

61. Project Angel Tears

Due to the torrential rainstorm, the tavern was bustling with activity as many workers found themselves stranded while looking for jobs. In Blackthorn and the north, rainstorms were rare, so many celebrated and hoped for a good harvest with cheap liquor and ale. Despite thunder roaring and rain drumming, the drunken shouting and laughter filled the room, creating a cheerful atmosphere.

The tavern door swung open with a loud creak followed by a blast of cold air; a few turned their heads, hoping the new arrivals were work colleagues or friends, yet all their expressions shifted from cheerful and jolly to terrified within seconds.

A man walked in wearing clothes that suggested his noble status; his blood-red eyes coldly appraised everything with a piercing gaze. His head almost brushed against the ceiling as he stood near the entrance.

Damien used *Psychokinesis* to lift his silver cape slightly off the ground; it was a defensive artefact and not just a fashion statement. Mages often died due to being attacked from behind; Therefore, for protection, Master Mages wore this cape made from a fabric that naturally dispelled C grade magic spells and significantly reduced the impact of B grade and above ones.

Damiens winced as the smell of cheap ale and sweat assaulted his nose, "Fay, clean this place. I can't stand it."

Fay nodded and began channelling her spell; the various drunkards stood up with fear in their eyes as they watched Fay raise her arms; some drew weapons or began using their *Weapon Arts*.

Damien channelled some mana into Suppressive Voice, "**Remain still.**"

The room froze, and everyone paused.

Fay's cleaning spell manifested itself; hundreds of tiny water tornados drenched everything, including the people. Then a warm breeze like a hairdryer blew through the room.

Damien released his control and took a deep breath; it still smelled a little off but a vast improvement.

Everyone looked around with confusion; some sniffed their armpits while others inspected their clothes that had gone from yellowing brown to white.

Damien surveyed the room and eyed the door behind the counter, "Who is the owner of this tavern? Come forth."

The door slowly opened, and a young man walked out.

Casually tying his long brown hair in a ponytail as he walked out, he eyed Damien, "You are Duke Nightshade, right? Welcome to my humble establishment, the name's Randy."

Damien already liked this guy; he was confident despite his young age, his facial hair was well-groomed and wearing clean clothes. Personal hygiene and care would always give Damien a great first impression.

Damien had a grin on his face and returned the pleasantries. "Greetings, Randy; I hope you don't mind my intrusion?"

Randy shook his head with a smile, "The pleasure is all mine Duke Nightshade; how can I be of assistance?"

Damien clapped his hands to draw everyone's attention, "Randy, I plan to use your tavern as a jobcentre." Damien gestured towards a dozen stone slates with jobs written on them, "Do you have more slates and chalk?"

Randy nodded and disappeared into the back room; he returned a moment later with a stack of slates towering above his head and unceremoniously dumped them on the bar.

"Right, listen up, everyone and spread my words around if you can." Damien used Psychokinesis to pick up the new slates and arranged them as a floating wall in the centre of the room. "Blackthorn is now my land, and as a Vampire, I have a very long lifespan. I wish to turn this town into the greatest city for both you and future generations, and for that, I need everyone's help."

Everyone had weary expressions, but some seemed hopeful, Damien planned to sell them a dream, not just for themselves but their children for generations to come.

"I shall be investing ten platinum into this venture," Everyone gasped, but many looked confused; Damien realised these country bumpkins would have never even heard of a platinum coin as only the Royals, and High nobles made deals in platinum coins, "That is equivalent to a hundred thousand gold, all of you can earn this money through various jobs that I shall now write."

Activating Automatic Writing Damien manipulated the many chalk sticks to write on the suspended stone slabs. The people in the tavern had never seen magic, so many watched in amazement, like children at a magic show.

After a few minutes, the many stone slabs floated over to the various walls and rested against them.

Damien then eyed Randy, "You shall be promoted to Guild Master, and your payment will be a gold coin a week. You can also hire five staff members to assist you for one silver a week. Do you accept?"

Randy didn't react to the gold coin offer and instead asked, "What do you need me to do?"

While narrating, Damien gestured to the tavern around himself, "Keep this place clean and tidy, keep track of who accepts which jobs. I will come round and provide the weekly funds to pay everyone for their hard work. But be warned, I will keep a close *eye* on you."

Randy gulped a little and nodded his head, "These terms are acceptable to me, although I can already see your ambitious plans and wondered if the pay would increase in the future. Although a single gold coin is enough to buy multiple houses here, with everyone receiving jobs from you with decent pay, the standard of living will sharply rise, and the cost of things will follow. A gold coin will become normal within a few weeks instead of incredibly rare."

Damien cursed in his head; this Randy fellow was clever. "Every month, I shall evaluate the state of Blackthorn's economy and increase wages accordingly."

Randy slowly nodded; he knew he was being played but wasn't in a position of power to negotiate any further and was apprehensive of how far he could push his luck. "Very well then, Duke Nightshade; I would be thrilled to assist you as your Guild Master."

Some of the people in the tavern shot him death stares for siding with the Vampire, while others seemed jealous of his one gold a month salary. Randy had taken on an extensive risk siding with Damien.

Damien walked into the centre of the room, cane tapping as he walked. The drumming of the rain on the tavern's wooden roof gave a cosy atmosphere, but the tensions within the room were high.

Damien walked over to a burley-looking man, "Proud citizen of Blackthorn, what job did you come here searching for?"

The man tried to hide his scowl and disgust for Damien; his middle-aged face and callous hands showed years of hard labour, "Construction work, my Lord..."

Damien nodded, "I understand your hatred for my race but just know I hate them just as much as you do; anyway, that's beside the point." Damien used *Psychokinesis* to bring over one of the stone slates.

[Walkway Maintenance]

Requirements: None

Description: You will work to upgrade and expand the walkway network.

Pay: 10 Coppers a Week

Punishment: None

The man slowly read the slab; his reading comprehension speed seemed slower than a child's back on Earth. Damien impatiently tapped his cane before gesturing towards Randy, "If you can't read, ask Randy to explain it."

The man's scowl deepened, but he slowly stood up, almost matching Damien's height. He walked over to the bar with long strides and handed Randy the stone slab.

Randy's brow raised as he reached the end of the slab and looked over to Damien, "What does punishment mean?"

Everyone in the tavern shifted uncomfortably in their seats and perked their ears to hear the answer. Since when did a job have a punishment attached to it?

Damien smiled and unintentionally showed his fangs, "Let's be honest here for a moment, everyone; Blackthorn isn't the safest place and is rather lacking in the public safety and law enforcement department. Even with money, I cannot set up and implement laws and a security force within a single day; that will take time. The second I mentioned that I would be providing high paying jobs, I am sure many of you immediately thought of ways to cheat me out of my money."

Many averted their eyes towards their tables, trying to hide their expressions.

"So my current solution is to attach a punishment to the highest paying jobs." Damien gestured towards the stone slab in Randy's hands, "That job is one of the simplest and lowest-paying, so attaching a punishment would be too hard to regulate for me. But I will give five copper coins to anyone who reports someone slacking off on the job."

Damien then brought over another stone slab with *Psychokinesis* and narrated the contents.

[Head Security Officer]

Requirements: Weapon Arts

Description: You will manage a group of law enforcement officers.

Pay: 1 gold a week

Punishment: The Vines

"Here is a high paying job and one with significant power and responsibilities. Some of the hunters here have *Weapon Arts* but have found very few jobs to utilise them due to the lack of monsters inhabiting this wasteland that provide any valuable materials."

Damien looked around and saw many groups around tables vigorously nodding their heads. "I won't say what the punishment means exactly, but I am *excited* to test it on the first offenders, so please feel free to try and cheat me out of my money."

Damien debated attaching a soul contract as one of the requirements but decided it would be overkill. The people currently didn't trust him, and very few people would be desperate enough to sign their souls away for a few gold coins. Furthermore, once they learned 'The Vines' meant death, the number of offenders should significantly decrease. But Damien didn't wish to tell them outright it was a death sentence as he wanted to weed out the useless members of society first.

Damien turned on his heel and began to walk out; many looked at this departing back with mixed expressions.

Just before opening the tavern door to brave the rainstorm once more, Damien looked back towards the tavern, "Did I forget to mention that I will not be collecting any taxes for the rest of the year? If anyone has any further questions or inquiries, feel free to visit the Mayor's house where I will be residing for the time being."

With that bombshell of a statement, Damien opened the door and left.

Everyone within the tavern went silent for a moment before they all stood up, and with a loud resounding cheer, they downed their ales before scrambling towards the many jobs lining the walls with anticipation.

Randy let out a deep sigh, and many of them formed a long line at the bar while holding stone slabs. Then, putting his hands on his hips, he shouted, "None of you idiots can read?"

One girl sitting in the corner raised her hand, "I can read..."

Randy didn't even look at her, "Get over here quickly, you're hired."

Over the next few hours, the tavern became the hottest news in town as people braved the rain to pay a visit and pick up a new job.

One such job hunter was a middle-aged woman, soaked in mud and a blood-stained rag wrapped around her thighs.

Mary pushed through the people crowding the tavern, many of the jobs had already gone, but a single stone slab resting in the corner caught her eye.

[Project Angel Tears]

Requirements: Soul Contract with Duke Nightshade

Description: ??? Meet the Duke at the Mayor's residence for details.

Pay: 10 silver a week

Punishment: Death

She grabbed the slate and joined the end of the long line without hesitation.