

Lord of Mysteries

1

Clown

Cuttlefish That Loves Diving



In the waves of steam and machinery,
who could achieve extraordinary?

In the fogs of history and darkness,
who was whispering?

I woke up from the realm of mysteries
and opened my eyes to the world.

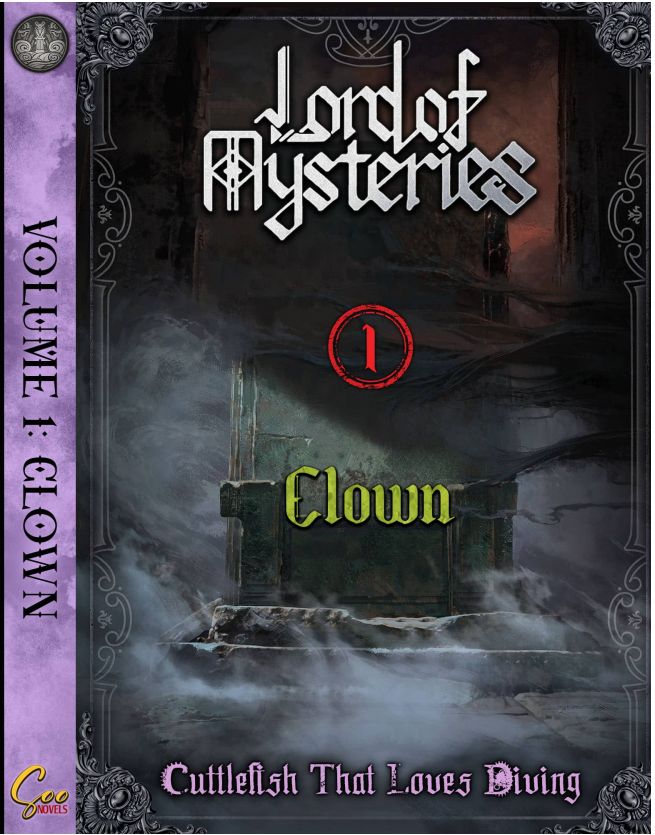
Firearms, cannons, battleships,
airships, and difference machines.

Potions, divination, curses, hanged-man,
and sealed artifacts...

The lights shone brightly,
yet the secrets of the world were never far away.

This was a legend of the "Fool".

Lord of Mysteries



VOLUME 1: CLOWN

Lord of Mysteries

1

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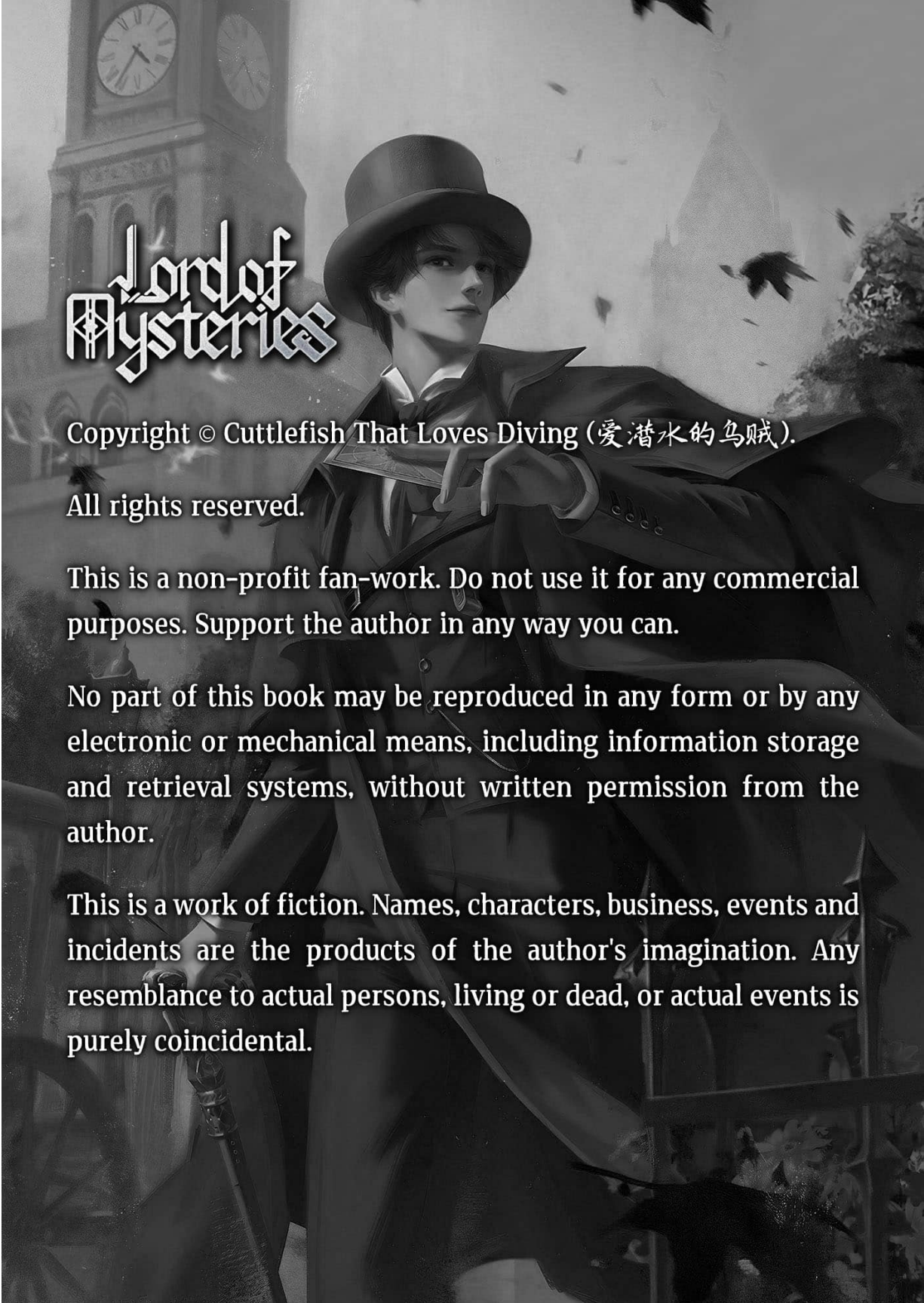
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Lord of Mysteries

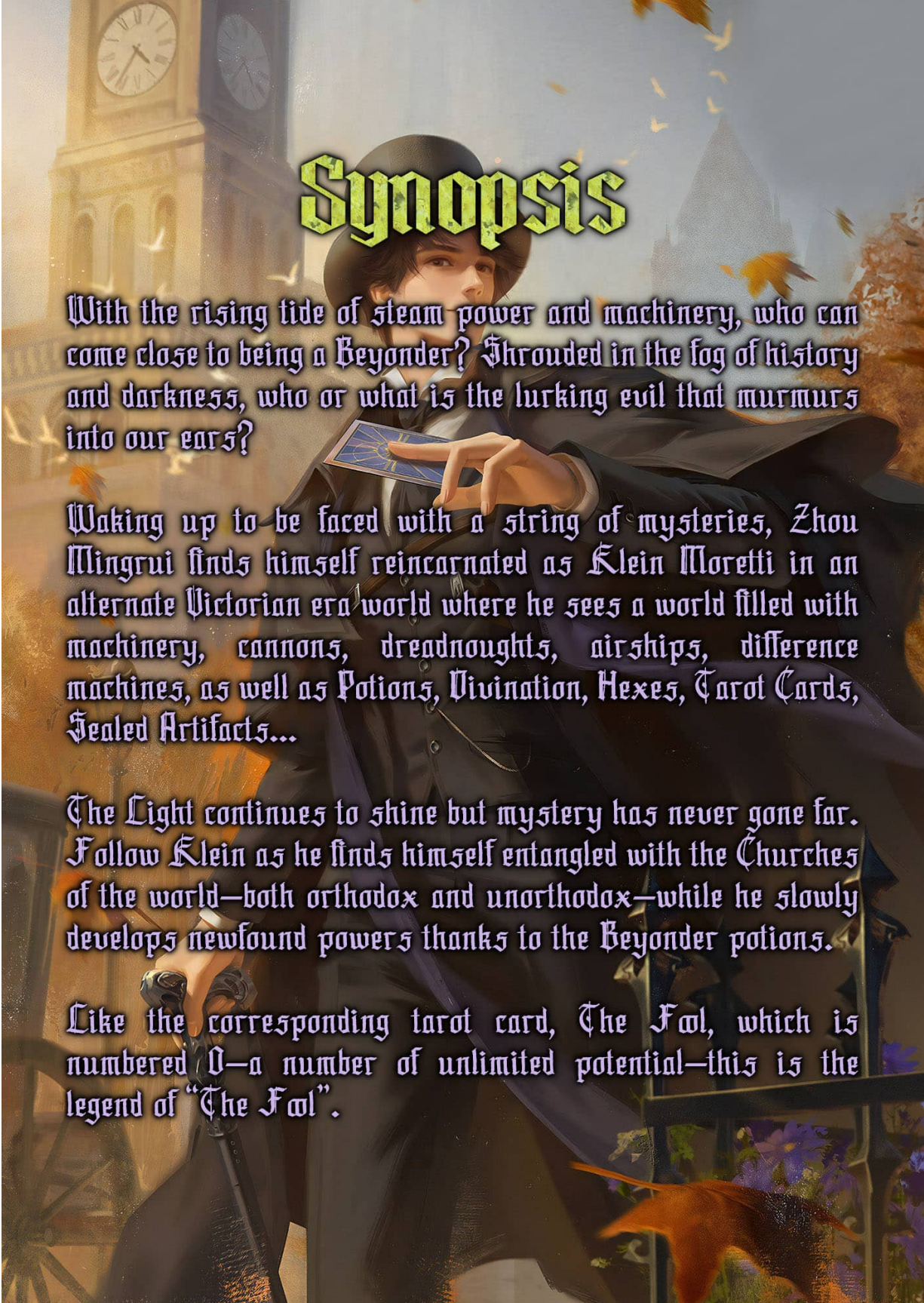
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This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, business, events and incidents are the products of the author's imagination. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, or actual events is purely coincidental.

The background of the entire page is a detailed illustration of a man in a Victorian-style top hat and dark coat. He is holding a tarot card in his right hand, which depicts a sun-like symbol. The setting is a city street with a large clock tower in the background and falling autumn leaves in the air.

Synopsis

With the rising tide of steam power and machinery, who can come close to being a Beyonder? Shrouded in the fog of history and darkness, who or what is the lurking evil that murmurs into our ears?

Waking up to be faced with a string of mysteries, Zhou Mingrui finds himself reincarnated as Klein Moretti in an alternate Victorian era world where he sees a world filled with machinery, cannons, dreadnoughts, airships, difference machines, as well as Potions, Divination, Hexes, Tarot Cards, Sealed Artifacts...

The Light continues to shine but mystery has never gone far. Follow Klein as he finds himself entangled with the Churches of the world—both orthodox and unorthodox—while he slowly develops newfound powers thanks to the Beyonder potions.

Like the corresponding tarot card, The Fool, which is numbered 0—a number of unlimited potential—this is the legend of “The Fool”.

Table of Contents

FRONT COVER

FULL COVER

VOLUME 1: CLOWN

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SYNOPSIS

CHAPTER 1: CRIMSON

CHAPTER 2: SITUATION

CHAPTER 3: MELISSA

CHAPTER 4: DIVINATION

CHAPTER 5: RITUAL

CHAPTER 6: BEYONDER

CHAPTER 7: CODE NAMES

CHAPTER 8: A NEW ERA

CHAPTER 9: THE NOTEBOOK

CHAPTER 10: THE NORM

CHAPTER 11: REAL CULINARY SKILLS

CHAPTER 12: HERE AGAIN

CHAPTER 13: NIGHTHAWK

CHAPTER 14: THE MEDIUM

CHAPTER 15: THE INVITATION

CHAPTER 16: RAT-BAITING WITH DOGS

CHAPTER 17: SPECIAL OPERATIONS DEPARTMENT

CHAPTER 18: ORIGIN AND CAUSE

CHAPTER 19: SEALED ARTIFACTS

CHAPTER 20: THE FORGETFUL DUNN

CHAPTER 21: AN OLD FRIEND IN A DIFFERENT WORLD

CHAPTER 22: STARTING SEQUENCE

CHAPTER 23: SIDE ARM

CHAPTER 24: PENNY-PINCHER

CHAPTER 25: CATHEDRAL

CHAPTER 26: PRACTICE

CHAPTER 27: SIBLINGS' DINNER

CHAPTER 28: SECRET ORDER

CHAPTER 29: "JOBS" AND RENTALS ARE SERIOUS BUSINESS

CHAPTER 30: BRAND NEW BEGINNING

CHAPTER 31: POTION

CHAPTER 32: SPIRIT VISION

CHAPTER 33: SWITCH

CHAPTER 34: ADVANCE PAYMENT

CHAPTER 35: EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION

CHAPTER 36: A SIMPLE QUESTION

CHAPTER 37: THE CLUB

CHAPTER 38: NOVICE HOBBYIST

CHAPTER 39: INTERESTING TRICK

CHAPTER 40: MYSTICISM CURRICULUM

CHAPTER 41: AUDREY AND HER SUSIE

CHAPTER 42: BUTLER KLEE

CHAPTER 43: SEARCH

CHAPTER 44: FATE

CHAPTER 45: RETURNING

CHAPTER 46: PORTRAIT

CHAPTER 47: OLD NEIL'S LACK OF MONEY

CHAPTER 48: HANASS VINCENT

CHAPTER 49: DIVINATION ART

CHAPTER 50: OLD NEIL'S METHOD OF REPAYMENT

CHAPTER 51: THE GROUNDED RITUALISTIC MAGIC

CHAPTER 52: SPECTATOR

CHAPTER 53: LISTENER

CHAPTER 54: THE FIRST DIVINATION REQUESTER

CHAPTER 55: REVELATION

CHAPTER 56: ESCAPE FROM THE SEA

CHAPTER 57: ORGANIZATION AND SUMMARY

CHAPTER 58: A TRAIN OF THOUGHT

CHAPTER 59: ROSELLE'S ORIGINS

CHAPTER 60: SECOND BLASPHEMY SLATE

CHAPTER 61: STRANGE SYMBOL

CHAPTER 62: THE SEER'S SUGGESTION

CHAPTER 63: DREAM INTERPRETATION

CHAPTER 64: INSTIGATOR

CHAPTER 65: BEYONDER INFORMATION

CHAPTER 66: DEMONESS SECT

CHAPTER 67: RESPONSE

CHAPTER 68: MONSTER

CHAPTER 69: PROTECTION AMULET

CHAPTER 70: 2-049'S ARRIVAL

CHAPTER 71: SLUGGISH PHENOMENON

CHAPTER 72: TRACKING

CHAPTER 73: FIRST BATTLE

CHAPTER 74: RAY BIEBER

CHAPTER 75: SAVING HIMSELF

CHAPTER 76: DEALING WITH THE AFTERMATH

CHAPTER 77: REMNANT ITEMS

CHAPTER 78: TRAUMA

CHAPTER 79: ANOTHER MURMURING

CHAPTER 80: BANQUET INVITATION

CHAPTER 81: FINALLY MEETING

CHAPTER 82: HERB STORE

CHAPTER 83: CARVING

CHAPTER 84: ELIZABETH

CHAPTER 85: URGENCY

CHAPTER 86: PRAYER

CHAPTER 87: EXHORTATION

CHAPTER 88: REPORT

CHAPTER 89: A SIMPLE MISSION

CHAPTER 90: FINDINGS BY SIGHT

CHAPTER 91: SOLUTION

CHAPTER 92: PSYCHOLOGICAL EXPERT

CHAPTER 93: NEW DIARY PAGE

CHAPTER 94: HIDDEN SAGE

CHAPTER 95: THE SUPPLICANT

CHAPTER 96: DALY'S GUESS

CHAPTER 97: COMBAT TEACHER

CHAPTER 98: MR. AZIK

CHAPTER 99: RED CHIMNEY

CHAPTER 100: INTERPRETING SYMBOLS

CHAPTER 101: UNEXPECTED CLUE

CHAPTER 102: CLOTH MERCHANT

CHAPTER 103: DOING AS THE HEART WILLED

CHAPTER 104: MR. Z

CHAPTER 105: SPIRIT CHANNELING

CHAPTER 106: ARTIST KLEIN

CHAPTER 107: FORS

CHAPTER 108: DEEP INTO THE NIGHT

CHAPTER 109: DEDUCTION

CHAPTER 110: CONFIRMATION

CHAPTER 111: LETTING SLIP

CHAPTER 112: AZIK'S EXPLANATION

CHAPTER 113: REQUEST

CHAPTER 114: THE STANDARDS OF A MEMBER

CHAPTER 115: CHEAT

CHAPTER 116: LANEVUS'S CHILD

CHAPTER 117: CONTACT

CHAPTER 118: AUGUST

CHAPTER 119: THE TRUE LOWER STREET

CHAPTER 120: WORKHOUSE

CHAPTER 121: LEONARD'S HYPOTHESIS

CHAPTER 122: TARGET BUILDING

CHAPTER 123: BEYONDER BATTLE

CHAPTER 124: WRAPPING UP WORK

CHAPTER 125: BOLD IDEA

CHAPTER 126: DIVINATION ISN'T ALL-POWERFUL

CHAPTER 127: LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS

CHAPTER 128: THE IMPOVERISHED FOOL

CHAPTER 129: RAMPAGER

CHAPTER 130: BACKLUND'S SECRET GATHERING

CHAPTER 131: TRANSACTION

CHAPTER 132: MEETING THE MONSTER AGAIN

CHAPTER 133: EXPENSIVE CHARMS

CHAPTER 134: IT'S BEEN MORE THAN A MINUTE

CHAPTER 135: PORTRAIT OF A BARON

CHAPTER 136: THE STUMPED KLEIN

CHAPTER 137: CITY OF SILVER

CHAPTER 138: GIANT PATHWAY

CHAPTER 139: STUDYING 3-0782

CHAPTER 140: EXPERT AT COURTING DEATH

CHAPTER 141: NIGHTMARE

CHAPTER 142: ASSOCIATION

CHAPTER 143: THE FOOL'S REAL-TIME TRANSLATOR

CHAPTER 144: THREE-WAY DEAL

CHAPTER 145: REQUEST FOR COOPERATION

CHAPTER 146: CREEPING HUNGER

CHAPTER 147: NIGHT VISITOR

CHAPTER 148: MESSENGER

CHAPTER 149: DIRECT HINT

CHAPTER 150: AZIK'S DISCOVERY

CHAPTER 151: KLEIN'S REQUEST

CHAPTER 152: NICE ATTEMPT

CHAPTER 153: FINAL ACT OF LAYING THE FOUNDATION

CHAPTER 154: SHARING “EXPERIENCE”

CHAPTER 155: URGENT MEETING

CHAPTER 156: MELISSA WHO TAKES THE LONG VIEW

CHAPTER 157: ITEM OF HIS DREAMS

CHAPTER 158: PREPAREDNESS AVERTS PERIL

CHAPTER 159: BESTOWMENT AND SACRIFICE

CHAPTER 160: SEIZING THE OPPORTUNITY

CHAPTER 161: INVERTED MAUSOLEUM

CHAPTER 162: INTENSE SUNLIGHT

CHAPTER 163: VARIOUS SIGNS

CHAPTER 164: MISERABLE WRETCHES

CHAPTER 165: EPITAPH

CHAPTER 166: EXAMINATION

CHAPTER 167: HOLY ARTIFACT

CHAPTER 168: CLOWN POTION

CHAPTER 169: NEW ABILITIES

CHAPTER 170: COPPER WHISTLE

CHAPTER 171: PROMOTION AND PAY RAISE

CHAPTER 172: "AUTOPSY"

CHAPTER 173: ZOMBIEFICATION

CHAPTER 174: MADAM SHARON

CHAPTER 175: DEDUCTION

CHAPTER 176: LETTER

CHAPTER 177: SUDDEN TURN OF EVENTS

CHAPTER 178: THE SUBSEQUENT IDEAS

CHAPTER 179: PRAISING MR. FOOL

CHAPTER 180: A SMART PERSON ALWAYS OVERTHINKS

CHAPTER 181: DIFFERENT STATE

CHAPTER 182: WANDERER KLEIN

CHAPTER 183: A LESSON ON MEDIUMSHIP

CHAPTER 184: BEHIND THE GATE

CHAPTER 185: SPIRITUAL WORLD

CHAPTER 186: THE HANDSOME CAPTAIN

CHAPTER 187: AZIK'S WARNING

CHAPTER 188: BALL

CHAPTER 189: PRAYERS AND REPLIES

CHAPTER 190: THE ASSORTMENT OF ABILITIES

CHAPTER 191: UNCLEAR MOTIVES

CHAPTER 192: ATTENTION

CHAPTER 193: COMING TO A CLOSE

CHAPTER 194: INFILTRATION

CHAPTER 195: "LOCKPICKING EXPERT" KLEIN

CHAPTER 196: SPIRIT MEDIUM MIRROR

CHAPTER 197: OPERATION

CHAPTER 198: APPROPRIATING UNIQUENESS

CHAPTER 199: SUCCESSFUL TOSS OF THE DIE

CHAPTER 200: THE DEMONESS OF PLEASURE

CHAPTER 201: INQUIRY

CHAPTER 202: CONFIRMING THE SITUATION

CHAPTER 203: MUTANT

CHAPTER 204: VISITOR

CHAPTER 205: URGENT ARRANGEMENT

CHAPTER 206: GRADE 2 SEALED ARTIFACTS

CHAPTER 207: GUARDIAN

CHAPTER 208: CRY

CHAPTER 209: LIGHT

CHAPTER 210: STORY

CHAPTER 211: FUNERAL

CHAPTER 212: AVENGER

CHAPTER 213: ANOTHER LOOK

END OF VOLUME 1

PATHWAYS GUIDE

IMAGE GALLERY

CHARACTERS

LOCATIONS

MAP OF THE LORD OF MYSTERIES WORLD

TO BE CONTINUED IN...

BACK COVER

CHAPTER 1: CRIMSON

Painful!

How painful!

My head hurts so badly!

A gaudy and dazzling dreamworld filled with murmurs instantly shattered. The sound asleep Zhou Mingrui felt an abnormal throbbing pain in his head as though someone had ruthlessly lashed at him with a pole again and again. No, it was more like a sharp object pierced right through his temples followed by a twist!

Ouch... In his stupor, Zhou Mingrui attempted to turn around, look up, and sit up; however, he was completely unable to move his limbs as though he had lost control over his body.

From the looks of it, I'm still not awake. I'm still in a dream... Who knows, perhaps the next scene will be of me thinking I'm already awake, but in fact, am actually still sleeping...

Zhou Mingrui, who was not unfamiliar with similar encounters, tried his best to focus in order to escape the shackles placed upon him by the darkness and confusion.

However, while still in his reverie, whatever will he could summon was ethereal like a fleeting fog. He found his thoughts difficult to control and introspect. No matter how much he tried, he still lost his focus as random thoughts surfaced in his mind.

Why would I suddenly have such an excruciating headache in the middle of the night?

And it's really painful!

Could it be something like a cerebral hemorrhage?

*F**k, don't tell me I'm going to die young?*

I need to wake up! Now!

Eh? Why doesn't it seem to hurt as much as before? But why does it still feel like a blunt knife is slicing through my brains...

From the looks of it, I won't be able to continue sleeping anymore. How am I to show up for work tomorrow?

Why am I still thinking about work? This is some authentic headache. Of course I have to take time off! I don't have to worry about my manager's grumblings!

Hey, putting it that way, it doesn't seem too bad. Hehe, I can end up getting some spare time for myself!

Throbbing pain inundated Zhou Mingrui, allowing him to slowly accumulate immaterial strength until he was finally able to move his back and open his eyes. He finally broke free from his reverie.

His vision first blurred before it was screened by a faint crimson red. All he could see was a study desk made of burly wood in front of him. Right in the middle was an opened notebook with coarse, yellow pages. The title was eye-catchingly written with strange, deep black lettering.

To the left of the notebook was a stack of neatly arranged books, numbering about eight. The wall on their right was inset with grayish-white pipes with wall lamps connected to them.

The lamp had a classical Western style to it. It was about half the size of an adult's head with an inner layer of transparent glass and an exterior gridded with black metal.

Diagonally beneath the lamp was a black ink bottle shrouded in a pale red glow. Its embossed surface formed a blurry angel pattern.

In front of the ink bottle and to the right of the notebook sat a dark-colored pen with a fully circular body. Its tip shimmered with a faint glint while its cap rested right beside a brass revolver.

A gun? A revolver? Zhou Mingrui was completely taken aback. The things laid before him were alien to him. It looked nothing like his room!

While feeling shocked and confused, he discovered that the desk, notebook, ink bottle, and revolver were covered in a layer of crimson 'veil,' a result of the light shining from the window.

Subconsciously, he looked up and shifted his gaze up bit by bit.

In midair, a crimson moon hung high above the backdrop of a 'black velvet curtain,' glowing in silence.

This... Zhou Mingrui felt inexplicably horrified as he stood up abruptly. However, before his feet fully straightened, his brain protested with throbbing pain. It made him temporarily lose his strength as he fell uncontrollably. His buttocks slammed heavily onto the burly wood chair.

Pa!

The pain did little. Zhou Mingrui stood up again by propping himself up. He turned around in a fluster as he began to size up the environment he was in.

The room was not very large, with a brown door on each side of the room. Close to an opposite wall was a low wooden bed.

Between the bed and the left door was a cabinet. Its two doors were swung open and beneath it were five drawers.

To the side of the cabinet, there was the same grayish-white pipe on the wall at the height of a person. However, it was connected to a strange mechanical device with exposed gears and bearings in several spots.

Items resembling coal stoves sat in the right corner of the room near the table, along with soup pots, iron pots, and other kitchen utensils.

Across the right door was a dressing mirror with two cracks. Its bottom was made of wood and the patterns were simple and plain.

With a sweep of his gaze, Zhou Mingrui noticed himself in the mirror—the present him.

Black hair, brown eyes, a linen shirt, thinly built, average-looking features and a rather deep outline...

This... Zhou Mingrui immediately drew a gasp as many helpless and confused guesses surfaced in his mind.

The revolver in ancient European style and the crimson moon that looked different from Earth's moon could only mean one thing!

C-could I have transmigrated? Zhou Mingrui widened his mouth slightly.

He had grown up reading web novels and had often fantasized over such scenes. However, he momentarily found it hard to accept the situation when he found himself in one.

This was probably what it means to love a fantasy [\[1\]](#)? In a minute, Zhou Mingrui had already cursed himself while trying to make the best out of his adverse situation.

If not for the still throbbing headache that made his thoughts high strung but clear, he would have definitely suspected that he was dreaming.

Calm down, calm down, calm down... After taking a few deep breaths, Zhou Mingrui worked hard to stop panicking.

At that moment, as his mind and body calmed down, memories began flooding him as they slowly appeared in his mind!

Klein Moretti, a citizen of the Northern Continent's Loen Kingdom, Awwa County, City of Tingen. He is also a recent graduate from the Department of History at Khoy University...

His father was a sergeant of the Imperial Army who had sacrificed himself during a colonial conflict with the Southern Continent. The bereavement allowance gave Klein the opportunity to study at a private language school and laid the foundation for his admission into university...

His mother was a devotee of the Evernight Goddess. She passed away the year Klein passed the entrance examinations to Khoy University...

He also had an elder brother and a younger sister. They stayed in a two bedroom apartment together...

Their family was not wealthy and its situation could even be described as somewhat wanting. At present, the family was supported solely by the elder brother who worked at an import and export company as a clerk...

As a history graduate, Klein grasped knowledge of the ancient Feysac language—deemed the origin of all languages in the Northern Continent—as well as the Hermes language which often appeared in ancient mausoleums as well as text regarding sacrificial and praying rituals...

Hermes language? Zhou Mingrui's mind stirred as he reached out to rub his throbbing temples. He cast his gaze toward the table at the opened notebook. He noticed that the text on the yellowed paper turned from strange to alien, before turning from alien to something familiar. It then turned into something readable.

It was text written in Hermes language!

The dark ink wrote the following:

“Everyone will die, including me.”

Hiss! Zhou Mingrui felt inexplicably horrified. He instinctively leaned back in an attempt to widen the distance between him and the notebook, as well as the text on it.

Being very weak, he nearly fell down but managed to extend his hands in a fluster to hold onto the edge of the table. He felt that the surrounding air was turbulent as though there were faint murmurings

resounding in it. The feeling was akin to hearing horror stories being recounted by elders when he was young.

He shook his head, believing that everything was an illusion. Zhou Mingrui found his balance and shifted his gaze from the notebook as he heaved for breath.

This time, his gaze landed on the shimmering brass revolver. He suddenly had a question arise in him.

With Klein's family situation, how can they have the money or means to buy a revolver?

Zhou Mingrui could not help but frown.

While in deep thought, he suddenly discovered a red handprint to the side of the table. Its color was deeper than the moonlight and much thicker than the 'veil.'

It was a bloody handprint!

A bloody handprint? Zhou Mingrui subconsciously flipped his right hand that had been holding the edge of the table. Looking down, he saw that his palm and fingers were covered in blood.

At the same time, the throbbing pain in his head continued. Although it had weakened a little, it continued incessantly.

Did I smash my head open?

Zhou Mingrui guessed as he turned around and walked towards a cracked dressing mirror.

A few steps later, a black-haired figure of medium build and brown eyes appeared clearly in front of him. The person had a distinct scholarly air to him.

Is this the present me? Klein Moretti?

Zhou Mingrui was stunned momentarily. Since there was insufficient lighting at night, he failed to see something clearly. He continued forward until he was just a step short from colliding with the mirror.

Using the crimson veil-like moonlight as illumination, he turned his head and examined the corner of his forehead.

A clear reflection appeared in the mirror. His temple had a grotesque wound with burn marks along its periphery. Blood stained the wound's surroundings and there were grayish-white brain juices squirming slowly within.

-
1. This is actually a proverb that describes Lord Ye. In ancient times, Lord Ye was very fond of dragons, adorning his whole palace—beams, pillars, doors, windows and walls—with drawings and carvings of them. When a real dragon in heaven heard of this, it was deeply moved by his infatuation and paid him a visit. When Lord Ye saw the real dragon thrusting its head in through the window of his study and its tail moving in his palace, he was frightened out of the house for his life. Clearly, what Lord Ye loved was not a real dragon.

CHAPTER 2: SITUATION

Tap! Tap! Tap!

Zhou Mingrui reeled back in fear at the sight that greeted him. It was as though the person in the dressing mirror was not himself, but a dessicated corpse.

How could a person with such grievous wounds be still alive!?

He turned his head in disbelief again and checked the other side. Even though he was a distance away and the lighting was poor, he could still see the penetrating wound and dark red blood stains.

“This...”

Zhou Mingrui drew a deep breath as he tried hard to calm himself.

He reached out to press his left chest and sensed his racing heart that exuded immense vitality.

He then touched his exposed skin. Beneath the slight coldness was flowing warmth.

When he squatted down and after verifying that his knees could bend, Zhou Mingrui stood up again and calmed down.

“What’s happening?” he muttered with a frown. He planned to inspect his head injury seriously once more.

He took two steps forward and suddenly paused. The moonlight of the sanguine moon was relatively dark, so it was insufficient for his ‘serious inspection.’

A memory fragment triggered as Zhou Mingrui turned his head to look at the grayish-white pipes and the metallic-gridded lamp on the wall right beside the study desk.

This was the most common gas lamp of the times. Its flame was stable and its illumination capabilities were excellent.

With Klein Moretti’s family situation, even a kerosene lamp was a dream, much less a gas lamp. Using candles was most apt for their standing and stature. However, back when he burned the midnight oil four years ago to be admitted into Khoy University, his elder brother, Benson, felt that it was an important matter which their family’s future

depended upon. Therefore, he insisted on creating conducive studying conditions for Klein even if it meant taking on debt.

Of course, Benson, who was literate and had worked for several years, was not a rash person who did not think of the consequences. He had quite some tricks up his sleeve. He reasoned with the landlord to 'raise the apartment's standards by installing gas pipes to improve the likelihood of rentals in the future.' The landlord was convinced and provided the money to complete the basic modifications. Then, using the convenience of working at an import and export company, he purchased a brand new gas lamp which was nearly at cost price. In the end, all he needed was to use his savings and did not need to borrow money.

After the memory fragment flashed past his mind, Zhou Mingrui came to the desk where he turned the pipe's valve and began twisting the gas lamp's switch.

With a sputtering sound, a spark sounded from friction. Light did not descend upon Zhou Mingrui as he had expected.

He twisted the switch a few more times, but all the gas lamp did was sputter and remain dark.

"Hmm..." Retracting his hand and pressing on his left temple, Zhou Mingrui sought for the reason by rummaging through his memory fragments.

A few seconds later, he turned around and walked toward the door. He arrived at the machine installation which was similarly inset into the wall and had grayish-white pipes connected to it.

This was a gas meter!

After seeing the exposed gears and bearings, Zhou Mingrui took out a coin from his trousers' pocket.

It was dark yellow in color and had a bronze shimmer to it. The front of the coin was engraved with a portrait of a crown-wearing man, and there was a '1' on a clump of wheat on the back.

Zhou Mingrui knew that this was the most basic currency of the Loen Kingdom. It was called a copper penny. One penny's purchasing power was roughly three to four yuan before his transmigration. Such coins had other denominations such as the five pence, a halfpence and a quarter-pence. Despite the three types, the denominations were not in small-enough units. In everyday life, one had to buy several different things just to spend a single coin from time to time.

After flipping the coin—which was only minted and circulated after King George III ascended to the throne—a few times, Zhou Mingrui inserted it into the gas meter's thin vertical 'mouth.'

Clink! Clang!

After the penny fell to the bottom of the meter, the sound of grinding gears sounded immediately, producing a short but melodious mechanical rhythm.

Zhou Mingrui stared at the meter for a few seconds before returning to the burly wood desk. He then reached out to twist the gas lamp's switch.

After some sputtering, there was a sharp sound!

A fire plume ignited and rapidly grew. Bright light first occupied the internals of the wall lamp before penetrating the transparent glass, blanketing the room with a warm glow.

The darkness quickly receded as the crimson retreated out the window. Zhou Mingrui felt at ease for a baffling reason as he quickly came in front of the dressing mirror.

This time, he seriously inspected his temple and did not miss a single detail.

After a few rounds of inspection, he realized that apart from the original blood stain, liquid was no longer flowing out of the grotesque wound. It appeared like it had received the best hemostasis and bandaging. As for the slowly squirming grayish-white brain and the discernible growth of flesh and blood around the wound, it meant that the wound might take

thirty to forty minutes, or maybe even two to three hours before it would only leave a light scar.

“The restorative effects that transmigration brings?” Zhou Mingrui curled up the right corner of his mouth as he muttered silently.

Following that, he let out a long sigh. Regardless, he was still alive!

After settling his mind, he pulled open a drawer and took out a tiny piece of soap. He took one of the old and tattered towels hanging by the side of the cupboard and opened the door. He then walked to the public bathroom which was shared by the tenants on the second floor.

Yes, I should clean up the blood stains on my head, or I'll keep looking like a crime scene. It's fine scaring myself, but if I were to scare my sister, Melissa, when she gets up early in the morning tomorrow, it would be quite problematic!

The corridor outside was pitch black. Silhouettes were barely accentuated by the crimson moonlight from the window at the end of the corridor. They looked like a pair of monster eyes that silently observed the living late into the night.

Zhou Mingrui lightened his footsteps as he walked towards the communal bathroom with a shuddering fear.

When he entered, there was even more moonlight, allowing him to see everything clearly. Zhou Mingrui stood in front of a wash basin and turned the tap's knob.

Upon hearing the gushing sound of water, he suddenly recalled his landlord, Mr. Franky.

As water was included in the rent, this short and thin gentleman who wore a top hat, a vest, and a black suit, always inspected the bathroom actively to take note of any sounds of flowing water.

If the water gushed too loudly, Mr. Franky would ignore all of his gentlemanly traits by flailing his walking stick and striking the bathroom's door, shouting things like 'Darn thief,' 'Wastage is a shameless matter,' 'I'll remember you,' 'If I see this happen another time, scam along with your filthy luggage,' 'Mark my words, this is the most value-for-money apartment in Tingen City. You will not find a more kindly landlord anywhere else!'

Putting away those thoughts, Zhou Mingrui used a moist towel to clean the blood stains from his face again and again.

After checking himself using the rundown mirror in the bathroom and verifying that all that was left was a hideous wound and a pale face, Zhou Mingrui relaxed. Then, he took off his linen shirt and used a bar of soap to wash away the bloodstains.

At that moment, he knitted his brows and recalled a possible problem.

The wound was too exaggerated and there was too much blood. Apart from his body, his room likely still had signs of his injury!

After Zhou Mingrui was done with his linen shirt a few minutes later, he briskly returned to his apartment with a moist towel. He first wiped the blood handprint on the desk and then, using the gas lamp's illumination, sought out spots which he missed out.

He immediately discovered that quite a substantial amount of blood had splattered onto the floor beneath the desk. And there was a yellow bullet to the left side of the wall.

“Releasing a round with a revolver pointed at the temple?” After mixing and matching the clues from before, Zhou Mingrui had a rough idea how Klein had died.

He was in no hurry to verify his guess. Instead, he seriously wiped away the blood stains and cleaned up the ‘scene.’ Following that, he took the bullet and returned to the side of his desk. He opened the revolver's cylinder and poured out the rounds inside.

A total of five rounds and a cartridge shell all had a brass luster to them.

“Indeed...” Zhou Mingrui looked at the empty cartridge shell in front of him and stuffed the rounds back into the cylinder while nodding.

He shifted his gaze to the left and it landed on the notebook’s words: ‘Everyone will die, including me.’ Following that, even more questions arose in him.

Where did the gun come from?

Was it suicide or a faked suicide?

What kind of trouble could a history graduate of humble origins get himself into?

Why would such a suicide method only leave behind so little blood? Was it because I transmigrated in a timely manner and it came with healing benefits?

After pondering for a moment, Zhou Mingrui changed into another linen shirt. He sat on the chair and began pondering over more important matters.

Klein’s experience was still not something he needed to concern himself with. The true problem was to figure out the reason for his transmigration and if he could return!

His parents, relatives, best buddies, and friends. The fascinating world of the Internet and all sorts of delicious delicacies... These were reasons that prompted his desire to return!

Click. Click. Click... Zhou Mingrui's right hand was subconsciously pulling out the revolver's cylinder and slamming it back into place, again and again.

Yea, there has not been much difference for me between this period of time and the past. I was just a little unlucky, but why would I transmigrate for no baffling reason?

Bad luck... Yes, I tried a luck enhancement ritual before dinner today!

A thought flashed in Zhou Mingrui's mind, illuminating the memories which were concealed by a fog of confusion.

As a qualified keyboard politician, keyboard historian, keyboard economist, keyboard biologist, and keyboard folklorist, he had always deemed himself as 'knowing something of everything.' Of course, his best buddy would often mock him as 'only knowing a little of everything.'

And one of them was Chinese Divination.

When he visited his hometown last year, he had discovered a thread-bound book titled ‘Quintessential Divination and Arcane Arts of the Qin and Han Dynasty’ at an old bookstore. It looked pretty interesting and could aid him in posturing on the Internet, so he bought it. Unfortunately, his interest was short-lived. The vertical script it used made the reading experience horrible. All he did was flip through the beginning pages before he threw it into a corner.

He had experienced a spate of bad luck in the past month—losing his cell phone, customers running away after cheating him, and mistakes at work. Only then did he suddenly recall the luck enhancement ritual written at the beginning of ‘Quintessential Divination and Arcane Arts.’ Furthermore, the requirements were extremely simple, without any basic foundation requirements.

All he needed was to get four portions of the staple food in his area and place them in the four corners of his room. They could be placed on furniture such as tables and cupboards. Then, standing in the middle of the room, he had to take four steps in a counter-clockwise fashion to make a square. The first step required him to sincerely chant ‘The Immortal Lord of Heaven and Earth for Blessings.’ The second step was to silently chant, ‘The Sky Lord of Heaven and Earth for Blessings.’ The third step was ‘The Exalted Thearch of Heaven and Earth for Blessings,’ and the fourth step was ‘The Celestial Worthy of Heaven and Earth for Blessings.’ After the four steps were taken, he needed to close his eyes and wait five minutes in his original spot. Only then would the ritual be considered complete.

Since it did not cost him any money, he found the book, followed what was stipulated, and did it before dinner. However... nothing happened back then.

Who would have guessed that he would actually transmigrate in the middle of the night!

Transmigration!

“There is a distinct possibility that it’s due to that luck enhancement ritual... Yes, I should give it a try here tomorrow. If it’s really because of that, I stand a chance of transmigrating back!” Zhou Mingrui stopped flicking the revolver’s cylinder and suddenly sat straight up.

Regardless, he had to give it a try!

He had to attempt a Hail Mary!

CHAPTER 3: MELISSA

After confirming his plan, Zhou Mingrui immediately felt he had a mental crutch. His fear and unease were all swept away into a corner of his mind.

Only then did he have the mood to carefully study Klein's memory fragments.

Zhou Mingrui habitually stood up before turning off the pipe's valve. He watched the wall lamp gradually dim until its flame extinguished before sitting back down. As he subconsciously fiddled with the revolver's brass cylinder, he pressed the side of his head. He slowly recalled his memories in the crimson-dyed darkness as though he was the most attentive viewer in a movie theater.

Perhaps as a result of having a bullet pass through his head, Klein's memories were like shattered glass. Not only were the memories not contiguous, there were many spots which were clearly missing. For example, memories pertaining to how the exquisite revolver appeared in his possession, whether he had committed suicide, or was killed, as well as the meaning of the words 'Everyone will die, including me' on the notebook, or whether he had participated in anything odd two days before the incident.

Not only had these particular memories become fragmented, there were also missing pieces. It was the same even for knowledge he ought to know. In light of the present situation, Zhou Mingrui believed that if Klein were to return to university, it was unlikely he could graduate. This was despite him having left campus just days ago without relaxing one bit.

He needs to participate in the Tingen University's History department interview two days later...

The university graduates of Loen Kingdom do not have the tradition of staying at their alma mater... His mentor had given him a recommendation letter for Tingen University and Backlund University...

...

Through the window, Zhou Mingrui silently observed the red moon setting in the west. The gradual sinking of the moon continued until faint light glowed from the east, dyeing the horizon golden.

At that moment, there was a commotion inside the apartment. Soon, the sound of footsteps approached his door.

“Melissa is awake... She’s really as punctual as always.” Zhou Mingrui smiled. Due to Klein’s memories, seeing Melissa made him feel as though she was really his younger sister.

However, I do not have a younger sister... He immediately contradicted himself.

Melissa was different from Benson and Klein. Her rudimentary education was not completed at the Sunday school classes offered by the Church of Evernight. When she reached schooling age, the Loen Kingdom had enacted the 'Basic Education Law.' A Primary and Secondary Education Committee was established and was specially provided with funding, increasing the kingdom's investment into education.

In less than three years, under the premise that numerous church schools would be incorporated, many public primary schools were established to strictly maintain the principle of religious neutrality. This was to prevent education from involving itself in the conflicts between the Lord of Storms, Evernight Goddess, and the God of Steam and Machinery.

Compared to Sunday school that only cost a copper penny a week, a public primary school's cost of three pence a week appeared rather expensive. However, the former only provided education every Sunday, whereas the latter provided six days of classes a week. In conclusion, the price was so low that it was almost free.

Melissa was different from most girls. From a young age, she enjoyed things like gears, springs, and bearings. Her ambition was to be a steam mechanic.

Having suffered from a lack of culture, Benson, who knew the importance of education, supported his sister's dreams just like how he supported Klein's university education. After all, Tingen Technical School was only considered secondary education. There was no need for her to attend language school or a public school for more knowledge.

In July last year, fifteen-year-old Melissa passed her entrance examinations and fulfilled her dreams of becoming a student at the Tingen Technical School's Steam and Machinery department. As such, her weekly school fees raised to nine pence.

Meanwhile, Benson's company was affected by the situation in the Southern Continent. There was a drastic drop both in profit and business transactions. More than a third of the employees were retrenched. In order to keep his job and maintain their livelihood, Benson could only accept more arduous tasks. He had to work overtime more frequently or head to places with harsh environments. That was what he was occupied with the past few days.

It was not that Klein did not think of helping share his elder brother's burden but being born a commoner and having been admitted into an average language school, he felt a strong sense of inadequacy when he enrolled into university. For example, as the origin of all languages in the Northern Continent, the ancient language of Feysac was something all the children of nobles and of the wealthy class would learn from a young age. In contrast, he only made first contact with it in university.

He faced many similar aspects during his schooling career. Klein nearly gave his all and often stayed up late into the night and woke up early before barely managing to catch up to the others, eventually allowing him to graduate with average results.

Memories regarding his elder brother and younger sister remained active in Zhou Mingrui's mind until he turned the doorknob open. Only then did he jolt awake and remember that he held a revolver in his hand.

This was a semi-regulated item!

It will scare children!

Also, there's still the wound on my head!

With Melissa arriving at any moment, Zhou Mingrui pressed onto his temple and hurriedly pulled open a desk drawer and threw the revolver in before slamming it close.

“What happened?” Melissa looked over curiously when she heard the commotion.

She was still in the prime of her youth. Even though she didn't have much nutritious food to eat, making her face thin and slightly pale, her

skin remained lustrous as it exuded the vibes of a young girl.

When Zhou Mingrui saw his sister's brown eyes look over, he forcibly composed himself and picked up an item beside his hand before calmly closing the drawer to conceal the existence of the revolver. He placed his other hand on his temple, the texture confirming that his wound had already healed!

He took out a silver vine-leaf pocket watch and pressed the top gently, causing its cover to flip open.

It was a picture of the siblings' father. It was the most valuable item the Imperial Army sergeant left behind, but being a second-hand item, it would often malfunction from time to time in recent years even though he had gotten a watchsmith to fix it. It had embarrassed Benson who enjoyed bringing it with him to elevate his status many a time, so it was thrown away back at home in the end.

It had to be said that perhaps Melissa did have talent in machinery. After grasping the principles behind the watch, she borrowed the tools from her Technical School to fiddle with the pocket watch. Recently, she even claimed to have fixed it!

Zhou Mingrui looked at the watch's open cover and saw that the second hand was not moving. Subconsciously, he twisted the top dial to wind the pocket watch.

However, despite winding it a few times, he did not hear the sound of taut springs. The second hand remained motionless.

“It looks like it’s broken again.” He looked at his sister while trying to find a topic of conversation.

Melissa shot him an expressionless glance and briskly walked over to take the pocket watch away.

She stood in her spot and pulled up the button sitting atop the pocket watch. With a few simple turns, the tick-tocking of the second hand sounded.

Isn’t pulling the button up usually meant to adjust the time... Zhou Mingrui’s expression immediately turned blank.

At that moment, a bell chimed from a faraway cathedral. It chimed six times, sounding distant and ethereal.

Melissa tilted her head to listen to it and pulled the button up once again. Following that, she turned it to synchronize the time.

“It’s okay now,” she said simply without emotion. She then pressed the top button back and handed the pocket watch back to Zhou Mingrui.