, he felt like a robot that was having its parts and electrical circuits swapped out.

After an unknown period of time had passed, his mind reflected his figure, as though he was listening to himself singing through his own ears.

Due to this strange projection, Klein discovered that he could precisely control his facial and bodily motions.

Meanwhile, his ears buzzed. He heard the murmurs and shouting echoing around him which had not happened in a while.

Hornacis... Flegrea... Hornacis... Flegrea... Hornacis... Flegrea...

Phew. Klein imagined the layered spherical light and slowly entered a Cogitation state. Bit by bit, he escaped from the state of having his spirituality seep out where he had a slight loss of control.

At that moment, he knew that he had advanced successfully. He knew that he was a Sequence 8 Clown.

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Chapter 169: New Abilities

Translator: AtlasStudios **Editor:** AtlasStudios

After the color in Klein's eyes went back to normal, Crestet Cesimir said with a laugh, "You can move about and try to get used to the changes in your body. Try to find the core powers that were given to you by the Clown potion."

Klein nodded. He considered the fact that he might need guidance from the deacon and thus didn't care about his presence. He repeatedly followed what he had been practicing all this time as he took a step forward. He twisted his hips and threw a punch forward, launching a frontal jab.

Pa!

He heard the crisp sound of his fist breaking the air. The power in the forward thrust exceeded his expectations.

In that instant, he felt as though he was sitting in a carriage which had abruptly hit the brakes. He lost his balance and fell forward.

Oh no! This is about to become an embarrassing story—just like Leonard's... Klein mused. But at that moment, he noticed that he could still effectively control his muscles, his body, as well as his center of gravity!

He simultaneously exerted force with his spine, tendons, and ligaments, instantly adjusting his center of mass and managing to stand firm despite his distorted posture.

Well... Upon gaining some understanding of this, Klein attempted several other actions. He confirmed that the biggest change in his body was the massive increase in coordination. He would no longer lose his balance unless there were some extenuating circumstances.

I feel like a roly-poly tumbler... I can even act in a circus now! It wouldn't be too hard for me to walk on a rope... The Clown potion sure lives up to its name... Many thoughts flashed through his mind. Klein once again tested the extent of the improvements to his strength, agility, and speed.

Hmm, I should be around the same level as Teacher Gawain. After I get used to this and go through the specialized training, I'll definitely become more powerful... Also, with my current mastery over my body, it would be easy for me to grasp combat techniques. Klein stopped moving and nodded in thought.

According to his plans, he estimated that he would become decent in combat arts only after half a year. But after consuming the Clown potion, he felt that it would only take a month, perhaps two or three weeks, before he could qualify as a policeman that was adept in combat.

That was the difference between an average person and a Beyonder.

In a sense, the talents of Beyonders were beyond the reach of normal humans!

Crestet watched silently as the newly advanced Clown tried out various actions before completely stopping. He then nodded.

“It truly is a potion adept in the field of combat.”

Without waiting for Klein to speak, he asked, “What sounds did you hear just now?”

“I heard someone muttering Hornacis.” Klein wanted to keep the term Flegrea a secret for the time being.

He wanted to observe the reaction of Deacon Cesimir. If he was willing to relay information regarding the Hornacis mountain range and the Nation of the Evernight, Klein would then add on, saying that he heard something different again.

Crestet nodded slightly, skipping over the topic. He reminded Klein, “Remember, a High-Sequence Beyonder can influence corresponding Low-Sequence Beyonders of the same Sequence pathway to a certain extent. In a way, some parts of the respective pathways contain the Realm of Demigods. The murmurings and howls might have been intentionally conveyed to you by them. They might be filled with malicious intent.

“You must be even more cautious if the Sequence pathway belongs to an evil god. I had a chat with Dunn just now. The Nighthawk in your team who lost control recently met with such a situation.”

Old Neil... The Hidden Sage... Klein’s expression darkened. He nodded solemnly and said, “Your Grace, I will remember this. I will not be tempted by the murmurings or howls. I will not be corrupted by them.”

At the same time, he thought of something else.

Could this be the reason why the Church only provides the pathways for Sleepless and Corpse Collector, while hiding a large number of the other pathways? After all, the Sleepless pathway belongs to the Evernight

Goddess, and Death which corresponds to the Corpse Collector pathway has already fallen... As for why the Church would still offer the Mystery Prayer and Seer, it's because these two jobs are of a support type and can fill the shortcomings of the Sequence 9 and 8 pathways for Sleepless and Corpse Collector. Furthermore, they're only at the beginning of the pathway, so the influence they can gather wouldn't be too prominent...

But this doesn't explain why they would hide the names and unique traits of the potions... or the lack of information as to what one should take note of when facing them...

Klein retracted his thoughts when he saw Crestet Cesimir pick up his suitcase to leave. He adopted a curious tone.

"Your Grace, I would like to know how to act as a Clown. Do I have to go to a circus?"

Crestet smoothed his tall collar and chuckled.

"According to our current understanding of philosophy, you just made the mistake of formalism.

"You need to understand that the name of a potion not only represents a job. It also represents a group of people that share certain traits. For example, we can also describe Seers differently. We can call them people who can see fate, yet remain respectful of fate. Of course, as I mentioned before, there are some differences to the rules concluded by each individual even if they consumed the same potion. You cannot completely reference the experiences of another person, do you understand?"

Klein nodded in thought.

“I think I can understand some of it. I can act as a Clown in my daily life, as long as I have grasped its essence?”

“In theory,” Crestet answered, being careful about his choice of words.

“... I understand.” Klein drew a crimson moon on his chest. “Thank you, Your Grace. May the Goddess bless you.”

Hmm, just what is the essence of a Clown? If I don't take into consideration what a clown represents back on Earth and only think about what it means in this world, a clown is a job that entertains people using ridiculous methods. For example, hilarious getups, exaggerated actions, trickster-like performances? The core is that it must be ridiculous, and it must entertain others. It feels a little off... Must I consider it from the perspective of court jesters from ancient times? Klein thought about it silently as he felt at a loss.

Crestet looked at him and also drew a crimson moon before his chest.

He smiled, revealing the wrinkles at the corner of his eyes.

“May the Goddess bless you too.”

At that moment, Klein suddenly perceived something, an intuition that felt like a prediction, that Deacon Cesimir would put his left foot forward!

He then saw Crestet pick up the silver suitcase and step toward the entrance of the alchemy room with his left foot!

One step, two steps, three steps. Klein watched as Crestet walked out of the hidden door, his figure vanishing into the corridor.

This... He was dazed for a moment before he felt intense excitement.

The Beyonder powers of the Clown potion were more powerful than he imagined!

He could intuitively predict a person's next course of action!

Was the combination of this ability, coupled with his powerful coordination, exceptional agility, and speed, as well as decent strength, considered being good at fighting with artifice? Klein thought about this revelation.

So, this can be considered the manifestation of the Seer's abilities in Sequence 8, but it's not enough... This pathway must be one that gives a unique ability every time I advance before reaching a High-Sequence Beyonder. But the intuitions I get are fleeting, so I don't think I can take advantage of them every single time. Of course, this ability is powerful enough as it is. Taking advantage of it once should be enough to turn defeat into victory... Oh right, after I reduce the influence of the negative effects that come with the Clown potion, I can try the ritual to summon myself. I nearly forgot about that... Yeah, the Captain must have infected me with his awful memory!

In the midst of his thoughts, Klein observed himself once again. He wanted to see if the Clown potion had brought along any other abilities.

According to the confidential records of the Nighthawks, if the potion would allow the person who consumed it to gain mastery over a certain spell, the person would be able to faintly detect what kinds of spells he obtained after advancing as if he was being instilled with knowledge.

But I don't sense any of that. In other words, Clown doesn't come with the ability to quickly cast spells, as reported in the confidential records of the Nighthawks... Could the meaning of "crafty" be that I can now effectively use my expressions and body language to more easily fool

people with my lies? Klein stretched his neck while seriously analyzing his current condition.

At this moment, he couldn't help but think back to the suited clown he had encountered previously. The clown's peculiar and varied spells had left a deep impression.

Hmm, that member of the Secret Order is probably a Sequence 7 Beyond. His clown getup was purely to mask his facial features to avoid being placed on a wanted list... It's no wonder that he could hold his own against two Sequence 7s and a Sequence 8... If he had deciphered the fact that I wasn't under the influence of Sealed Artifact 2-049 and avoided falling under its control, ten of me might not have been enough to deal with him.

Of course, Clown is not completely devoid of spells. There are still spells like these...

Klein walked toward the long table and picked up the piece of paper that the Clown formula was written on.

His pupils darkened and with a flick of his wrist, he tossed the piece of paper into the air.

Pa!

It was as if the soft piece of paper had become a dagger, and it pierced itself into the wall of the alchemy room!

I can bring a deck of tarot cards with me in the future. They can be used both for divination or as weapons. Klein collected himself and started to pack up the objects left behind from the potion's concoction.

After dealing with this and burning the formula for the potion, Klein exhaled and left the alchemy room, closing the secret door behind him.

For the time being, he didn't feel like trying to entertain others through ridiculous methods because of what happened to Old Neil. He intended to lessen the influence of the potion through Cogitation first.

Phew, this is going to be a brand new experience again... No matter what happens, I'm no longer just a supporting member... Yes, ever since Old Neil passed away, I'm the only one left in the Tingen Nighthawks team that can provide support. The Holy Cathedral will most likely send a Mystery Pryer or a Seer to the team... Klein followed the wall lamps, walking down the dark corridor, and calmly made his way up the stairs leading to the Blackthorn Security Company.

He then saw the sunlight in the Nighthawks' recreation room.

The sunlight shone in through the oriel window, sunlight which was pure and warm.

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Chapter 170: Copper Whistle

Translator: AtlasStudios **Editor:** AtlasStudios

Klein turned towards the Captain's office and saw that the door was wide open. Dunn Smith was leaning back in his chair, sniffing at his pipe.

When Dunn swept his gray eyes at him, he changed his seating posture.

“You seem to be in good shape, nothing like someone who had just consumed a potion.”

“This might be the advantage of fully digesting a potion before leveling up.” Klein closed the door behind him and took a seat.

He and Dunn both knew about the “acting method,” so their oath didn’t keep them from talking about the “acting method” with each other. They could exchange their thoughts about it, but the two of them didn’t bring it up with a tacit understanding. They fell silent at the same time after the exchange.

Klein thought and asked, “Has His Grace left?”

“Yes, as a high-ranking deacon, he has other matters to take care of.” Dunn thought for a moment. “Oh, he took the pair of red eyeballs that remained after Old Neil died.”

Klein was shocked and confused.

“Why?”

Dunn picked up his coffee and took a sip. He answered after a long silence, “We shouldn’t lie to ourselves. A Rampager is in fact already a monster, and as I told you before, monsters leave behind things that are rich with Beyonder powers after they die. When these relics can’t be controlled, they have to be sealed. Yes, that is one of the most common origins of Sealed Artifacts. According to the Nighthawks’ internal rules, the items left behind by Rampagers need to be stored elsewhere, so that they won’t trigger their partners.”

“A logical rule.” Klein nodded heavily.

Suddenly, he sharply noticed that the Captain had missed out something. So, he asked curiously, “What if the item left behind is controllable?”

Dunn looked at him, his gray eyes were deep like a quiet night.

He sighed and said, “You wouldn’t want to know the answer.”

Klein was taken aback before he suddenly realized a possibility.

Normal monsters left behind Beyonder ingredients which could be used to make potions.

But what of a Rampager who turned into a monster?

If they left behind controllable items, would those things be used as Beyonder ingredients?

Upon realizing that, Klein suddenly felt a strong sense of disgust. He couldn’t help but turn his head to retch. Even his sight suddenly grew blurry.

This is such a terrifying theory... But it’s an answer that’s highly likely of being closer to the truth! In that instant, he had a deeper understanding of sayings like “To fight against the abyss, we have to endure the corruption of the abyss,” and “We are guardians, but also a bunch of miserable wretches that are constantly fighting against threats and madness.”

Would this be one of the reasons why the Church hides the “acting method”? So that they can recycle a certain number of their own members for spare parts? But this will make members of the upper echelons reject the Church... Klein’s face clearly reflected his changing expressions.

Upon seeing his response, Dunn suddenly laughed. There was a twinkling light in his gray eyes.

“Think about it on the brighter side of things, you can think of it as our teammates watching over us in a different form. They will be with us forever.”

After saying that, Dunn lowered his head, picked up his coffee, and brought it to his mouth.

After nearly twenty seconds of silence, he lifted his head and said, “And you don’t have to worry. As long as we can find sources of Beyond ingredients, we wouldn’t do what you were thinking about.

“Alright, according to the rules, you’ll receive a day off since you just advanced. You can decide whether or not you want to go to your combat training this afternoon, but you have to inform Gawain either way.”

Klein gently nodded. Taking a deep breath, he straightened his back and said, “Captain, I have finished my lessons on mysticism. I’d like to use my mornings to learn techniques such as tracking and monitoring.”

He paused and added with a serious expression, “I’d like to fulfill my full duty as a Nighthawk soon.”

Dunn gave him a piercing look and sighed.

“You’re tougher than I imagined. As you wish.”

“Yes, Captain!” Klein suddenly stood up and drew a crimson moon on his chest.

...

After leaving the Blackthorn Security Company, Klein didn't return home to rest, but instead, took the opportunity to take a trackless carriage to Azik's place.

Ding dong, ding dong.

As the doorbell rang clearly, Azik opened the door in a white shirt and black vest.

There was a gold watch chain hanging from his vest pocket.

"Don't you need to work?" Azik took a glance at the sky and realized that the sun had yet to climb to its peak.

"I actually have most of the day off due to some special circumstances," Klein explained vaguely.

Azik looked at him and appeared to notice something as he nodded and made way for Klein's entry.

At the hallway, Klein set his cane aside, took off his hat, and followed Azik to the living room.

The living room was comfortably furnished with a fireplace, rocking chair, couches, and a coffee table. Klein sat at his usual spot.

Azik sat down opposite Klein and pointed at the cigars on the coffee table.

"Do you want one?"

"No." Klein shook his head firmly.

Azik didn't attempt to persuade him as he struck a match and lit one of the cigars. At the same time, he asked casually, "Have you taken care of the matter at Morse Town?"

"I have to thank you for that," Klein replied sincerely.

At the same time, he secretly lampooned, Mr. Azik, before you lost your memories, you definitely must've left behind quite a sizable wealth for yourself. Otherwise, how could a teacher who isn't even an associate professor be able to enjoy cigars so frequently?

As Azik was fiddling with his cigar, Klein brought up a matter.

"Mr. Azik, I have something to ask you."

"What is it?" Azik replied without lifting his head.

Klein paused and organized his words.

"One of my colleagues lost control and became a monster. I'd like to know if his spirit was contaminated?"

He wasn't certain if Mr. Azik knew the meaning of "losing control," so he prepared an explanation, just in case.

Azik stopped what he was doing and lifted his head to look at Klein. He nodded heavily and said, "No doubt. You have to be very careful in a situation like that. If he lost control due to the temptation of an evil god or devil, try to avoid contacting his spirit. It might very likely lead to life-threatening danger."

"I understand." Klein let out a breath of disappointment.

When he was at Old Neil's place, he was too emotional and had forgotten to contact Old Neil's spirit. Neither did Dunn Smith remind him at all. Hence, he missed the opportunity entirely.

Now that I think of it, Captain didn't forget but intentionally avoided bringing it up...Klein was silent in thought.

He didn't dwell on the topic and instead mentioned his previous encounter.

"Mr. Azik, I tried to divine the origins of Morse Town's paranormal incidents. I ended up seeing an upside-down pyramid that extended underground. My teammate told me that it's a symbol of Death. Only His descendants would receive such an honor."

Azik put down the match and took up the cigar cutter when he suddenly fell into a daze. He was motionless for quite a while.

He leaned back into his seat and wore an unusually gloomy expression.

After a while, he said in a deep voice, "This gives me a very familiar feeling, but I don't seem to be recalling anything."

"I'm very sorry." Klein sighed sincerely.

He had imagined that he could use the revelation obtained from his divination to further jolt Mr. Azik's memories.

Azik cut off the cigar cap, shook his head, and smiled bitterly.

"If it was something that could be recalled easily, I think I would've long found a way to escape my fate. Of course, I have to thank you for your kindness. Thank you for remembering about me this entire time."

He thought for a moment before adding, “Oh, and I’ll be leaving Tingen in the near future.”

“Why?” Klein asked in surprise.

Didn’t we say that we were going to find the manipulator behind the scenes, the person who affected my fate, and stole your child’s skull?

Azik held his cigar and sighed before explaining, “The target might’ve noticed my attention and investigation. He hasn’t been taking any action recently, leaving me with no clues. Thus, I’m thinking of leaving Tingen for the time being and going to Backlund. On one hand, I can take the opportunity to search for traces that I left behind before I lost my memories. On the other hand, my absence might let the target lower his guard.”

That’s right. Mr. Azik’s last memory loss was around Backlund University. It’s a pity that you can’t take my place, searching for the red chimney house... Klein nodded solemnly and said,

“I’ll pay close attention to this. Once the target takes action and exposes himself, I’ll inform you immediately.

“Hmm. Mr. Azik, how will I inform you of things in a timely manner?”

Klein had the idea that if Azik was Death’s descendant, or if he was linked to Death in a certain way, his powers would have been something similar to the Corpse Collector Sequence. He definitely had a way to call something like Daly’s messenger.

In other words, this could confirm if Azik was actually related to Death or a descendant of Death.

Azik took a puff of his cigar and thought for nearly twenty seconds. He took out an ornament from his left sleeve.

It was an intricate but old copper whistle. There were many unique patterns that filled it with a mysterious aura.

“This is something that I had with me when I woke up in Backlund. When you blow it, you’ll summon a messenger that belongs to me.” Azik held the copper whistle as he explained in detail.

After so many years, this copper whistle can still be used? This should be a magical item, right? Klein was surprised and delighted that he had indirectly proved that Mr. Azik was related to Death.

Azik gave Klein a glance, then he put the copper whistle to his mouth and demonstrated.

His cheeks puffed up as he blew with all his might.

Nothing was heard, but Klein felt a sudden gloominess and coldness.

He quickly tapped his left molar and saw that there were blurry white bones being thrown up from the ground, one after another, forming a strange fountain.

After a few seconds, there was an illusory monster in the living room.

Its body was made of white bones, and there were dark flames glowing in its eye sockets. It was almost four meters tall, and it towered over Klein, who wasn’t even 175cm tall.

As he watched its head nearly tear through the ceiling, Klein suddenly had a thought, Mr. Azik, isn't your messenger a little... too exaggerated?

Azik didn't share those thoughts at all. He smiled and said, "After you pass the letter to it, blow the whistle again to end the summoning. Then, it'll send the letter to me very quickly, in a secretive manner."

After that, Azik shook his wrist and threw the old copper whistle across the room.

Klein extended his right hand and accurately caught it. He found it cold but mild.

Thank you Clown potion... He breathed a sigh of relief. He wiped the whistle and blew it hard.

Silently, the huge messenger fell apart as blurry white bones sank underground.

...

The Tussock River ran through Backlund and harbors that dotted around the area.

Alger Wilson wore the long priest robes of the Church of the Lord of Storms as he walked down from the passenger ship slowly.

He saw people walking to and fro around the harbor with countless port workers sweating under the sun. It was a bustling yet noisy scene.

"It's been a while, Backlund," Alger muttered to himself.

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